

Loss of coal in Jharia fires

1798. SHRI R.K. ANAND: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the underground fires occur every year in the town of Jharia in the State of Jharkhand;

(b) if so, whether Government have chalked out any plan to prevent the underground fires; and

(c) whether it is a fact that the loss of coal due to underground fires is more than 37 million tons that costs the exchequer more than Rs. 7000 crore?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI PRAHLAD SINGH PATEL): (a) No, Sir.

(b) In order to retard the progress of existing fire, BCCL has taken the following measures depending on the conditions—

- (i) Blanketing/surface sealing/sealing
- (ii) Sand flushing
- (iii) Inert gas injection
- (iv) Trench cutting
- (v) Water pooling etc.

(c) Central Mine Plan and Design Institute (CMPDI) has earlier estimated that about 37 million tonnes of coal was lost due to mine fires in Jharia coalfield. At current average price of coal of Rs. 783 per tonne, the estimated losses are to the extent of about Rs. 2900 crore.

Effects of Jharia fire on population

1799. SHRI R.K. ANAND: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that nearly four lakh inhabitants of Jharia in Jharkhand are facing eviction due to underground fire;

(b) whether Government have undertaken any action to rehabilitate them, and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

[6 August, 2003]

RAJYA SABHA

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI PRAHLAD SINGH PATEL): (a) to (c) It is estimated that persons residing in 65,300 houses located over critically endangered areas arising out of fire and subsidence in Jharia coalfield are to be shifted for their safety. These include some houses located in and around Jharia town.

A Master Plan has been prepared which envisages shifting of these affected families to new rehabilitation sites in non-coal bearing area.

A demonstration scheme involving shifting of 4600 houses located over critically endangered areas of Jharia coalfield has been approved by the Government and is under implementation.

Private sector participation in coal mining

1800. SHRI RAJU PARMAR: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to enact legislation to allow private sector participation in coal mining; and

(b) if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI PRAHLAD SINGH PATEL): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Coal Mines (Nationalisation) Amendment Bill, 2000, which was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on 24.4.2000, seeks to amend the Coal Mines (Nationalisation) Act, 1973, *inter alia*, for the following purposes:—

To allow the Indian companies to (i) mine coal and lignite without the existing restriction of captive consumption; (ii) engage in exploration of coal and lignite resources in the country.

Development work undertaken by WCL

1801. SHRI R.S. GAWAI: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Western Coalfields Ltd. has undertaken any community development and labour welfare work in its coal producing areas;