

DECEMBER 23, 1981

12:30 hrs.

CALLING ATTENTION TO MAT- TER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

REPORTED COLLAPSE OF A BUNKER IN KOTAMA COLLIERY IN MADHYA PRADESH

SHRI UTTAM RATHOD (Hingoli): 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:

'The reported collapse of a bunker in Kotama Colliery in district Shahdol in Madhya Pradesh, resulting in the death of some persons and injuries to several others.'

THE MINISTER OF ENERGY (SHRI A. B. A. GHANI KHAN CHAUDHURI): I regret to inform the House that on 10th December at about 5.30 P.M. there was an accident in the civil construction work in progress relating to construction of overhead bunkers for the coal handling plant to be installed in the Kotama Colliery of Western Coalfields Limited situated in Sahdol District of Madhya Pradesh. This construction work is being executed by M/s. Dhanjal Brothers, Civil Contractors, on behalf of Western Coalfields Limited. Presently civil construction work is in progress in regard to 4 overhead bunkers of 1500 tonnes capacity each. At the time of incident, when concreting work was in progress in the hopper portion of one of these bunkers, hopper portion already concreted collapsed apparently due to the displacement of the vertical wooden members supporting the shuttering.

At this time about 40 workers of the contractor were engaged in the construction work at the site of whom only 4 workers were working below the bunker for purposes of lifting the concrete mix. When the concreted portion collapsed, these persons were crushed under the falling debris resulting in the instantaneous death of

2 persons. The other two who were seriously injured succumbed to their injuries subsequently. 8 other workers sustained minor injuries who were discharged after necessary medical aid.

The colliery Management took immediate action for rendering medical aid to the injured persons. WCL has also sanctioned ex-gratia payment of Rs. 1,000/- to the family of each of the deceased. In terms of the agreement between WCL and the contractor, the contractor is liable to pay compensation to the next of the kin of the deceased under the provisions of the Workmen's Compensation Act. WCL is taking action to ensure that the amount which is likely to be of the order of Rs. 18,000/- for each of the deceased is paid expeditiously to their next of kin.

Senior officials of WCL have visited the site of the accident and an enquiry in this regard by Internal Safety Organisation of WCL has been completed. The report has just been received and is under examination. Director Mines Safety, Jabalpur, under DGMS, has also visited the site and made enquiries. In order that the entire circumstances leading to this accident are known an independent two member technical team has also been appointed to enquire into the accident. Appropriate action will be taken against any one found responsible for this unfortunate accident.

While the Government and the Management of Coal India is aware of the need to promote safety in coal mines and all necessary steps are being taken to implement the safety measures. I would like to take this opportunity to state that newspapers, on the basis of some unverified report from an agency, carried an exaggerated version of the accident. It was reported that as many as 30 persons have been killed in this accident which as indicated above is far from the truth.

In the end I would once again like to stress the fact that we have been giving the highest importance to enforcement of safety measures in our coal mines and as a result of the implementation of these measures, there has been a definite decline in the rate of accidents since the nationalisation of the mines. It is noteworthy that in WCL the rate of fatalities in 1973 was 2.66 per million tonnes and it has gone down to 1.12 per million tonnes in the current year between January to November '81. In fact, the Committee on Safety in Coal Mines had given an objective of the reduction of rate of fatalities to 2 per million tonnes by 1983 and actually a rate much below this level has already been achieved in WCL as well as in Coal India as a whole.

SHRI UTTAM RATHOD: I have read the statement supplied to us by the hon. Minister. I have also heard him. It has been stated that the construction work of overhead bunkers was going on.

The story that is given here gives that a support wooden beam was displaced and that ultimately resulted in the collapse of R.C.C. roof. I want to know: Did the civil authorities in-charge of this work not see and certify that the material that was used for centring was proper and it could take the load of the material that was to be placed on it.

The Minister has stated that 40 workers were involved in this accident. According to the F.I.R., it is seen that nearly 45 people were working under it. Why is there difference of five persons?

According to the statement that has been supplied to us, it seems that the accident took place at 17.30 P.M. I would like to know when did the work of removal of debris start? Is it a fact that the local authorities were awaiting instructions from the Nagpur Office?

The Minister has said that the enquiry has been ordered. They have already submitted a report. This is

a tribal belt. All the four people who have died, they are all tribals. You know that the contractors are very negligent so far as the safety measures are concerned.

I would, therefore, suggest to this Government to institute a judicial enquiry into this affair to find out whether proper safety measures were taken or not and also whether the debris were removed immediately after the incident?

