

## **A bird's eye view of the industrial relation in the select collieries of eastern coalfield limited for the period 2009-2010 to 2018-2019**

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### **Abstract**

*No organisation can function efficiently and produce the goods and services if there are constant strikes, work stoppage and turmoil between the management and the labour. Therefore, healthy IRs between workers and management are essential for the growth and development of the organisation and the country as well. It is impossible to introduce any innovation on productivity improvement exclusively through the various industrial engineering techniques, if the sound IRs do not exist in the organisation.*

*Industrial climate during the period under study has not shown a constant positive or negative trend of industrial relations. It is the relevance of mixed industrial relations situation. Though during last two years under study there has not been manifestation of work stoppage (may be due to fear psychosis generated from likelihood of closing down of mines.) it does not necessarily mean a climate of healthy industrial relations existed in Eastern Coalfields Limited under the study period. So looking to overall perspectives of industrial relations, it can be said that industrial relations situation has not been much alarming and it is under control.*

**Keywords:** Industrial Relations, Industrial Disputes, Strikes, Gherao, Lockout, Settlement of Machineries.

### **Introduction**

Industrial Relation (IR) is dynamic in nature. The nature and climate of IR can be seen as an outcome of the complex set of transactions among the major players such as state, the employers, the employees and the trade unions in a given socio-economic context. The performance of an organization is largely regulated by the pattern of IRs maintained in the organisation. IR should be taken as part and parcel of human relationship at large and not as something extraneous to it. They must be regarded as natural concomitant of the industrial life of a society.

Among the various important factors which determine and regulate this relationship are the IR policy and practices of the organisation, attitudes of the management and the labour, strength of the labour unions, multiplicity of unions, joint consultation, labour legislation and methods for settlement of disputes. Industrial relations however, are primarily a matter of attitudes, i.e. how does the management feel about the labour and vice versa. Good relationship cannot, however, be grown overnight, but has to be developed and nurtured by both the parties over a period. It is only through an attitude of mutual trust and respect that harmonious and cordial IR can develop in an organization or

industry. Harmonious IRs within an organisation is essential for its efficient running. No organisation can function efficiently and produce the goods and services if there are constant strikes, work stoppage and turmoil between the management and the labour. Therefore, healthy IRs between workers and management are essential for the growth and development of the organisation and the country as well. It is impossible to introduce any innovation on productivity improvement exclusively through the various industrial engineering techniques, if the sound IRs do not exist in the organisation. One of the major problems of a developing country is to increase the per capita income of the population through rapid industrialisation as well as through improvement in agricultural field. Industrialisation will create more employment opportunities and help in achieving a better standard of living. For rapid industrialisation, healthy climate has to be created which will encourage investments and attract entrepreneurs. One of the major factors which attract investment is the state of industrial peace. No nation can take up a programme of industrialisation unless the proper climate prevails. Strikes, unrests and lockouts only lead to loss of man-days in industries and consequent monetary loss to the nation in terms of lost production.

### **Objective of the study**

The objective of the study is to explain the prevailing state of IRs practised in West Bengal collieries through the analysis of some selected parameter affecting IR over a period of ten years (2009-2010 to 2018-2019) the other objectives are:

- To identify the main factors that affects the IRs in the Coal Mining Industry.
- To determine the substantive causes of industrial disputes in the Coal Mining Industry.
- To evaluate social security and welfare benefits provided by the management of collieries.
- To study and find out the machineries used to settle industrial disputes in collieries and also the preventive aspects of industrial disputes.
- To explore working of disputes settlement and preventive machineries.
- To explore industrial relations situations in collieries during the period 2009-2010 to 2018-2019.
- To suggest substantive measures for improving industrial relation in Coal Mining Industry in future.

### **Methodology**

IRs is not created in vacuum. They are the product of the circumstances in which people work and live together. It is an abstract idea. So its direct measurement is not possible. It can be measured indirectly only through certain appropriate and important parameters. After surveying the literature and making an exhaustive study of the subject certain parameters have been identified as yard-sticks, having important bearing on IRs. These parameters are:-

- Industrial disputes in Collieries.

