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First MDO mine of CIL launched; Unions demur

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DHANBAD: As major trade unions prepare for a nationwide strike on Wednesday to protest what they call "anti-worker and pro-corporate" policies of the central government, Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCCL) on Tuesday marked a significant milestone by restarting coal production from the long-discontinued Putki Balihari (PB) Project under the Mine Developer and Opera-

tor (MDO) model.

Launched in Putki Balihari Colliery Area of Dhanbad, this initiative represents Coal India Limited's (CIL) first operational mine under the MDO framework, and is being hailed by officials as a transformative step toward realising the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat. The project, awarded to Eagle Infra India Ltd for 25 years, is expected to yield 52 million tonnes of coking coal over its life cycle and is aimed at reducing

India's import dependency in the steel and infrastructure sectors.

BCCL, in its press release said, "the project exemplifies a modern public-private partnership model that introduces advanced mining technology, ensures transparent and sustainable mining practices, and drives regional economic development. The company will receive 6% of the gross revenue under a revenue-sharing agreement".

However, the timing of the launch has drawn sharp criti-

cism from trade unions, who have been vocal in their opposition to the MDO policy. Union leaders allege the policy, while being promoted as a capital-efficient strategy to boost production, effectively opens the door for private operators to bypass labour rights, safety norms, and environmental safeguards. They argue it could jeopardise the interests of thousands of contract workers and outsourced staff engaged by private contractors.