

Sonepur Bazari OCP: Setting New Benchmarks in Coal Production and Operational Excellence

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Situated in the eastern part of the Raniganj Coalfield in Paschim Bardhaman district of West Bengal, **Sonepur Bazari Opencast Mine (OCP)** is one of the flagship mines of Eastern Coalfields Limited (ECL) and among the most productive opencast mines in Coal India Limited (CIL). For decades, the mine has been a vital contributor to India's energy security by supplying quality thermal coal to major power utilities including NTPC, WBPDC, DVC, CESC and several core industries. With its robust infrastructure, scientific mine planning and operational excellence, Sonepur Bazari continues to play a pivotal role in supporting the nation's growing energy requirements.

Outstanding Physical Performance in FY 2026-27

Sonepur Bazari OC has commenced **FY 2026-27** with remarkable operational performance, reflecting meticulous planning and efficient execution. Against an ambitious **Annual Action Plan (AAP)** target of **120 lakh tonnes** of coal production, the mine has consistently remained ahead of schedule.

Up to the current period, against a planned coal production target of **27.74 lakh tonnes**, the mine has produced **29.22 lakh tonnes**, achieving **105.34%** of the target. This impressive performance is a testimony to efficient resource deployment, disciplined mine planning and strong execution at the field level.

Equally noteworthy has been the mine's performance in **Overburden Removal (OBR)**, which forms the backbone of sustainable coal production. Against a planned OBR target of **206.20 lakh cubic metres**, the mine has achieved **253.40 lakh cubic metres**, registering an outstanding **122.89%** achievement. The accelerated overburden removal has substantially enhanced coal exposure, creating a strong production base for the remaining part of the financial year.

The mine has also registered excellent performance in coal evacuation. Coal dispatch during the current financial year has reached **39.94 lakh tonnes**, representing a **16% increase** over the corresponding period of the previous year. This reflects efficient logistics management, improved evacuation systems and seamless coordination between production and dispatch operations.

Major Enabling Conditions for Achieving the Annual Target

The impressive operational performance has been backed by several enabling factors that have significantly strengthened the mine's production capability.

Recognizing that **land availability is the key driver of opencast mining**, Sonapur Bazari has made substantial progress in rehabilitation and resettlement, resulting in the successful shifting of villages from coal-bearing areas. This has made available significant mining area, strengthened coal availability and created adequate working faces for sustained production. Simultaneously, additional mining areas have become available, ensuring continuity of operations and providing sufficient operational flexibility to achieve the Annual Action Plan target.

Another major strength of the mine is its robust coal evacuation infrastructure. The modern **12 million tonne per annum Coal Handling Plant (CHP)**, commissioned in 2021, is equipped with Rapid Loading Systems, twin silos and substantial bunker capacity, enabling dispatch of **10–12 railway rakes per day**. This ensures uninterrupted evacuation of coal to consumers across the country and eliminates logistics as a potential bottleneck. The availability of the requisite statutory clearances further reinforces the mine's production readiness.

Technology and Infrastructure Driving Productivity

Sonapur Bazari possesses one of the most comprehensive fleets of Heavy Earth Moving Machinery (HEMM) in Eastern Coalfields Limited. The mine operates a high-capacity **Marion Dragline**, electric rope shovels, hydraulic excavators, large-capacity dumpers and a wide range of supporting equipment. Departmental operations are effectively complemented by outsourced mining fleets, ensuring operational flexibility, optimum equipment utilization and high productivity.

The mine has also embraced modern mining technologies to enhance productivity while promoting sustainable mining practices. High-capacity **Surface Miners** enable blast-free coal extraction with improved productivity, uniform coal sizing and lower environmental impact. Advanced drilling systems, controlled blasting techniques and dust suppression measures further contribute to safer and more environmentally responsible mining operations.

A Mine Ready to Deliver

Sonapur Bazari OCP exemplifies the transformation underway across Coal India Limited's mining operations. Outstanding production performance, exceptional overburden achievement, enhanced coal exposure, improved land availability, world-class infrastructure and adoption of advanced technologies have collectively positioned the mine for another successful year.

With all major enabling conditions firmly in place, Sonapur Bazari is confidently poised to achieve its **120 lakh tonne coal production target for FY 2026–27**. More importantly, it demonstrates how sound mine planning, timely execution, technological modernization and a committed workforce can consistently deliver operational excellence. As one of ECL's flagship mines, Sonapur Bazari continues to set new benchmarks in productivity while making a significant contribution to Coal India Limited's mission of ensuring reliable, affordable and sustainable energy security for the nation.

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