

status of micro-nutrients in the soil; and accordingly, we advise the farmers about the use of fertilisers; and also we are looking after to examine the ground water and suggesting the farmers its use for irrigation purpose.

In coastal districts also laboratories which have been established, are primarily looking after this matter - saline water and other nutrients that is status of the nutrients inside the soil; and they giving the findings of it to the farmers; and accordingly the farmers are utilising the fertilisers judiciously in the soil for the increase of the production.

#### Drilling of Oil Wells

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\* 903 SHRI ATAL BIHARI  
VAJPAYEE:  
SHRI SHANKERSINGH  
VAGHELA:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the oil wells where drilling is going on at present and the cost of drilling per meter in each case;

(b) whether any study has been made to reduce the drilling cost; and

(c) if so, the outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI S. KRISHAN KUMAR): (a) At present 136 wells are under drilling. The cost of drilling per meter in each well varies depending on location, depth, geology etc.

(b) and (c). Studies to improve drilling efficiency have been carried out. Implementation of various recommendations in this regards has resulted in improvement of rig productivity.

[Translation]

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, yesterday the Hon. Finance Minister had confirmed that petroleum products worth 15 thousand crore rupee are being imported every year. The functioning of the Oil Natural Gas Commission has not only attracted public criticism but the Hon. Finance Minister himself has commented on the working of the Commission.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want to know as to not how many wells are lying idle. If the Hon. Minister does not have information in this regard he can evade reply by saying that he requires notice but the Hon. Minister is an intelligent person and can well visualise that when we are asking the number of wells working, then the questions as to how many wells are lying idle and since when these have been lying idle are likely to be asked. Is it true that the wells are being neglected? Is it also a fact that the Commission is not doing its duty properly? Why, the production of oil is not registering the stipulated increase?

[English]

SHRI S. KRISHAN KUMAR: In the methodology of operations of the Corporation there will always be certain idle wells and certain wells which are under rectification. Altogether, there are about one thousand wells which are either idle or which are under rectification. It is the constant endeavour of the ONGC to keep the number of idle wells low, improve the production from the existing wells in order to improve the production in the short term.

As regards part (a) of the question, it is true that there is a gap between the demand and the indigenous production of crude and petroleum products, imposing on us a crushing burden of imports. It is the endeavor of this Ministry through short medium and long term measures to see that this gap is contained and reduced. We have launched major development schemes in the Bombay

High. About seven major projects are being launched during the Eighth Plan, which when implemented will result in increase in production by about 14 million tonnes a year.

Also, we have concluded what is known as the fourth round of bidding for 13 blocks offered to national and international companies 24 bids have come, these bids will be turned into production sharing contracts in the next two months.

Similarly, we have to find new wells due to the on-going exploration efforts in various parts of the country. If any of these wells can be productionised during the Eighth Plan, additionally in production can be achieved. So, this is a comprehensive programme for the improvement of production which the Government is concentrating on; the Government has a perspective strategy as well as an action plan.

**SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE:** I specifically referred to the widespread criticism of the functioning of the ONGC. I also referred to the criticism made by the Finance Minister himself. I would like to know whether the Ministry has taken any note of such criticism. What have they done to streamline the functioning of the Commission?

**THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI B. SHANKARANAND):** I do share the anxiety and concern of the hon. Member with regard to production of oil. It is also a fact — I do not want to deny the fact — that the production has come down during the last couple of years. It is not as though — let us keep in our mind — once the development of any oilfield takes place, in the wells that are dug, oil will not flow continuously for years to come. There is some sort of reservoir and its recoverable reserves in the womb of the well. Oil can be extracted to a maximum level given reservoir constraints, the development constraints and other circumstances. It is our concern to see that the oil is produced to the maximum possible extent.

We are also aware of the fact that in view of the growing demand for oil in this country efforts shall have to be made to produce more oil in the country. We cannot go on depending on imported oil and spending huge amounts of foreign exchange. We are aware of these things. As a matter of fact, as the House is aware, a Committee was appointed to find out why oil production is coming down and the Dasgupta Committee went into the various aspects. They have suggested certain recommendations and we are taking action as per the recommendations of the Committee.

