

(c) the details of steps taken to fill up these vacancies?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL AND MINES (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) and (b) The backlog of vacancies pertaining to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in respect of public sector undertakings under the Ministry of Coal and Mines, except Bharat Gold Mines Limited, as on 31.3.2001 is as under:—

Name of the PSU	Backlog of SC	Backlog of ST
Hindustan Copper Limited	33	17
Hindustan Zinc Limited	32	60
National Aluminium Company Limited	14	11
Mineral Exploration Corporation Limited	47	20
Coal India Limited	653	1285
Neyveli Lignite Corporation Limited	32	93

Bharat Gold Mines Limited stands closed w.e.f. 1.3.2001 under section 25(o) of the Industrial Dispute Act, 1947 subject to the decision of High Court of Karnataka where the matter is subjudice.

(c) The Ministry regularly reviews the position relating to unfilled vacancies of SCs/STs (including backlog vacancies) in its public sector undertakings and has instructed these organisations to clear the backlog of vacancies earmarked for SCs/STs.

Exploration and Exploitation of Coal Bed Methane

299. **SHRI RAJNATH SINGH 'SURYA':** Will the Minister of COAL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal for more exploration/exploitation of coal bed methane in the country;

(b) if so, what are the sites identified for this purpose;

(c) whether any bid has been invited from private companies for this purpose; and

(d) what has been their response?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL AND MINES (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) In order to give impetus to the exploration of Coal Bed Methane (CBM), the Government has approved the policy for exploration and production of CBM in the country as an alternative source of energy.

(b) to (d) In the first such offer of blocks under this policy, the following seven blocks in the states of West Bengal, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan were offered through global competitive bidding during April, 2001.

Sl. No.	Block	State
1.	Bokaro	Jharkhand
2.	North Karanpur	
3.	Sohagpur (E)	Madhya Pradesh
4.	Sohagpur(W)	
5.	Satpura	
6.	Barmer	Rajashtan
7.	Raniganj	West Bengal

In response to this, 16 bids for 6 blocks have been received.