

[Translation]

**Coal Mines**

+

\*283. SHRI SATYA DEO SINGH:  
DR. KRUPASINDHU BHOI:

Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) the number of coal mines running in loss in the country;

(b) since when these coal mines have been incurring losses;

(c) whether there is any proposal to close down the loss-making coal mines;

(d) if so, the number of underground and open coal mines proposed to be closed down;

(e) the number of workers likely to be rendered unemployed due to the closure of these coal mines; and

(f) the action taken to provide alternative employment to them?

[English]

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI AJIT PANJA): (a) to (f). A *Statement* is laid on the Table of the House.

**STATEMENT**

(a) and (b). According to Coal India Limited 237 of their mines are running in losses continuously for the past 4 years.

(c) and (d). Closure of some old mines becomes inevitable for reasons of (i) exhaustion of reserves (ii) adverse

geo-mining conditions (iii) adverse mine safety conditions and (iv) economic non-viability (even after efforts, by way of merger, efficiency improvement, technological improvement etc. fail to improve the economic viability of operations). According to Coal India Ltd. decision to close eleven mines may have to be taken according to compelling reasons in each case in a phased manner over a period of next 3-4 years. Of these eleven mines, eight are underground and three are opencast.

(e) and (f). Workers will not be rendered unemployed consequent to closure of any such mine. They will be re-deployed in alternative jobs in other collieries (both existing and new project(s). Wherever required training would be given for upgrading/changing skills for gainful deployment.

[Translation]

SHRI SATYA DEO SINGH: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Coal industry is one of our oldest industries and for the first time coal mining started in the country in 1774. After nationalisation Coal industry has attained new heights and coal production has been continuously increasing. The hon. Minister has stated in the reply that at present 273 coal mines are running in loss and 11 coal mines are proposed to be closed. The reasons advanced for it are adverse geo-mining conditions, adverse mine safety conditions and economic non-viability. However, through you, I would like to submit to the hon. Minister that as per the Geological Survey of India's findings there are 2 crore million tonnes of coal reserves in the country and on the other hand loss incurring coal mines are proposed to be closed down. The main reason for incurring losses is the deteriorating quality of coal. As a result of it

power and steel sectors are reluctant to purchase this coal.

MR. SPEAKER: Why are you taking so much time in asking supplementaries? Probably yesterday also you gave a notice to me.

SHRI SATYA DEO SINGH: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have come to the supplementary.

MR. SPEAKER: Be quick.

*[English]*

Let us be very precise. Others also want to ask questions.

SHRI SATYA DEO SINGH: I am precise.

MR. SPEAKER: No. You are not. Now please come to the question. Please do not argue.

SHRI SATYA DEO SINGH: My question is—part (a)—whether the Government will try to improve the quality of the coal so that the local consumers can take it.

*[Translation]*

Secondly, I would like to know whether the Government is going to sign an international agreement to set up ash washeries to reduce high ash content of coal?

*[English]*

MR. SPEAKER: I would request the hon. Member to read the rule book. You are expected to ask one Supplementary. You are asking three Supplementaries.

SHRI AJIT PANJA: For the first part of question about improving the quality, the second about the establishment of washeries and the third for lowering down the ash content, the reply is 'Yes'.

MR. SPEAKER: Very good.

SHRI SATYA DEO SINGH: My question has not been answered.

MR. SPEAKER: He has said, 'Yes'.

*[Translation]*

SHRI SATYA DEO SINGH: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the centre has recently reduced customs duty on coal from 85 per cent to 30 per cent. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the Ministry of Coal has conceded with the quantum reduction effected in Customs duty?

*[English]*

MR. SPEAKER: That is a decision by the Cabinet. You cannot ask about it.

*[Translation]*

SHRI SATYA DEO SINGH: Sir, if this is not being allowed, then, through you, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether an agreement for modernisation has been signed with China? By what time it is going to be implemented in order to reduce losses in the coal industry?

MR. SPEAKER: You are creating confusion.

*[English]*

SHRI SATYA DEO SINGH: I am not confusing. I am very clear in my mind.

My question is whether the coal mines are being closed down on account of losses. That is the basic question. When we have large resources of coal in our country we are importing coal from other countries. That is my question.

MR. SPEAKER: Are you going to implement the agreement with China?

SHRI AJIT PANJA: Certainly Sir.