[Translation]

**SHRI SHANKERSINH VAGHELA:** Mr. Speaker, Sir, through you I would like to know from the Hon. Minister the total quantity of our crude oil reserves, as also the percentage of the crude oil which is being exploited at present. Are irregularities being committed by O.N.G.C. in the exploration of petroleum products? The Government had taken a decision in November 1990 to undertake exploration work in the joint sector with the help of private companies, as such how many Indian and foreign companies are involved in exploration work and how many companies are working in the joint sector? What is the quantity of crude oil available in our reserves and how much is being exploited?

[English]

**SHRI S. KRISHAN KUMAR:** There are different types of reserves, the prognosticated reserves as they are called, about 5 million barrels in the country in 26 sedimentary basins. Out of the established reserves, we produce about four and a half per cent, that is production to reserves ratio is 1:23. This production to reserve ratio is low when compared other countries. That means, we are not exploiting our reserves at a rate which is possible. This is due to several constraints of functioning, including the availability of foreign exchange from time to time. It is true that as per the new Economic Policy of our Government, several

parts of oil economy, have been thrown open for participation for private sector and foreign companies especially exploration. It is on this basis, Sir, the 72 blocks, 39 offshore and 33 onshore- have been put up forbidding. As I said 24 bids have come for 13 blocks. These will be converted into contracts.

As far as the remaining blocks are concerned, we will be throwing them open for further bidding as per a policy to be decided immediately. So, it is our endeavour to maximise the potential operating of ONGC, which is the exploring company, to explore the possibility of joint venture in wells to be specifically located for the purpose. Thus, full advantage will be taken of the new policy for promoting private sector participation.

DR. C. SILVERA: Sir, it is presumed that there is fair amount of oil deposits in the North Eastern States. And some preliminary investigations had been done in the State of Mizoram. May I know from the hon. Minister, how many drillings are being undertaken in the North Eastern States of India at present; how many in the State of Mizoram in particular; what is the outcome of drilling that was done in Bikaathir, and what is the oil prospect in the State of Mizoram?

SHRI S. KRISHAN KUMAR: Sir, exploration activity has taken place in Mizoram. One well was dug in 1991, that is called Rengte.

*For further details about exploration, all possibilities and prospects in Mizoram we will require notice. I shall send this information to the hon. Member.*

SHRI SUDHIR GIRI: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want to know from the hon. Minister, through you, whether oil well drilling took place in the district of Maldah in West Bengal and whether oil was found there or not. If so, what is the quantum of oil deposits in the district of Maldah?

SHRI S. KRISHAN KUMAR: Sir, in West Bengal, as a whole 33 onland wells and 7 offshore wells have been dug. Altogether about a sum of Rs. 600 crores has so far

been spent on exploration in West Bengal. We are continuing the exploration. But if you want a specific answer for a particular part such as a district, we will require notice. I shall make the information available to the hon, Member.

### Procurement of Pipelines by ONGC

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\* 904. SHRIGEORGE FERNANDES:  
SHRI R. DHANUSKODI  
ATHITHAN:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether an enquiry has been sought into the alleged irregularities committed by the Oil and Natural Gas Commission in the procurement of pipelines for capping the flaring natural gas from Bombay High;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI S. KRISHAN KUMAR): (a) and (b). A representation has been received from Members of Parliament regarding certain alleged irregularities in the procurement of line pipes for SHG Process Complex by ONGC. The allegations include, *inter alia*, that the order was placed on a consortium the leader of which had evaded customs duty by misusing and selling imported material, that the firm has no suitable manufacturing or processing facilities, that the processing part was to be done by another firm whose bids were rejected by ONGC on four counts of technical incompetence etc.

(c) *No action with regard to the contract is considered to be necessary.*

[Translation]

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: Mr. Speaker, sir, I was one of the signatories