SHRI A.B.A. GHANI KHAN CHAUDHURI: Sir, whether the material was proper or not would be revealed after the enquiry is conducted by the independent technical team. As I said, we are having an independent technical team to look into the matter. We are awaiting the report. As soon as they go at the site and examine, they will give us the report. Everything would be revealed in this report. At the present moment, what happened is that there was a departmental enquiry. We have just received the report. But we have not now depended on the departmental enquiry. We have constituted a technical team and they will give us a report very shortly.

I am sorry, I cannot accept a judicial enquiry because technical committee is more important here. These people are not from the coal company but they are an independent technical committee. That is somebody from N.P.C.C. who is an expert on the construction work and somebody from the Department are conducting this enquiry.

About the difference of "five persons", I do not have the report with me. I will enquire into the matter and let you know. It is also our experience, that in contractual works, the contractors do not take sufficient safety measures against their workers. That is why we have decided to do away with the contractual work system. We will do it departmentally.

SHRI UTTAM RATHOD: When did the removal of the debris start? I have specifically asked this question. But he has not...

SHRI A. B. A. GHANI KHAN CHAUDHURI: The information is not with me. I have explained that the debris were removed.

SHRI UTTAM RATHOD: In the last paragraph, the Minister has said that the rate of fatalities in 1973 and all that. Here, he says that it has come down to 1.1 from 2.63 per million tonnes. May I know what steps he is going to take to reduce or eradicate the number of accidents from the collieries?

SHRI A. B. A. GHANI KHAN CHAUDHURI: We have a lot of recommendations from committees with regard to safety measures. We have 66 major recommendations. Some of them, about 15 in number, were already implemented. The rest of them, we will implement in the phased manner. But if you want to do away with all the fatal accidents, well, the mechanisation is the only answer.

DR. KRUPASINDHU BHOI (Sambalpur): The Minister has given detailed information on the floor of the House, which has been collected from the officials. I have got strong doubts about the information which he has supplied. The part of the infrastructure of the coal handling plant which had been collapsed, had nothing to do with open cast mining or underground mining. But this particular bunker had a prime need for speedy implementation of loading of coal to the different work wagons. This is the kingpin of speedy transportation of coal from the mine heads to different destinations where it is utilised. This is the most important part of the infrastructure which can load coal speedily in a mechanised way so that the gap in production and consumption is narrowed down.

Our Prime Minister, Shrimati Indira Gandhi, has laid so much stress on energy. In the Sixth Five Year Plan, more than 27 per cent of the total public sector undertakings Plan outlay is going to be spent on energy. The Sixth Plan outlay on energy has been increased. She has

attended many interantional conferences in Kenya and other countries and she has given some guidelines about it. I want to know whether the Energy Department particularly is adhering to the guidelines which have been envisaged by the Prime Minister or not.

The question of mining safety that has been raised here is of prime importance in the field of coal. More than 500 coal mines are there in the country. The mining safety is the main question. The hon. Minister has replied that the number of accidents is now declining. I have got here a journal, *Coalfield Tribunal*, in which there is an article with a heading: Fatal Accidents in Coal Mines increased. This is just contrary to what the hon. Minister has replied. It reads:

"Fatal accidents in coal mines in India have gone up substantially during the nine months' period from January to September this year as compared to the corresponding period last year as has been recorded by the Directorate General of Mines Safety."

This is the report of the Director-General of Mines Safety. What has decreased? Only the number of serious accidents have decreased marginally. It says that instead of 1280 persons who were seriously injured, earlier, this year, the number is 1258. This is only a marginal decrease. Basing on that, we should not come to a conclusion that the number of accidents have decrease.

What is the interantional standard of accidents which is occurring in the best developed mines in other countries? I want to know whether our Research and Development wing of the Government of India and the Coal India Limited is adhering to the international standard in the matter of safety. In China, though it is a developing country, their standard has increased. The OMS in China is 1.5 whereas in India, it is 0.75. I want

to know whether we are adopting the international standard as far as mining safety is concerned and also in so far as the production in coal mines is concerned. If we are not adhering to the international standard, I would like to know how much money we are spending in Research and Development wing, particularly in the coal-field. Unless and until this basic parameter is identified, it is very difficult to say whether proper safety measures are being taken. Without knowing the root cause of the disease, without knowing the pathology of the disease, how can you take measures for curative purpose?

Particularly in regard to the infra-structure like the bunker which is the kingpin of speedy loading and transportation of coal in the rakes, I want to know whether the Government has brought this particular infra-structure under the Director-General of Mines Safety and, if not, whether they are going to include it in their jurisdiction. In his statement the hon. Minister has stated that. But it is not clear whether this infra-structure which is mainly responsible for coal transportation has been put under the jurisdiction of the Director-General of Mines Safety.

