

17.35 hrs.

## HALF-AN-HOUR DISCUSSION

*[Translation]*

## Shifting of NTPC Unit from Murad-Nagar to Dadri

SHRI K. N. SINGH (Hapur): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am thankful to you for the opportunity given to me to speak. A unit of the National Thermal Power Corporation was going to be set up in my area. For that, a period of two full years was spent on investigations and thereafter it was decided that Muradnagar area was quite suitable for this purpose, because the requirement of water for thermal power project could be met through the Ganga canal and the problem of ash content from the unit would be solved by the Hindon river which flows nearby. The land had been acquired and they started paying compensation also. But I do not know why all of a sudden the payment of compensation was stopped and a decision to shift the plant was taken. Had Shri Vasant Sathe been here, that would have been better because he was associated with the entire dispute. He had made certain commitments, that is why I had requested that his presence here was a must.

*[English]*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Madam is there. She will answer to your questions.

*[Translation]*

SHRI K. N. SINGH: As some decisions were taken between Shri Sathe and the farmers, the record of which is not available, so Shri Sathe's presence was necessary. The hon. Minister had committed that the plant would be set up in Muradnagar unless the Hon. Prime Minister himself decided otherwise. But all of a sudden the officers started shifting the material. After that we wrote a letter to the Hon. Prime Minister because the hon. Minister had said that only the

Prime Minister would arbitrate in this matter and his decision would be final. So, on the 24th March, 1986 we wrote a letter. A reply was received to that letter from Shrimati Sushila Rohtagi in the month of June. I want to submit that no development of any area can take place unless the people of the area were associated with that. Before the decision of shifting the plant was taken, the experts had already examined the proposal for two years and found that there could not be a better place for setting up this plant than this. But all of a sudden the officials thought of shifting it and they constituted a Committee on the issue of environment pollution which declared that this place was not suitable for this project. I may tell you that before this when in 1982-83 this plant was being set up, the local newspapers had opposed the move on the plea that it would create pollution. Then the same very officers had stated in September 1983 that it would not pollute the environment. They had said that the ash content from the plant would be disposed of in the Hindon river which is 2.5 to 3 kms wide. But I am sorry to say that now they have taken the plea that there is scope for pollution in the area. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, through you, I want to submit that 1200 to 1300 acres of land was required for the project and about 500 acres had been acquired, out of which they had paid compensation for 60 acres at the rate of Rs. 39 per square yard. The State Government too had objected to this but you had said that this compensation was quite high. At that time, our farmers had clearly stated that whatever compensation you wanted to pay according to law, would be acceptable to them. It has been provided in the law also that compensation has to be paid after acquisition of the land. If we refuse, you may deposit the amount in the treasury and acquire the land. They did not do even this and wanted to take away the entire material to some other place. When our delegation met the hon. Minister, a deputation of the Corporation, which included technocrats, also met the hon. Minister. We were also present there. After an hour's hearing, the hon. Minister said that it appeared that what the Corporation was saying was not true.

[Shri K. N. Singh]

He said that this project would remain there but if the Prime Minister wanted then it could be shifted elsewhere. I want to tell you that there are no orders from the Prime Minister to shift this project. It is so because when we had lost the elections, Shrimati Indira Gandhi had first of all toured between Delhi and Haridwar. At that time, lakhs of farmers from Muradnagar had welcomed her and raised slogans of "Prime Minister Zinda-bad". Shrimati Indira Gandhi had said that she was then no more the Prime Minister, to which the people had replied that they deemed her to be the Prime Minister. They also told her that she was seeing the backwardness of the area and when she became the Prime Minister she should think of that area. She had said that she would take special care of that area on becoming the Prime Minister. Today Shrimati Indira Gandhi is no more. It was she who had given this project to Muradnagar and this project was started in her name. Now when she is no more, this project is being shifted elsewhere. The people of this area have their own history. In 1857 when the battle was fought against the Britishers, this was the area and these were the people who had fought against them. Today, these people are in a miserable condition and are poverty-ridden. I would like to submit that two or three excuses have been put forth for shifting the project. First is that for carrying coal they will have to construct three overhead bridges there. They also say that they have to pay higher compensation and where they are now shifting the project, they will not have to pay compensation. These are their pleas. When I asked them as to how they will dispose of the ash which comes out in hundreds of truck-loads a day, they replied that the question did not arise. They said so to conceal the facts. The technocrats engaged in this work have made it a point of prestige. There is no other point in it. Between 1983 to 1986, some 500 acres of the farmers' land had been acquired and compensation had been paid for about 60 acres of land. No compensation has been given for the rest of the land. That land has been lying uncultivated for the

