

Import of coal from Australia

816. SHRI K. RAMAMURTHY: Will the Minister of STEEL MINES AND COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have permitted import of one lakh tonne of coal from Australia by the Minerals and Metals Trading Corporation on the ground that the imported coal is cheaper and also the quality is of high grade; and

(b) if so, the steps being taken to bring down the cost of indigenously mined coal and also to improve the quality of coal?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL, MINES AND COAL (SHRI VASANT SATHE):

(a) Tamilnadu Electricity Board had been permitted to import 1 lakh tonnes of coal from Australia through Minerals and Metals Trading Corporation, having regard to the constraints in moving coal to Tuticorin Thermal Power Station via Haldia Port, to enable the Power Station to build up a buffer stock.

(b) Pithead prices of coal are fixed by Government. While revising the coal prices necessitated due to escalation in the cost of inputs, wage increases, higher incidence of depreciation and interest charges etc., its impact on the consumers and on the national economy is always kept in view and prices are kept as low as possible.

On the quality front, several measures have been taken for improving the quality of coal supplies. These: include

1. Setting up of an independent quality control organisation in each coal company.
2. Installation of more coal handling plants with provision for sizing and screening of coal wherever required.
3. Breaking up of sized coal and segregation of extraneous material by manual means, where CHP's do not exist.
4. Introduction of a clause in the agreement with major consumers providing for joint sampling and analysis and payment on that basis; and

5. The Coal Controller as an independent authority has been given the powers to determine the grades of coal seams in the mines as also of the coal supplied to consumers and for these purposes to take samples and arrange for the testing of coal suo-moto or if any complaint is made in this regard by any consumers. The Coal Controller's decision in the matter shall be final.

Plans for Renovation Programme for the Bengal Nagpur Cotton Mills in Rajnandgaon

817. SHRI SHIVENDRA BAHADUR SINGH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND SUPPLY be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any plan for renovation of Bengal Nagpur Cotton Mills at Rajnandgaon; and

(b) if so, the total estimated expenditure thereon?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND COMMERCE AND SUPPLY (SHRI VISHWANATH PRATAP SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir. An amount of Rs. 471.29 lakhs has been sanctioned for renovation, modernisation of this mill.

(b) Against the sanctioned amount, a sum of Rs. 367.16 lakhs has been spent upto December, 1984.

Labour Problem in Bengal Nagpur Cotton Mills at Rajnandgaon

818. SHRI SHIVENDRA BAHADUR SINGH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND SUPPLY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the management of Bengal Nagpur Cotton Mills at Rajnandgaon is facing any labour problem at present; and

(b) if so, the steps proposed to be taken to solve the problem?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND COMMERCE AND SUPPLY (SHRI VISHWANATH PRATAP SINGH): (a) and

(b). There were labour-problems in the mill during the year 1984. A settlement was reached on 6th December 1984 between the