There are more than 500 coal mines and there are 3600 other mines are also. What is the job of DGMS? They should inspect every mine quarterly. What is the organisation which is existing now in the DGMS. There are, Class I officers—100; Class II officers—12; Class III staff—501 and Class IV staff—281. Will this organisation cater to the need of inspection of different mines which is more than 4,000 in number and giving a clear chit that a particular mine is safe for working by workers? In this context I want to know whether in the case of this particular bunker which was under construction, though it is under the jurisdiction of the civil works (Engineering), for the design, parameter portion which should be amendable to work by workers and the best for speedy progress of work

of loading into the box-wagon, the Directorate of Mining Safety inspected that in that particular quarter and if not, why.

Mr. Dalbir Singh has visited that particular spot—it is in his constituency—and he has observed certain things there...

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: His name is also here. Leave that point to him.

DR. KRUPASINDHU BHOI: I will leave that point to him I want to know categorically from the Minister whether this particular contractor has previously constructed other bunkers in the country and if he is a new contractor, why was the contract given to him. The Minister has replied very nicely that the contract system will be abolished in that particular coal-field. That is a welcome decision and I must congratulate him on that.

I want to refer particularly to the gross negligence which has been there. According to his report, the pillar was made of rotten wood and it had broken; the beam collapsed and then only the 200-tonne capacity centering collapsed. The debris is yet to be removed. The main mason is untraceable till now. The information is that four persons were killed and eleven were injured. The local people say that 55 persons were working. About the people who died, of course, nobody can bring them back to life. But a correct report should be made so that proper compensation can be given to the victims.

Lastly, so many Committees have been constituted during the last five years, from Chasnala till now. I want to know whether the Government has already accepted the recommendations of those Committees which were constituted previously, and if the Government has not accepted all the recommendations and implemented them, then what are the portions which are yet to be implemented.

[Dr. Kripasindhu Bhoi]

I also want to know whether, in this particular Coal India organisation in different parts of the country, in order to make proper safety measures, retired army personnel will be posted in key posts of the organisation so that the target of 20,000 megawatt of installed capacity in the Sixth Five-Year Plan can be achieved.

SHRI A. B. A. GHANI KHAN CHAUDHURI: The recommendations of the Committee on Safety of Coal mines were received in 1979 and have been accepted by the Government and are being implemented. Of the 66 major recommendations made by this Committee, 15 have already been implemented and 43 are under continuous implementation. As regards the remaining eight recommendations, most of them are under implementation by an extended time-frame as envisaged by the Committee on Coal mines Safety for completion. We are in the process of implementing all the recommendations. Government has accepted the recommendations made for safety in coal mines and we are in a phased manner, implementing those recommendations.

With regard to the report which I have given, Mr. Deputy-Speaker, the hon. Member has some doubts. I cannot help it. Whatever report we have got officially, I am giving to the House. And unless I get the DGMS's report I cannot say whether it is at all a mining accident or not. *Prima facie* it seems that it is not a mining accident. All over the country about 100 coal-handling plants are going to be installed very hurriedly to get better quality coal for the power stations. Now, when we get that report we will be able to tell you whether it was a mining accident or whether there was negligence on the part of the contractor and all that problem. But I have been told that the contractor was a qualified contractor for this sort of job but, as I have said, whether he is a qualified man or a non-qualified man, it is immaterial be-

cause we are trying to do away with the services of the contractor.

The hon. Member has tried to bring in analogy of international standard. How can you think of international standards to-day? A lot of things have to be done and we are doing all those things. And the most important thing is mechanisation and we are now in the process of mechanisation. For example, the long wall, in the deep mining is one of the most important measure for safety and we are talking to the French people. Technical people have come. We are talking to U.K. We are having all this technology and are trying to improve the mining method.

Now, with regard to the accident in the Western Coalfield, I am of the emphatic opinion that the accidents have decreased. Whether my hon. friend agrees with me or not, I do not know. I have the figures, I have already given those figures and I am again repeating. In 1980 the number of fatal accidents in Coal India was 128 and the serious ones were 1075. In 1981 only 114 fatal accidents have happened. Whether it is increasing or decreasing—you can see. With regard to accidents per million tonnes, according to the standard of DGMS people, if we can have 1 something per million tonnes, that is a remarkable achievement. We have already achieved it.