last three years because roads were being constructed and the areas were earmarked for housing projects and storages. That is why the farmers had sold their oxen and got their tubewells disconnected. They expected that they would get compensation for their lands, and their children would get employment in the project. The notices sent by the Government in this regard are with me and it is mentioned in them that they would be given compensation. Those people have been waiting for the last three years but I regret to say that they have not received any compensation so far. Therefore, I would like to make an appeal to the Government that this commitment was made by our late Prime Minister Shrimati Indira Gandhi, and the hon. lady Minister who held a senior position in her cabinet and who is still in this Department, should honour this commitment and this project should not be shifted elsewhere by taking advantage of their poverty. Otherwise, I think, the farmers of the area will perhaps not cooperate.

Sir, I would like to submit one more point. This Thermal Power Project is being set up to meet the requirements of Delhi. The entire power will be supplied to Delhi whereas the land of the farmers on which the project will be set up is in Ghaziabad in U. P. We have been told that we would get 10 per cent share of the total power generated as royalty. Our area is part of the National Capital Region. Our farmers are being deprived of their land to meet the needs of the capital city. The proper amount of compensation for the entire land would come to hardly about Rs. 30 or 40 crores which they have refused to give. The farmers from our area have approached you so that justice is done with them and the plant which was to be installed there is not shifted to any other place. The hon. Minister should assure us in this regard. Roads have already been constructed there and plenty of cement is lying there. Therefore, I am sure the hon. Minister will do justice with us.

Sir, another point which I would like

to make is that when they finally decided not to install this power plant there, then they set up a committee which said that it would not be proper to set up the project there due to environmental reasons. In this connection, I would like to say that had we or the farmers of that area been associated with that Committee, even then there would have been some satisfaction, but the fact is that when the dispute arose about compensation and when they took a decision to shift the project, only then a committee was set up quietly. They thought that the land being more fertile, it would be better not to acquire it. Hence, I would say that injustice is being done with the farmers of this area. These technocrats are trying to take advantage of their poverty and illiteracy. Therefore, I appeal to you to intervene in the matter and honour the commitment made in this respect and try to save the people there who are very much worried for the past three years.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF POWER AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRIMATI SUSHILA ROHTAGI) : Sir, our experienced colleague expressed his feelings with great anguish and had his views been based on facts, I would have agreed with him. He spoke about the farmers. There cannot be two opinions about it that it is due to the farmers that the country today is standing on its feet, it has become self-reliant in the matter of foodgrains and Green Revolution has been brought about. Our farmers have laboured hard braving the hot sun and cold winter, irrespective of the fact whether water, power or other amenities of life were available to them or not. The glory that our country has earned is all due to the farmers. I, therefore, agree with our colleague that full justice should be done unto the farmers. And this has been the very policy of our Government. The farmers have been able to elevate the country so much because the Government have been continuously endeavouring to help them by bring about new techniques and in other ways. But it is possible that our colleague may be having different facts than those available with us.

The first thing that I would like to say is that there has been no commitment on this issue. I have looked into the records carefully and I have not found it mentioned anywhere. Had there been any commitment, that would have been honoured under all circumstances. But the fact of any commitment has not been mentioned anywhere.

