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Title: Reported trapping of illegal miners in a coal mine in Purulia, West Bengal.

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHURY (BERHAMPORE, WEST BENGAL): Sir, I would like to draw the attention of the Union Government, through you, that the most heart rending episode has taken place in the coal belt area, stretching from Jharkhand to West Bengal. It is continuing to take its toll because a few days earlier, scores of abandoned coal pits have been submerged and the water has been gushing in the abandoned pits. You are well aware that private owners, prior to 1970, have abandoned hundreds of coal mines. But illegal extraction of coal has been continuing. The entire area has been infested with coal mafia and other illegal activities also are taking place. State Government of West Bengal has been looking into this matter. Shri Basu Deb Acharia, MP has been entrusted to coordinate the rescue operations. It is surprising to note that Shri Acharia is sitting in this House. I would request you that you should direct the Union Government to come out with a statement because the entire rescue operation has come to a standstill[s9].

The Army is reluctant to make rescue operations. Naturally, we are all groping in the dark as to what had actually happened, how many have already been died or drowned. Already 150 ft. of pit have been submerged in water, of the total depth of 180 ft. But we do not know how many illegal miners have been trapped there, how many illegal miners have been died and how many illegal miners are waiting to face watery grave. So, I would request the hon. Union Minister, through you, Sir, to come out with a statement because we are all agitated over that.