

SHRI RATANSINH RAJDA (Bombay South): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I raised the question of privilege of the entire House

MR. SPEAKER: It is under my consideration.

SHRI RATANSINH RAJDA: I want to make a submission. I was actuated with the purest motive that the name, fame and reputation of the entire House should not be at stake and that is why I thought, I should raise this question.

MR. SPEAKER: You have raised it and it is under my consideration. I have referred it to PTI.

SHRI RATANSINH RAJDA: The headline 'MPs exchange blows' gives an impression that all the Members of the House were involved in this. I would be the last man and I do not want to attribute any motives either to PTI or the press.

MR. SPEAKER: Appearances can be deceptive.

SHRI RATANSINH RAJDA: Just to do away that impression, I would not like to press this question. I was there. I know what had happened. I did not see anybody exchanging blows.

MR. SPEAKER: Right you are.

SHRI RATANSINH RAJDA: But it might have escaped my attention. I do not know.

MR. SPEAKER: There were no blows.

SHRI RATANSINH RAJDA: I have taken the stand, but I do not want to attribute any motive to the press and from that point of view. I am not pressing this matter.

MR. SPEAKER: O. K.

SHRI HARIKESH BAHADUR:
Sir... **

MR. SPEAKER: Irrelevant. I have already allowed that. We will take it up.

SHRI HARIKESH BAHADUR:
Even a statement under 377 is not being allowed.

MR. SPEAKER: I have allowed one.

श्री हरीश कुमार गंगवार : (पीली-भीत) : एक मिनट मुझे भी दे दीजिए मैं ने एक स्थगन प्रस्ताव दिया था । उस को आप ने रिजेक्ट कर दिया । मैं यह चाहता हूं कि उस पर बहस का समय आप दें, चाहे आधा ही घंटा आप दें । . . . (व्यवधान) . . .

अध्यक्ष महोदय : देखने बाद में ।
. . . (व्यवधान) ** . . .

MR. SPEAKER: It is not to be discussed. Irrelevant things and irrelevant questions not to be recorded.

(Interruptions) **

MR. SPEAKER: Please sit down. this is not the time.

12.14 hrs.

CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER
OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

REPORTED TRAPPING OF MINERS IN THE
BHADUA COALMINES IN GIRIDIH DISTRICT
OF BIHAR

SHRI SUNIL MAITRA (Calcutta North East): Sir, I call the attention of the Minister of Energy to the following matter of urgent public importance and request that he may make a statement thereon:

"Reported trapping of about 560 miners in the Bhadua coalmines in Giridih district of Bihar."

12.15 hrs.

[MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENERGY (SHRI VIKRAM MAHAJAN): Sir, I have to inform the House that a subsidence occurred on 13-2-1981 in an old and abandoned mine called Seerampur in Bhadua Hill area of Giridih colliery. This is one of the mines in the Giridih group of B & K area of Central Coalfields Limited which were taken over from Railways at the formation of N.C.D.C. in October, 1956. There are 5 working mines at Giridih. Besides, there are several old mines including Seerampur which have been abandoned. However, illegal mining operations have been reported in these abandoned mines.

On receipt of information about this subsidence, the local management of C. C. L. took steps to obtain entry into the disturbed property and also informed the C.C.L. Headquarters. A joint inspection of the area was carried out on 15th February by senior officers of C. C. L. and D. G. Ms. who also made underground inspection of the illegal workings through accessible entry on the other side of the subsided ground. An area of about 150 meters X 50 meters was found to have subsided along the slope of Bhadua Hill. The ground had subsided to a depth of about 1 metre. There was evidence of illegal mining having been carried out in the area. There was, however, no evidence of any death having taken place.

The Deputy Commissioner sent out teams in the nearby villages and also made announcements in the town of Giridih and villages to obtain information regarding missing persons if any. But no such information has been received till 19th of February. Chairman, Coal India Limited has also visited the site and found no evidence of any fatalities having occurred. No report have been lodged in the Police Station regarding any missing persons or death having taken place.