Besides, I would like to say that the national thermal power project, which has been mentioned, is a huge project. It would have an installed capacity of 240 megawatts and 840 megawatts in its first phase and by 1990 or 1991 it is hoped that the first unit of 210 megawatts would be commissioned and the remaining units would be commissioned at the rate of one unit each after every six months and that would constitute the first phase. Thereafter, the huge project of 1840 MW would come up in the country.

The hon. Member has said that a lot of time was taken at the initial stages of the formation of the plan itself, and at that time an assurance was given on the basis of which land was acquired. I would like to tell you that when the first feasibility report was received in 1982, then the Department of Power had called the representatives from different Government units and departments to deliberate upon the recommendations of the report, which included those from N.T.P.C., the coal sector, the Departments of Environment and Railways and the C E A. also. They made efforts to find out a suitable site somewhere. It was not limited to this alone but it was also thought that it should be—

[English]

—subject to detailed environment assessment being carried out for the recommended site.

[Translation]

So, from the very beginning, it was stipulated that the plant would be installed only subject to the approval of the

[Shrimati Sushila Rohtagi]

Ministry of Environment. This was a condition—subject to that proviso.

Our Minister of Environment is present here.

[English]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : He is always available.

SHRIMATI SUSHILA ROHTAGI : Yes, he is always available. He is very kind. I must say that.

[Translation]

Our colleague is himself aware as to how much study of environment and ecology has been made in our country and how much harm has been done to our economy, to our human resources and our flora and fauna due to environmental factors like felling of trees and pollution. The entire social structure has been affected thereby. As in shown in the films,

[English]

—it is not only the matter of mind but the matter of heart.

[Translation]

The process of development in every field has been adversely affected thereby. An 'Environmental Impact' study group was formed. I would submit that through this group the Government themselves want to ensure that nothing should be done which may harm the interests of the farmers, spread pollution and development work may be obstructed. Besides this, the Government scrutinises every project. And this being a major project, it was scrutinised in detail in the very beginning and after going into the matter thoroughly it was found that this new site is very near to Delhi and it also falls in between Ghaziabad and Delhi. Besides this, the Environment Ministry had also rejected the old site. There was a pre-condition

that if the Environment Ministry did not accept it, the proposal would be rejected and the power project would not be set up there. So, when the Environment Ministry said that this project should not be set up there and some another site should be selected for it, only then another site was selected for this purpose. The other site is also not very far from Delhi. That site is very near to the district of Kedarbhai and it is in Uttar Pradesh and is near to his constituency. Moreover, some of its area falls in his constituency. I would like to tell Kedarbhai for his information that this is not a question of constituency, because the constituency can be ours as well as theirs. All are affected by it. This is particularly related to the farmers. Notices were issued for acquisition of about 500 acres of land. In the meeting held on 10th January, the hon. Minister had intimated that out of the land notified for acquisition, compensation had been paid for 70 acres of land and the rest of the land was de-notified. Compensation for 70 acres of land was given at the rate of Rs. 2 lakh per acre. In the nearby areas, land was available at the rate of Rs. 30000 or 35000 per acre. When this land was acquired at the rate of Rs. 2 lakh per acre, no farmer was ready to part with his land. As a result thereof, the proposal of locating that plant was going to be stalled. As the project was very important and our power industry as well as the future of the country depended on it, the Government had to take immediate step. The farmers started speculating and they were not ready to part with their land on compensation less than Rs. 2 lakhs. Besides this, the Environment Ministry rejected it.

We also came to know that there were many advantages if we set up the plant at another nearby place in the same district. I would like to give details of those advantages to the hon. Member. The land which was selected earlier for locating the project is cultivable and this new land which has been selected now is not fertile and no crop is being grown there. It was said that cultivation was not being done on that land for the last 5 to 7 years and the people were not taking advantage of

the land. But we have no facts to substantiate this contention.

