

terms of the findings of the coal wage board and are going to take steps for implementation after the other work connected with the regularisation of the employees and the mini-workers has been completed.

12.54 hrs.

STATEMENT RE: INCIDENTS AT BHILAI STEEL PLANT

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI S. MOHAN KUMAR-MANGALAM): Sir, since the matter of the incidents at Bhilai on the 2nd April, 1973 has been raised in this House, I would like to put the facts before the House.

Bhilai Steel Plant had made record production of 211,000 tonnes of ingot steel in the month of March, 1973. This is 102 per cent of the rated capacity and a good achievement. It has also produced 2,108,000 tonnes over the year 1972-73, which is the highest recorded production. I went down to Bhilai on the 2nd April in order to congratulate the engineers and workers on their excellent performance and also to announce the targets for next year's production, which had been fixed in consultation with the representatives of the workers.

After visiting the Plant where I met a number of engineers and workers, whom I personally congratulated on their excellent performance, I came to the head office of the Bhilai Steel Plant. There, a large number of ministerial employees under the leadership of the office-bearers of the Staff Association, invaded the administrative building and insisted that I must come out and discuss with them. I asked their representatives to come inside and discuss with me their problems. They insisted that I should come out and address them. Ultimately, I did so and they claimed that since they are also part of

the operational staff and in view of the excellent performance of the Plant, they are also entitled to some additional payment. I told them that I would discuss about this with their management who would meet them later in the day.

The Chairman of Hindustan Steel Ltd., Shri H. Bhaya and the General Manager, Shri P. R. Ahuja later met some representatives of the ministerial staff and after discussions, the representatives were informed that in view of the excellent performance of the Bhilai Steel Plant, they would be given two days' extra wages. The representatives of the ministerial staff expressed their full satisfaction with the decision of the management.

However, when the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Shri P. C. Sethi, and I arrived at the place of the meeting at 5 P.M., we found that a crowd, around 2,000 to 3,000 consisting mainly of ministerial staff and contract workers were shouting slogans condemning the management and acting in such a way that the atmosphere had become tense and any moment it was possible that violence might break out. The Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh and I, therefore, decided that it would be better not to hold the meeting and cancelled it.

Later, a procession of some 2,000 to 3,000 strong crowd came to the Bhilai Hotel where I was staying. According to the Superintendent of Police who was on duty outside the Hotel, when he asked the processionists to choose a delegation who could go inside the Hotel and discuss their problems with me, they insisted that all of them should be allowed to go inside the Hotel. The Superintendent of Police, apprehending violence, refused to allow them. They then threw stones and brick-bats. A lathi-charge was resorted to, tear-gas shells were burst and the crowd dispersed.

I must express my regret at this unfortunate happening. I had al-

[Shri S. Mohan Kumarmangalam]

ways been ready to meet any delegation from the workers in Bhilai as in other centres and I was ready on that day. But it appeared from the manner stones and brick-bats were thrown that some persons at least in the crowd were prepared for more than merely meeting me and this unfortunate occurrence developed out of this. This is all the more unfortunate in view of the good record of Bhilai Plant in March, 1973. Almost all records have been broken not merely in production of ingot steel and saleable steel but in a large number of departments and my intention was to congratulate the workers personally on their excellent performance. Unfortunately, this was not possible.

13 hrs.

STATEMENT BY MEMBER RE. VARIATION IN ESTIMATES OF COST OF APTA-MANGALORE RAILWAY PROJECT

SHRI SHANKERRAO SAVANT (Kolaba): The estimates of the West Coast Railway Project from Apta to Mangalore vary from Minister to Minister and from time to time. This has created confusion in the minds of the people.

Shri Hanumanthalya, the then Railway Minister, in his letter dated June 4, 1971 addressed to me had stated in the note appended to his letter as under:—

"Reconnaissance engineering and detailed traffic surveys for a new Railway line from Apta to Mangalore is now in good progress" and further down "The project may cost anything upto Rs. 100 crores"

It may be noted that this outer limit of Rs. 100 crores was given after the survey was in good progress as admitted by the Minister himself.

After the completion of the survey reports, Shri T. A. Pai, the then Rly. Minister wrote to me on September 23, 1972 that the line may cost about Rs. 214 crores.

Then Shri L. N. Mishra the present Railway Minister made his statement in the House on 26-2-1973 and he put the cost at Rs. 225 crores including rolling stock and interest. As a matter of fact it is wrong to include interest in the cost of construction. That is never done. Even the cost of the rolling stock should not be included in the cost of construction of the Railway line because the rolling stock will not be limited to this length of 910 kms. only but it will operate on the entire length of the line from Bombay to Kanya Kumari and further north and east.

In reply to supplementaries to my Starred Question No. 105 Shri Mishra said on 27-2-73 that the cost would be Rs. 325 crores and when Shri B. V. Naik asked how the cost went up by 100 crores in 24 hours, he replied that the Hon. Member should give thought to the interest part of it, rolling stock part of it.

As a matter of fact interest and rolling stock were included in the figure of Rs. 225 crores stated by the hon. Minister on the previous day itself.

Even more puzzling is the reply of Shri Qureshi, the Dy. Minister of Railways who while answering Unstarred Question No. 3131 on 13-3-1973 i.e., within less than a fortnight of the Railway Minister's statements on the floor of the House has put the cost at Rs. 213 crores. He has presumed that the work will be spread over 8 years.

The facts are too puzzling and require elucidation without recourse to any prevarication. It is hardly necessary to point out that the extremely discordant figures can only lead to the inference that somebody is playing with the figures with ulterior motives.

The Final Locational Survey and the actual expenditure after the completion of the work are two new bo-