- Settlement of grievances through grievance procedure.
- Trade union activities.
- Welfare facilities & amenities.
- Social security measures.
- Multiple trade unions and Inter union rivalry
- Mode of collective bargaining.
- Management attitudes / style of functioning

### **Result and Discussion**

Now the different findings relating to the different chosen parameters are employed to understand the existing industrial relations situation in West Bengal collieries. It has been found that the number of industrial disputes in the first five years of the period under study was significant. It was mainly due to demand for promotional facility, closure of mines, inadequacy of welfare and social security, demand for wages and other monetary benefits and also for pending Wage Board Agreement. Besides the above issues which also gave rise to different disputes were easily managed by giving some financial advances since they were mainly related to direct financial matter like demand for LTC, LLTC advance, overtime, allowance etc. Somehow we can say, the positive impact of these measures was reflected in the reduced number of disputes and ultimately a 'state of nil' dispute in the subsequent years. Hence as far as the impact of industrial disputes on the industrial relations situation in the Eastern Coalfields Limited collieries is concerned, it can be spelt out that frequency of industrial disputes is not disturbing the industrial relations situation as well as working atmosphere in Eastern Coalfields Limited. From survey work in select collieries it was evident that the workers were not getting all facilities according to their need or standard in industry base. It is also observed that number of industrial disputes reduced due to fear of privatization of coal mines. And also a mechanism has been evolved to have periodical meetings with the recognized union and the representative status unions at various levels to amicably settle all issues / problems of the workers. It is noted that with the application of different mechanisms, there has been a downward trend in the number of different forms of disputes. It indicates an overall improvement in the service conditions of employees and the work culture in the organization. These have contributed to a great extent in improving the industrial relations scenario in the Eastern Coalfields Limited.

The following steps have been taken to maintain law and order in the Eastern Coalfields Limited:

- Deployment of CISF in affected areas.
- Communication network strengthened.
- The job of transportation of coal is being awarded to ex-servicemen and co-operative agencies.
- Company employees holding sensitive posts are transferred at periodic intervals.

- Steps have been taken to protect employees from the clutches of moneylenders operating in the West Bengal coal belt. Co-operative credit societies are functioning in West Bengal collieries which are granting loans at convenient rates of interest to employees. System of payment of wages through bank has also been introduced in some of the collieries.

- Efforts are made to get civil works like construction of quarters, roads and bridges etc. done through public sector companies.

From survey work in select collieries it is observed that the causes of grievances fall under the following categories:

**Concerning working conditions:**

- Unsafe and unpleasant working conditions.
- Inadequate toilet facilities, dirty toilets etc.
- Non-availability of necessary raw material, tools and machines.
- Misfit between workers' ability and job.

**Concerning management policy and practices:**

- Wages
- Incentive
- Promotion
- Transfer
- Punishments and penalties

**Concerning violation of rules and regulations:**

- Organisational rules and regulations
- Civil laws
- Procedure of collective bargaining
- Past practices

**Concerning personality traits:**

- Fault-finding attitude
- Over-ambitious
- Mental stress and tension
- Negative approach to life
- Excessive ego feelings

**Trade union practices:**

**The grievances of the following nature are mainly disposed of through a systematic mechanism.**

- Grievances of working employees of Eastern Coalfields Limited regarding age dispute, retirement on medical ground, employment on compassionate grounds etc.

- Grievance representation received from the workers unions in connection with work. Mainly

the grievances relate to non-payment of outstanding bills.

From the foregoing analysis of data both primary and secondary it can be said without any hesitation that the existing grievance procedure is not much effective to promote sound industrial relations in Eastern Coalfields Limited. Employees' dissatisfaction against economic factors could be redressed easily if more financial benefits are extended but redressal of dissatisfaction or feeling of injustice of workers against non-financial issues is not so easy to redress. For this reason more effective grievance procedure with versatile scope for redressal of non-financial grievance is of great necessity.

