

Correspondence

'THE SAD STATE OF OUR MINERAL INFORMATION SYSTEM'

(We reproduce below excerpts from the letter of the Controller-General, Indian Bureau of Mines by way of explanation and refutation of some points made out in the Editorial, published in the August 1992 issue of the Journal - Ed.)

" We regret that your conclusions and comments in a learned journal like yours do not accord with the existing reality. We therefore, wish to correct them with respect to our organisation as follows :

You say 'our information is behind schedule by nearly three years'. Actually, it is not so. For instance, we report data on Mineral Production in India every month in our publication 'Monthly Statistics of Mineral Production' which we bring out with a natural time gap of 3 to 4 months expectedly required to receive the statutory returns from mineowners, process the data in computer and to print. Copy of the latest MSMP April 1992 is enclosed. Printing of May, 1992 is nearing completion and a copy of the sheet regarding gold production during May, 1992 is also available in that sheet.

Besides, we have computer resident information in respect of mining leases, mineral resources, etc., which can be provided to needy on payment of prescribed charges. For other specific requirements of information, within the framework of our time and resources, they also can be considered. Thus, one gets latest mineral information from us as compared to some of the foreign mineral year books like USBM.

Our other publications which carry information collected from both statutory and non-statutory sources are also brought out within the natural timelag applicable to them. The Indian Minerals Year Book 1992 (Part-I) is to be released within this week which covers production data up to 1990-91 with an addendum of latest provisional production data of 1991-92 appended with this.

In your opinion, our publications are not well printed and illustrated. You pinpoint to the printing of our Monthly Statistics of Mineral Production with illegible figures and mix-up of Hindi and English. You have suggested to print Hindi and English versions separately on opposite pages to facilitate information search easy. The present format has been arrived at after examining all possible options including one suggested by you. The present format of providing English equivalents immediately along with the Hindi version should not pose any problem to a reader who uses either exclusively the Hindi or English version in as much as the major portion of printed page contains 'numerals' only. If Hindi and English versions are printed separately, the number of pages will be doubled up. As per Government's directives the Hindi version has to be made with the English version or a separate Hindi version has to be published.

Because of diversity and changing nature of information content, and also of the necessity to bring out this publication quickly, the computer output is directly reproduced using a cheaper and faster method of xerox-offset printing. Since the information contained in the publication is transient in nature - i.e., loses its value

when the next month's issue is released – ostentation in printing takes the backseat and principles of economy assume dominance. This is however not to deny that printing should be legible. It ought to be. Efforts are underway to make the figures sharper and more legible by using better print types, giving more spacing between lines or changing the publication size, etc. Our inhouse printing facility has been modernised and augmented to and quality publications with multicolour printing have been brought out.

Regarding your enquiry on the gold production from M/s HCL and HZL as appearing in the Mining Annual, 1990, the fact is that gold is recovered as a by-product by M/s HCL at their copper smelter in Singhbhum district of Bihar. They are treating the anode slimes produced in their copper smelter as also the anode slimes received from Khetri Copper Complex. Besides, the copper smelter at Ghatsila is also consuming certain quantities of copper concentrates received from Malanjhand Copper Project, situated in Balaghat district of Madhya Pradesh. Hence, it is very difficult to say about the exact mines responsible for this gold production as they are working mines in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. Only because of this we had requested you to consult M/s HCL and HZL for detailed information as the same was not available with this department.

7th September, 1992
Nagpur

S. K. CHOUDHURI
Controller General
Indian Bureau of Mines

(We thank the Controller-General for offering explanation on some points raised in our editorial.

We repeat that the printing and get up of the publications issued by the IBM are of poor quality. A look at their Mineral Year Book 1991 will bear this out. Production Statistics given in this book relates to 1988, i.e. three years behind schedule as stated in the Editorial.

We have acknowledged the utility of the publication 'Monthly Statistics of Mineral Production', but only wanted it to be issued regularly. The Geological Society of India is a subscriber to this publication and the latest issue we have received is for December 1991. Both November and December 1991 issues were received in one bundle on 2-6-1992. Subsequent issues have not been received till date. The objective of furnishing information quickly gets defeated if care is not taken to make it reach the user with the least possible delay.

We continue to remain in the dark as to the source of gold stated to have been produced from the State of Bihar, although we raised this issue more than a year ago.

Our primary duty, as we understand it, is to point out deficiencies in our system, in the hope that remedial measures are taken promptly. We entertain the hope that attempts will be made to present mineral information, promptly and in a more elegant manner, keeping the user in view and not merely satisfying a statutory obligation—Ed.)