SHRI K.N. SINGH : I had not said this. I had said that the land which you had acquired earlier was lying unutilised for the past 3 years and no sowing had been done there.

SHRIMATI SUSHILA ROHTAGI : So far as our information goes, that land is fertile and cultivation is also being done there. So, we do not want to acquire that land on which crops are being grown. We have to select such land for the project which is small in size and which is a waste land. Besides, buildings will be constructed along with the plant and a township as well as industry will also be set up. This is why it was proposed to acquire such land which is not being cultivated.

There was another advantage that 50 per cent of the land belonged to the Government and it could be acquired without delay. It would not have taken years to acquire it and also it was near the railway track. The land which was going to be acquired earlier is 30 kilometers away from the railway track and this land is only 10 kilometers away from the track. I would like Kedarbhai to hear me attentively because money is saved in this way and also the matter is settled early.

I would like to say about the fly-over also. According to the information received by me, 6 fly-overs were needed on the land which was proposed to be acquired earlier whether it was for the railway line or for the major road. The site which has been selected now is not so costly and also it is near to the railway line. Besides this, only two fly-overs will have to be constructed here. All these things give a lot of advantages.

18.00 hrs.

Moreover, this land is somewhat level. The expenditure which is to be incurred on digging for levelling the land also makes some difference. Water is also available from the Upper Ganga Canal,

which is only two kilometres away. About a sum of Rs. 60 crores is expected to be saved thereby which is not so small an amount. So, this site is advantageous to our farmers, the project can be executed here expeditiously, it will not create pollution and also the Environment Ministry has cleared it.

[English]

The Ministry of Environment are satisfied and have cleared the new site for the power project.

[Translation]

When all these advantages were there, then it was decided that the power project should be set up here.

You have touched a very relevant point that what will be done to the ash. I had not tried to answer your question about ash is a lighter vein. You have been our experienced Minister and colleague.

[English]

“Does not arise; the project is yet to be set up”.

[Translation]

The project has not been set up as yet. We have learnt that in Britain and other places some techniques have been developed under which the ash is piled up layer upon layer near the plant in such a way that trees can be grown up on that and even animals can go there. The place can be turned into greenery. Besides this, it does not spread pollution. We have come to know about one or two such projects and we are going to see them.

One thing more. This ash does not need vast land. There is no need to acquire land in a big way for this purpose. There is a place near the power project where it can be dumped layer upon layer and raised to a certain height. In this way it can be made beautiful and turned into

[Shrimati Sushila Rohtagi]

greenery by afforestation, plantation or vegetation as is done in U.K. Similar technique is proposed to be adopted here. Taking all these things into consideration, the Environment Ministry had recommended on 24th December 1985 that Dadri would be a suitable place for it and they unanimously agreed to it. After this, the Minister of Power, the Minister of Revenue of Uttar Pradesh and our Energy Minister held a meeting on 10th January 1986. It was decided in the meeting that the chairman of NTPC and the chairman of Electricity Board, U.P., should together look into the matter to decide what will be suitable for it. An expert committee was appointed and it was their opinion that it was a right step. On the 11th February, the Government gave it its formal approval. After all this, the matter was placed before you.

Probably you have put some questions regarding the World Bank. You might not have put the question today. But I would like to say how the question of approval arises in regard to the earlier proposal. Approval is given only when the proposal is cleared from every side—subject to approval by the Department of Environment. So, how it could be there about Muradnagar? When it was cleared from every side and when the Environment Ministry also cleared it, they recommended Dadri in the Development Forum. In my opinion the thing is.....  
(Interruptions)...

[English]

DR. CHINTA MOHAN (Tirupati) :  
It is political.

SHRIMATI SUSHILA ROHTAGI :  
I do not think it is political at all...  
(Interruptions)

DR. CHINTA MOHAN : Is it a fact that you are starting 26 NTPC units in the Amethi Constituency?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : This is not Amethi Constituency that we are discussing now.

