Commercial coal auctions: 85 bids for 18 blocks out of 26 offered

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Prelims: commercial coal auctions, technical evaluation, MSTC, FDI



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Why in news

The Ministry of Coal's Nominated Authority opened bids for the 16th round of commercial coal mine auctions and the second attempt of the 15th round on 20 November 2026. Together, they received 85 bids for 18 coal blocks out of 26 offered across eight states. The combined figure must not be attributed to the 16th round alone.

Read the figures separately

- 16th round: 83 bids for 17 coal blocks.
- Second attempt of the 15th round: two bids for one block.
- Combined: 85 bids for 18 blocks; 16 of the 26 offered blocks attracted multiple bids.
- Twenty first-time bidders entered the commercial coal mining regime.

What happens next

A multi-disciplinary Technical Evaluation Committee will examine the bids. Technically qualified bidders will be shortlisted for an electronic auction on the MSTC portal. Opening bids does not complete mine allocation.

According to PIB, captive and commercial mine production rose 10.22% to 210.46 million tonnes in FY 2025-26. Since 2020, 145 mines have been auctioned across 15 rounds, bringing in 44 new companies. These mines are expected to generate about ₹47,500 crore in annual revenue and about 4.9 lakh jobs. These are expectations, not realised results. The auction framework includes no end-use restriction, 100% FDI through the automatic route and low upfront payments.

Prelims practice questions

Question 1: What does the figure of 85 bids refer to?

(a) The 16th round alone

(b) The 16th round and second attempt of the 15th round combined

(c) The second attempt of the 15th round alone

(d) Final allocation of 85 mines

▼ Answer and explanation

Answer: (b) The 16th round received 83 bids and the reattempt received two, totalling 85 bids.

Question 2: What follows the opening of bids?

(a) Automatic allocation of all mines

(b) Production without technical scrutiny

(c) Technical evaluation and electronic auction for qualified bidders

(d) The auction is deemed complete

▼ Answer and explanation

Answer: (c) After scrutiny by the Technical Evaluation Committee, qualified bidders will participate in the electronic auction on the MSTC portal.

FAQ

In short: the 16th round and second attempt of the 15th round together received 85 bids for 18 blocks, with 20 first-time bidders.

Q: Did all 26 blocks receive bids?

No. Twenty-six blocks were offered and 18 received bids.

Q: Does receiving 85 bids mean that 85 mines were allocated?

No. These are bids for 18 blocks; technical evaluation and electronic auction are still ahead.

Q: How many bidders entered the commercial coal mining regime for the first time?

Twenty first-time bidders participated in this auction group.

Sources

1. PIB/Ministry of Coal, 20 November 2026, 4:23 PM: https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2339072