DR. KRUPASINDHU BHOI: The hon. Minister has mentioned in the reply that 237 of their mines are incurring losses. But the Press reports say that 18 coal mines of the Coal India are to be closed and 300 coal mines—261 underground mines and 49 opencast mines—are incurring losses. Based on that, I would like to know whether his reply is correct or the Press report is correct.

MR. SPEAKER: That is disallowed. The Minister's reply on the floor of the House is treated as correct.

DR. KRUPASINDHU BHOI: The hon. Minister has visited China where 92 per cent of the mines are underground and about 90 per cent of the mines are earning profit. I would like to know whether it is a fact that Coal India is operating its mines departmentally instead of doing through the contractors.

If this is done, whether the Coal India Limited will earn profit or not. Without BICP clearance, if something is done by the Coal India Limited, it is illegal.

SHRI AJIT PANJA: Sir, all the coal mines, which are now being operated and the new mines which are coming up, are being done by the Coal India Limited. And contractors are only used for doing some permitted purpose like transport in

a very localised area under complete supervision of the Coal India Limited.

So far as China is concerned, I have no knowledge as to whether all their mines are making profit or not because these statistics are not available as such. But, so far as their long wall technique is concerned, it is suitable to India. And our experts have also found that because geo-mining conditions of Chinese coal mines and Indian coal mines are almost the same. That is why, we are trying to take their technology and develop our indigenous technology accordingly.

SHRI HARADHAN ROY: I will be very precise.

MR. SPEAKER: Very good. Thank you.

SHRI HARADHAN ROY: Please name the collieries. Where are they located? Earlier, in reply to my question, the Minister has stated that 46 coal mines have been closed. It is his statement. What I find is that some collieries have been merged with other collieries and regrouped. Now, they are running and producing coal. I want to know whether any study of the Government for closing down has been made or not. If so, I want to know whether those coal mines could not function at the moment. That is why, I would like to know from the Minister whether the coal mines have been properly reviewed or not. They start the mines sometimes and close them at other times. They also transferred the workmen from the mines which have been closed. But those workmen have not been transferred back to their original places. I want to know about this.

SHRI AJIT PANJA: Sir, there are many questions. I will try to answer them.

First the study for closing down any coal mine is being done by CMPDI with the subsidiary and Coal India experts together. They have also studied about 237 mines which have been mentioned by me, as to how many could be revived either by merger or by implementation of modern technique or by looking into detail about economic situation.

So far as workers are concerned, not a single workman has yet been affected and whoever are found to be surplus are deployed, because of closure of mines, to the neighbouring mines or some other mines according to their capacity. They are also being given in-service training so that they become adjusted to the method adopted in another mine, where they will be deployed.

### Gas Pipelines

\*284. SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the policy for laying gas pipelines;

(b) whether there is any plan for laying pipelines for carrying gas from Western coast to the other parts of the country;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) whether there is also any proposal to lay pipelines in the Eastern zone?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (CAPT. SATISH KUMAR SHARMA): (a) Such a policy is based on the availability of gas, location of the consumers and the techno-economic feasibility of the pipeline.

(b) and (c). The expansion in the capacity of the HBJ pipeline from 18.2 MMSCMD to 33.4 MMSCMD has been approved. The Government have approved in principle the concept of laying a pipeline from a suitable landfall point on the Western Coast to the Southern States.

(d) The Gas Authority of India Ltd. have proposed the laying of a pipeline for carrying gas from the fields around Lakwa in Assam to Numaligarh.

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA: Sir, the Minister has not replied to part (d) of my question. I have asked, whether there is also any proposal to lay pipelines in the Eastern Zone. The Minister has replied that there is a proposal to lay pipeline in the North Eastern Zone and not in the Eastern Zone.

Sir, there is abundant reserve of gas in Tripura. That gas is not being properly utilised and that is being flared up. May I know from the hon. Minister whether there is any proposal to bring gas from Tripura by laying a pipeline via Bangladesh to West Bengal and to Orissa also? If so whether techno-economic feasibility studies have been made and also whether this has been taken up with the Government of Bangladesh?

CAPT. SATISH KUMAR SHARMA: We do not have adequate quantities of natural gas in Tripura and Assam which could be used for transportation to the eastern zone. A pipeline has to be economically viable. It should carry a minimum of ten million standard cubic metres a day. Only then the project becomes feasible and the pipeline becomes feasible. Hence, we have no proposal.

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA: Sir, there is a national grid in power sector.