Illegal mining of coal has been made a cognizable offence under the Coal Mines Nationalisation (Amendment) Act. However, certain parties were indulging in illegal coal mining after obtaining interim exparte orders from various Courts. In May, 1980, the Supreme Court in a judgement has upheld the vires of the Coal Mines Nationalisation in a (Amendment) Act and declared that no person other than authorised persons can obtain coal mining lease or do coal mining in the country. This has had a salutary effect in curbing illegal mining. The State Government has been organising raids from time to time and arresting persons indulging in such illegal mining. Security personnel of C.C.L. Giridih project have also detected specific cases and reported them to the local authorities for necessary action and investigation.

It will be thus observed that possible action is being taken by C.C.L., with the cooperation of the local authorities and police, to curb illegal mining of coal in this area.

SHRI SUNIL MAITRA: This particular coal mine Seerampur in Bhadua was a captive mine of the railways. The Minister has stated in his statement that it was taken over in 1956. The Minister has not stated in his statement at what point of time this mine was abandoned.

Let me inform the House that the people within a radius of 5 miles in Giridih town are extremely poor and mostly their profession is to mine, they are miners. When a mine is opened and after working for several years when the mine is abandoned, these people are left in the lurch, they are not provided with alternative employment. Actually what happened over there is that the underground water from the mine is pumped out as a result of which the surface area cannot be cultivated it becomes barren. Therefore when a mine is abandoned the people loss their job. The

people over there are originally agriculturists; they live on agriculture. When a mine is abandoned, they cannot find employment as miners nor can they cultivate their land because the land over there is barren. They are left in the lurch. There is not only one mine Bhadua in this area, but there are a number of mines which have been abandoned and the people who were working there have been left in the lurch; they have been left there to fend for themselves because they are unemployed. But still these abandoned mines have some potential.

It appears that some management of unscrupulous contracts, unscrupulous businessmen has started financing the operation of mining. In the Giridih District, throughout the Raniganj-Jharia mining belt, you will find what is called foxsoul mining. People have started illegal mining operations there. These contractors under the patronage of police and also very powerful politicians go on operating these illegal mines. So, in that background the entire question of this Bhadua mine has to be examined. Now, the Minister has stated here that the subsidence occurred on the 13th February, 1981 in an old and abandoned mine in Searampur in Bhadua Hill area of Giridih colliery. How did this subsidence take place? According to Press reports in the afternoon of 13th February 1981 people saw a column of smoke rising there. A little thereafter there was a terrific sound of explosion, the reverberations of which reached miles around. And after the explosion took place the hill caved in and there were more than one thousand men who were engaged in this illegal operation and were working in the mine. The hon. Minister says that a team went and inspected. They found that there were no fatalities, nor death. How did they go there? They entered from the other side. But if there was an explosion and the hill-top caved in, there must have been a mountain of debris. But the Minister has not

stated anything about it, whether there was a mountain of debris when the team went there. And when the mountain of debris was there, the inspection team inspected and came to the conclusion that there was no fatality or death or any injury and did they find any sign of any human being there? And, the Minister comes in and tells the House that there is no fatality or anything of that sort.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: What is your question? Please come to the question.

SHRI SUNIL MAITRA: The second point is the Deputy Commissioner sent out teams to villages to ascertain whether actually anyone was missing. If the operation was illegal, how do you expect the villagers to report that the mine is being worked illegally. The Minister is deliberately suppressing. It is very dangerous on the part of the relatives of the employees to report to the Police that the relatives are engaged in illegal mining. The contractors there are very powerful men. He would not like the villagers going to the Police and telling them that their relatives are engaged in illegal mining. Therefore, to expect the villagers to report to the Police or the Deputy Commissioner to send out teams to find out if there were any missing people is, to say the least, living in a fool's paradise.

The Minister says that the Supreme Court gave a judgment in May 1980 nobody except the authorised persons should be allowed to carry on mining in those areas. And you had the Supreme Court Judgment in your pocket since May 1980. What are you doing? Illegal mining operations are going on under the supervision of powerful people. Again I want to bring it to the notice of the hon. Minister that on the 9th December, 1980... (Interruptions).

