

(b) if so, whether it is also a fact that besides quality, the comparative price of Indian coal is higher as well;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) what are the Government's plans to bring the quality and price of Indian coal at par with the international level?

THE MINISTER FOR COAL AND MINES (SHRI SHIBU SOREN):(a) It is a fact that our country is endowed with generally poor quality coal compared to many other coal producing countries principally due to the nature of coal deposits.

(b) and (c) The price of Indian coal is based on useful heat value (UHV) for non-coking coal and ash percentage for coking coal whereas that of imported non-coking coal is based on gross calorific value (GCV) and for coking coal, it is based on ash per cent which is much lower than Indian coal. The average pit head sale value of Indian coal is one of the lowest on per tonne basis in rupee terms when compared to the CIF price in the international market. However, the delivered price of Indian coal upon transportation over long distance to various consumption points including transportation cost is substantially higher and varies depending on the distance of transport. The foreign coals being superior in terms of ash content and unit heat value, the cost of Indian coal on per therm basis is higher in certain coastal locations.

(d) Indian coal being inherently of inferior quality in nature cannot in general be brought at par with International Coal. However by resorting to coal beneficiation the ash content of Indian coal can be reduced to some extent and its heat value can be increased. The Government has encouraged setting up of coal beneficiation plants by the BOO (Build Own Operate) operators in different coalfields to make available washed coal to the needy consumers.

The average pithead sale value of Indian coal is one of the lowest on per tonne basis in rupee terms and compares well to the CIF price in the international market.

Development of hypersonic Plane

59. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

[7 July, 2004]

RAJYA SABHA

(a) whether it is a fact that the Indian Defence scientists are aiming to fly an indigenously built hypersonic plane very soon;

(b) if so, whether it is a fact that the hypersonic plane is three-times faster than the existing fighter aircraft;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) by when the ground tests of the above aircraft are going to take place?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) The defence scientists have evolved the preliminary design of a hyperplane, based on which certain technology packages are being developed with participation of academic institutions, as lead in programme. However no project has been sanctioned for developing hyperplane.

(b) to (d) Does not arise.

Training of IAF Pilots on Hawk AJT

60. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the first batch of 25 IAF pilots has gone to UK for training on the Hawk Advanced Jet Trainers; and

(b) if so, by when the second and third batch of pilots will go to the UK to get training from the Royal Air Force?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) 75 IAF pilots will be trained in UK on Hawk aircraft over the next three and a half years. The induction rate is six to eight pilots every three months. The induction of first batch has not yet started. The second and third course is scheduled to commence on September 20,2004 and January 3,2005 respectively.

Defence Modernisation Fund

61. SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have formulated Defence Modernisation Fund to tackle the chronic under-utilisation of the Defence Budget year after year;