श्री बलवीर सिंह (गढ़वाल) : माननीय

उपाध्यक्ष महोदय, माननीय मंत्री जी ने इस दुर्घटना के सम्बन्ध में जो उत्तर प्रस्तुत किया है मैं उस से सन्तुष्ट नहीं हूँ। मैं स्वयं उस क्षेत्र से आता हूँ—यह दुर्घटना 10-12-1981 को घटित हुई। 15-12-1981 को मैं स्वयं दुर्घटना स्थल पर गया था। वहाँ पर उस दिन फुट-बॉल का फाइनल मैच हो रहा था। सभी अधिकारी वहाँ पर उपस्थित थे। वह हिन्दुस्तान में नबून का एक बड़ा शंकर बन रहा था, लेकिन दुर्घटना के बाद उस को देखने के लिए कोई मौजूद नहीं था। गढ़वाल

जिले में 16-17 कोयले की खदानें चलती हैं, जिन में यह खदान अपने आप में एक बहुत बड़ी खदान है और यह बंकर 1500 टन क्षमता वाला बन रहा था। न वहां सिविल इंजीनियर मौजूद था, न सब-एरिया मैनेजर मौजूद था, अपने आप में कोई भी रेस्पॉसिबिलिटी देने की तैयार नहीं है। आप ने इस सम्बन्ध में जो रिप्लाय दिया है, वह भी बहुत डिफर करता है। घटना एफ० आई० आर० के मृत्युविक 5 बजे बतलाई जाती है, उसमें 22 पुरुष और 13 महिलाएं बतलाई जाती हैं, दो माइनर बच्चे - मुन्नी और श्यामकली भी थे। जब घटना घटी तो उसके बाद तब के ब्यान लिये जा रहे थे। कांटेक्टर ने उनको भगा दिया और उन लड़कियों का ब्यान अभी तक नहीं हुआ है। मैं यह कहना चाहता हूँ कि अभी भी वहां पर जिन लोगों की मृत्यु हुई है, उन में से लगभग आधे लोगों की लाशें अभी भी मलबे के नीचे दबी हैं, हाफड के नीचे दबी हुई हैं। मैं स्वयं वहां गया था और मैंने वहां की हालत को देखा है। यह कह देना काफी नहीं होगा कि मलबा हटा दिया गया है। मैं बताना चाहता हूँ कि अभी पूरा मलबा नहीं हटाया गया है। और मैं जानना चाहता हूँ कि इस के बारे में आप क्या कार्यवाही करेंगे। आप क्या कोई एप्रोक्सिमेट डेट बताएंगे, जिस तक यह मलबा हटा दिया जाएगा। वहां पर अधिकारियों से पूछने पर पता चला कि जब नागपुर से आदेश आया, तब यह मलबा हटाया जाएगा।

एक बात यह और बताना चाहता हूँ कि 80 फीट की हाईट से 200 टन वजन बीम सहित का मलबा गिरा और वह 5 फीट नीचे जमीन में चला गया। आप कैसे कह सकते हैं कि उसमें केवल 4 व्यक्तियों की मृत्यु हुई है। वहां पर एक दर्दनाक घटना हुई है और मैंने स्वयं वहां के अधिकारियों से चर्चा की है। वहां का जो जनरल मैनेजर, मुहापुर एरिया का है, वे दुर्घटना होने के काफी दिन बाद वहां

जाते हैं। दुर्घटना 10 तारीख को हुई और वे 13 तारीख को वहां जाते हैं।

मैं आप से भी निवेदन करूंगा कि 18 हजार रुपये प्रति व्यक्ति मुआवजा देने की जो बात आपने कही है, वह बहुत कम है। आप इसको इस प्पेक्टिव से देखें कि जो मृतक हैं, उनकी उमर कितनी कम थी। मैं इस को पढ़ देता हूँ। छोटे लाल 25 वर्ष, सुन्दर सिंह - 25 वर्ष, श्रीमती फूल कुंवर - 22 वर्ष, श्रीमती सुभद्राबाई - 30 वर्ष। सुभद्राबाई की मृत्यु अस्पताल में 16 तारीख को हुई है। इस तरह से आप देखें कि 30 वर्ष तक की आयु के ये मृतक थे और उनके लिए 18 हजार रुपये मुआवजे के रूप में देने का आप वायदा कर रहे हैं। यह काफी नहीं होगा।

इसके साथ ही साथ मैं यह कहूंगा कि ये सारे के सारे ट्रिब्यूनल लोग थे और मेरा कहना यह कि इनके परिवारों के कम से कम एक सदस्य को आप खदानों में नौकरी पर लगाने।