AN HON. MEMBER: What does he want?

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: He is coming to the question.

SHRI SUNIL MAITRA: On 9th December, 1980 a question was asked by an hon. Member—no less a member than Shri A. K. Roy. He asked for the names and the number of collieries in the Giridih District now lying closed in the same area and the potential ore lying unutilised because of that. The hon. Member's point was that the large scale closure of the present colliery has led to the theft of coal by illegal mining which is continuing there openly. What the Giridih town officials claim is otherwise.

On 9th December, in reply to the Unstarred Question No. 3123 of Shri A. K. Roy, the Minister in this House in a written reply, promised to him that an inquiry would be made. Two months back the Government was informed that such an illegal mining was going on and there was danger to human lives. The Government did not take any measure whatsoever to stop this illegal mining. Therefore, in this background, let me ask two questions:

1. Is it a fact that in August last year, exactly at the similar spot there was a subsidence as the Government said, or a part of the mine caved in and three persons lost their lives, even as FIR was filed with the local police station, the names were given but subsequently they were quietly dropped and the case was hushed up?

2. Why were immediate and effective steps not taken to tackle the problem of illegal mining although in May, 1980, the Supreme Court gave a judgment in your favour and on 9th December, 1980 Shri A. K. Roy asked a question fore-warning the Government of the existence of illegal mining involving such hazards and risks to the people who had to earn their living by working in those mines?

SHRI VIKRAM MAHAJAN: As I have already mentioned in my statement, to our knowledge, no deaths

have occurred. If the hon. Member gets any information, we would be very glad to inquire into it again. But the local administration and our officers had inspected the area, as was mentioned in my statement. They had come to the conclusion specially after visiting nearby villages that no such tragic incident had occurred so far.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA (Basirhat): Such callousness towards deaths of human beings should not be there. Mr. Maitra has asked whether the soil which has subsided there, has been removed....

SHRI VIKRAM MAHAJAN: Let me answer the question of my hon. friend.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: Are you satisfied that the debris has been removed and the people are not lying there? Is he supposed to give you information? You said that the hon. Member should give you information.

SHRI VIKRAM MAHAJAN: I certainly said that if the hon. Member had any information. I did not say that he should go and collect the information.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: He has given you the information.

SHRI VIKRAM MAHAJAN: I am sticking to my answer that to my knowledge, to the knowledge of my Department and the State Government no death has occurred. This is the sum and substance of my statement.

श्री रामाबल्लार शास्त्री : (पटना) :

लोग मरे हुए पड़े हैं, पुलिस वहां जाने नहीं देती लोगों को निकालने के लिए ।

SHRI VIKRAM MAHAJAN: If you keep on arguing there is no way out. I have to answer the hon. Member's question. If there is a wrong reply,

there is always a way out to move a privilege motion. Let me answer the question.

So far as the mine is concerned, it was abandoned before it was taken over. This mine was abandoned 45 years back. Therefore, I doubt whether there was a problem of unemployment and those people who were unemployed 45 years back are now doing this job.

SHRI NARAYAN CHOUBEY (Midnapore): Were you present 45 years back?

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: He can know that.

SHRI VIKRAM MAHAJAN: You were not present. Am I supposed to be present even hundred years back? Is this the way of asking a question?

The mine was abandoned because according to our assessment, it was totally uneconomic and it was not worthwhile putting it into operation again. There were entries to go down. Regarding subsidence, our information is that when a mine is abandoned, some pillars are left so that it supports the roof and avoids subsidence. But those who do illegal mining go on cutting these pillars, which support the roof. So, one of the reasons for subsidence is the taking away of the pillars by those who do illegal mining. This is the assessment of the officers as to how the whole thing has occurred.