Another important parameter is trade union rivalry which affects the industrial relations situations in Eastern Coalfields Limited. Before nationalization of collieries industrial relations situation in Eastern Coalfields Limited was very strained. For the disparity of the political opinions, the workers were divided into different groups and had different unions. Each trade union presented its charter of demands which was not possible to be entertained by management. In many cases demands were put just to highlight its strength. Due to such indiscreet union activities, an atmosphere of mutual distrust, hatred, suspicion arose in the minds of different trade union officials and management for which work situations was adversely affected. But trade union representatives during period under study were different from that of earlier years. The trade unions have a positive attitude to the interest of both workers and management. Our study reveals that the activities of trade union for their betterment started after the formation of Joint Bipartite Committee for the Coal Industry (JBCCI).

Frequency of occurrence of misconduct is another one of the essential parameters that has been selected to study the actual industrial relations situation in the Eastern Coalfields Limited. The study shows that the occurrence of misconduct in the Eastern Coalfields Limited is not alarming. The major elements of misconduct are habitual absenteeism, unauthorized absenteeism, theft, insubordination etc. The management issues charge sheet to the persons committing misconduct. So the number of charge sheet issued is one of the criteria for the measurement of the occurrence of misconduct. It is seen that the number of charge sheets issued is in decreasing trend during the years under study. This trend is the result of the joint effort of the management and trade union officials. The trade union officials at first identified the persons and counselled them for improvement of their conducts. After this measure, if conducts was not improved, trade union officials gave the sole power to the management to take necessary actions. These steps decreased the frequency of misconduct drastically. So it may be said that the occurrence of misconduct during the period under study is not a major factor to disrupt industrial relations situation in the Eastern Coalfields Limited.

The other parameter for identifying actual industrial relations situation in the Eastern Coalfields Limited is the study of code of discipline. Interviewing some management personnel, trade union officials and workers, we came to know that there was no serious violation of code of

discipline in the Eastern Coalfields Limited, although in the pre-survey period (i.e. prior to 1992) there were some cases of breach of code of discipline. In terms of code of discipline both employees and management in Eastern Coalfields Limited voluntarily agreed to maintain and create an atmosphere of mutual trust and co-operation in the industry. Thus it can be said safely that industrial relations situation in the Eastern Coalfields Limited is not suffering from the violation of code of discipline.

Welfare facilities and amenities have an appreciable effect on the industrial relations situation in the Eastern Coalfields Limited. Adequate welfare facilities in terms of housing, water supply, medical, education facilities and town administration etc. are pre-requisites in developing harmonious industrial relation situation.

### **Conclusion**

It is now at the end of our quest for the exploration of industrial relations in coal mining industry. We get a glimpse of the emerging pattern of industrial relations system in the industry in the context of Eastern coalfields Limited situation, because our empirical study in this thesis has been mainly based on the case study of select collieries. Promoting harmonious human relations and maintaining cordial relations with the workers, trade union officials and management are the important business objectives of the public sector coal industry. A clear idea about the actual industrial relations situation in the Eastern Coalfields Limited could be made with the help of careful studies on the available primary data and through personnel contacts and also from official records. Here we have already observed that the industrial relations of Eastern Coalfields Limited are very complex in nature. To study such complex industrial relations situation of Eastern Coalfields Limited we have chosen some useful parameters in that way which the other behavioral scientists follow. Here it may be noted that there are many other parameters that may be suggested but we have given weightage on the parameters that we have chosen because according to us these are the most effective and also important to draw a clear picture on the actual industrial relations situation in the Eastern Coalfields Limited.

It becomes thus obvious that for promoting healthy industrial relations in Eastern Coalfields Limited a lot of measures have been taken to dispose of grievances expeditiously and also through joint participation and dyadic involvement of employees. It is very clear that all the parties (viz. management, workers and trade union officials) desired for disposal of issues through collective bargaining machinery. It indicates that a congenial atmosphere prevails in Eastern Coalfields Limited that facilitates promoting sound industrial relations in coal belt. So, industrial climate during the period under study has not shown a constant positive or negative trend of industrial relations. It is the relevance of mixed industrial relations situation. Though during last two years under study there has not been manifestation of work stoppage (may be due to fear psychosis generated from likelihood of closing down of mines.) it does not necessarily mean a climate of healthy industrial relations existed in Eastern Coalfields Limited under the study period. So looking to overall perspectives of industrial relations, it can be said that industrial relations situation has not been much alarming and it is under control.

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