मैं यह भी कहना चाहूंगा कि जिस कांटेक्टर ने यह ठेका ले रखा है, हुकुम सिंह ने बेजल एण्ड आर्दर्स के नाम से जो यह ठेका ले रखा है, उससे जब बात हुई तो ऐसी सरल भाषा में वह कहने लगा जैसे कुछ हुआ ही नहीं हो। उसने कहा कि ऐसी घटनाएं तो रोजाना होती रहती हैं। क्या इस तरह की बातों से उन लोगों की क्षतिपूर्ति हो सकती है। इतनी बड़ी यह कोससाइन है और वहां पर ठेकेदार इस तरह की बात कहता है।

मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से यह निवेदन करना चाहता हूँ कि वहां पर जो मलबा पड़ा हुआ है, उसको हटाया जाए। यह कहना कि मलबा हट चुका है, मैं इस को मुनाहिब

[श्री दलवीर सिंह]

बात नहीं समझता। इस के साथ ही साथ, जो बॉम गिरा है, उसका एक सैंपल मैं लाया हूँ और यदि माननीय उपाध्यक्ष महोदय परमिट करते हैं, तो मैं संसद के समक्ष इसको प्रस्तुत करूँगा। आप इस की जाँच करें कि यह कौसी लकड़ी है। आप स्वयं मौके पर जा कर देखें कि किस तरह की सड़ी हुई लकड़ों की सेंट्रिंग हुई है और वहाँ पर जो सीमेंट बगैरह जिस मात्रा में मिलाया गया है, वह पर्याप्त नहीं है।

इस के साथ साथ मैं यह भी निवेदन करना चाहता हूँ कि वहाँ की जनता में इस पर काफी रोष है। मैं सिर्फ यही प्रश्न पूछना चाहता हूँ कि मलबा किस तारीख तक आप हटवा देंगे और दूसरा यह है कि मुआविजा देने की जो घोषणा आप ने की है, उसको बढ़ाया जाए। मैं यह भी कहना चाहता हूँ कि जो आंकड़े आप ने दिये हैं और जो रिपोर्ट पुलिस ने दी है, उससे वे भिन्न हैं। पुलिस रिपोर्ट कुछ और कहती है। आप 40 कहते हैं, इसमें मुझे शंका है और मैं समझता हूँ कि मलबे के नीचे अभी भी लाखों होंगी। जब इतना मलबा गिरा है, तो आप कह सकते हैं कि मलबे के नीचे और आदमी नहीं है। मैं पुनः मंत्री जी से निवेदन करना चाहता हूँ कि जो मुआवजे की राशि है, उसको ज्यादा से ज्यादा बढ़ाया जाए।

SHRI A.B. A. GHANI KHAN CHAUDHURY: Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, we are awaiting the report of the D.G.M.S. I do not know why this big junk is not removed. Probably the DGMS people are working there. As soon as the clearance is given, it will be removed.

In regard to compensation, according to the rate prescribed under the Workmen's Compensation Act, it is to be paid by the contractor. About employing someone from the deceased family, if we get suitable people, certainly, we shall look into that.

12.55 hrs.

ANNOUNCEMENT RE ACCEPTANCE BY CHAIRMAN, ESTIMATES COMMITTEE (1978-79) OF GOVERNMENT'S REPLIES INDICATING ACTION TAKEN ON RECOMMENDATIONS ETC. CONTAINED IN CERTAIN SECRET REPORTS OF SUB-COMMITTEE OF DEFENCE

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: I have to inform the House that the Chairman, Estimates Committee has intimated the Speaker that he has accepted the replies of Government indicating action taken on the recommendations and conclusions contained in the five *ad-hoc* Secret Reports of the Sub Committee on Defence—Estimates Committee, 1978-79—on the subject of modernisation of Defence which were forwarded to the then Deputy Prime Minister and the Ministry of Defence in April-May, 1979.

12.56 hrs.

MATTER UNDER RULE 377

- (i) DEMAND FOR EARLY RELEASE BY SALT COMMISSIONER OF UNUTILISED LAND FOR CONSTRUCTION OF HOUSES THEREON BY BOMBAY MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
PAL CORPORATION

DR. SUBRAMANIAM SWAMY (Bombay North-East): Sir, Bombay is a fast growing city. Therefore, land is urgently required for housing of poor and middle classes. The lands originally meant for panning salt is lying unutilised now, but the salt Commissioner under the Central Government is not releasing such lands to the Bombay Municipal Corporation. The proposals are still pending with the Salt Pan authorities whose lands are required by the Corporation for implementing the reservations made in the Development Plan of the Corporation.