So far as the August 1980 report is concerned, the FIR has been lodged. Digging out of coal through illegal mining is a cognisable offence, punishable with imprisonment upto three years and fine upto Rs. 20,000. We have been reporting matter to the State Governments. Our security forces have been keeping a thorough watch and catching people indulging in illegal mining. In the last one

year or so we have lodged about 63 reports with the administration about illegal mining and about 100 raids have been carried out to curb illegal mining. We have seized four trucks, motor cycles and about 150 bicycles. The operation, according to our information, is quite satisfactory.

When the subsidence occurred, no smoke was coming out. No explosion took place. There was only a column of dust.

As I have already stated, about 100 raids were carried out in the last one year, after the new Government came to power.

It is true that some unscrupulous traders are involved. Our efforts have been to detect those people. Reports have been lodged. Most of these reports have been made by our officers who are on the spot. Because of the efficiency and vigilance which they have shown, our assessment is that they were not involved.

SHRI SUNIL MAITRA: I asked a question whether it is a fact that in August 1980 three deaths took place in the same area, the FIR was lodged but, subsequently, the whole thing was hushed up. I am quoting the statement of the local CPI leader, which has appeared in today's *Patriot*.

SHRI VIKRAM MAHAJAN: So far as hushing up is concerned, according to my information, the FIR is still there and the matter is being proceeded with.

SHRI SUNIL MAITRA: Who are the persons named in the FIR?

SHRI VIKRAM MAHAJAN: I will have to collect it. It is not mentioned in the Calling Attention.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Shri K. P. Singh Deo-absent; Shri Mukunda Mandal-absent; Shri Manoranjan

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

Bhakta--absent; Shri Mool Chand Daga--absent. We will take up the next item.

12.34 hrs.

RE. CALLING ATTENTION NOTICES

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES (Muzaffarpur): Sir, may I make a submission? We all give Call Attention Notices. But you publish only five names. Yesterday also this happened, when there was a very important Calling Attention Notice on the Bangalore-based public sector undertakings. Today also it is an equally serious matter, where hundreds of people are reported to have died. Besides, it raises certain basic questions about ownership of mines, safety in mines etc. Though you have published five names, we suddenly discover that four of them are absent. So, my submission is, you give the names of only those who come in the ballot and you call only five names. But, if the first, say, four are absent then you should call the next five names. Otherwise, we are denied a discussion by default. In fact, I gave my name yesterday and today, but it did not come in the ballot.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: You are the makers of these rules.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: I am making a submission that you may making this rule so that on every Calling Attention five Members can put questions, even if some Members are absent. I am sure the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs will agree with me, because we should not allow the discussion to go by default.

DR. SUBRAMANIAM SWAMY (Bombay North East): This is a good suggestion. It should be referred to the Rules Committee. In

fact, this is the practice in Rajya Sabha. We can have it here also.

12.36 hrs.

STATEMENT CORRECTING ANSWER TO S.Q. NO. 278 RE DATE FOR RECEIPT OF TENDERS FOR PROPOSED IRON ORE PELLETISATION PLANT AT MANGALORE

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND WORKS AND HOUSING (SHRI BHISHMA NARAIN SINGH): On behalf of Shri Pranab Kumar Mukherjee, I make the following Statement: On the basis of material furnished by Kudremukh Iron Ore Co. Ltd., on the 27th November, 1980, I had stated in the Lok Sabha on the 5th December, 1980 in answer to Starred Question No. 278 and the supplementaries arising therefrom that the last date for the receipt of tenders for the proposed iron ore pelletisation plant at Mangalore was the 15th December, 1980. However, it appears that at the request of prospective tenders, Kudremukh Iron Ore Co. Ltd had notified the parties on the 3rd December, 1980 of the postponement of the tender opening date to the 15th January, 1981, that is, by one month. The Ministry of Steel and Mines was not immediately informed of this extension and, as a result, the answer given to Starred Question 278 and the supplementaries thereto did not reflect the correct position in this regard.

12.38 hrs.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND WORKS AND HOUSING (SHRI BHISHMA NARAIN SINGH): With your permission, Sir, I rise to announce that Government Business in this House during the week commencing 23rd February, 1981, will consist of:—

(1) Further discussion on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address.