DR. CHINTA MOHAN : In Amethi, are you starting 26 NTPC units? Is it a

fact? How is environment more acceptable to start these units in Amethi? Why not have them in other backward areas?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : This is not connected or relevant.

SHRIMATI SUSHILA ROHTAGI :  
Sir, through you I would like to remind the hon. Member that sometimes he should be kind enough to dispossess his mind of Amethi and think of the national interest at large. This is something which is much more than Amethi, much more than Dadri, much more than Muradnagar. This is environment as a whole and what effect it is going to have on the quality of life. I will seek his assistance on that.

[Translation]

After all these things, a sum of Rs. one crore and six lakhs was spent on the acquisition of land. Another sum of Rs. 72 lakhs was also spent on the office arrangements and on providing other infrastructures. I know the hurt feelings of the hon. Member because of the fact that the proposed big project is not being set up there. But I assure you that we are certainly going to implement three other projects there. Firstly, N.T.P.C. intends to set up a Transmission Training Institute at Muradnagar. It requires 65 to 70 acres of land for this Institute which is available there. Workshop and Transmission towers will be set up for training purposes. Secondly, N.T.P.C. has also decided to set up the Main Earth Station with Satellite Communication at Muradnagar. Thirdly, N.T.P.C.'s office of Northern Region Transmission Line will be opened at Muradnagar to ensure close coordination with the U.P. Electricity Board Sub-Station, Muradnagar.

I am sorry to say that I do not have any information regarding the commitment mentioned by the hon. Member, otherwise I would not have hesitated in providing the facts.

So far as the farmers are concerned, I have to submit that this nation exists only due to the strength, support and the

aspiration of the farmers and I hope that my brothers will not take any such step or do such propaganda, as may lead to their demoralisation.

**SHRI K.N. SINGH :** Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir the hon. Minister has tried beautifully to conceal her mistakes. You said that this project was to be set up after the clearance from the Environment Ministry. The investigations were carried on for two years. Then, buildings were constructed over there and according to my informations, Rs. 10 crores were spent there. If your engineers and technocrats knew that they had not got the clearance, then they should not have started the process of construction of buildings or acquisition of the land. *(Interruptions)*

So far, the hon. Minister has not told about the ash as to where does this go. You will do experiment, that is all right. But there is no provision for one rack of cool/ash which will turn out from there daily. So far as the fly-overs are concerned only four fly-overs were to be constructed there. *(Interruptions)*

*[English]*

**MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER :** You please only seek clarification.

**SHRI K.N. SINGH :** Mr. Sathe is not here today. He had made a commitment. Let Mr. Sathe come with an open announcement that he did not make a commitment.

*[Translation]*

**SHRIMATI SUSHILA ROHTAGI :**

Sir, I have answered all the three questions. I would like to make it clear that there is no question of misguiding any one from any political or technocrat point of view. I have presented facts before you and I want that you should look at it from another angle. *(Interruptions)* I have already told you that a compensation of Rs. one crore and 60 lakhs was given to the farmers.

*[English]*

Rs. 72 lakhs have been spent by N.T.P.C. for creating basic infrastructure facilities like office, construction of temporary roads etc. It was all that was done at that time.

*[Translation]*

Secondly, you said Rs. 10 crores whereas it is Rs. 72 lakhs only.

We are not looking towards Britain as we do not know less than any other country. Regarding the disposal of ash, I tell you that there is a project for this purpose at Nasik. *(Interruptions)*. If we are wiser at a cost of Rs. 72 lakhs, then it is not a costly. The problem was about the environment. There is an ash project at Nasik. So, it will be better if the hon. Member sheds any misgiving in this regard.

18.10 hrs.

*The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Thursday, August 21, 1986/Sravana 29, 1908 (Saka)*