



Crusader or Conspirator? Coalgate and Other Truths

By PC Parakh, IAS

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In 2012, a controversy over allocation of coal blocks to private companies rocked the country. The government's finance watchdog the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) found the government had picked favourites and avoided open and competitive bidding which would have generated far more revenue for a cash-starved state. The CAG concluded that India had lost ` 1.86 lakh crore (over \$ 30 billion) in the process, all of which went to the private companies. It was the biggest recorded scam in the history of India. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), India's premier investigation agency, then filed an FIR against the top officer in the coal ministry Secretary PC Parakh and industrialist Kumar Mangalam Birla. Parakh had by then earned a fine reputation for ability and integrity in over three decades as a civil servant. His stint as the top bureaucrat in the coal ministry was his last posting in a sterling career. The FIR outraged the civil services and corporate India and was widely condemned by the intelligentsia of the country. The book isn't just about the coal scam. It is also about working with some of the biggest Indian politicians, starting with chief ministers of Andhra Pradesh. It is about life in the coal ministry with Mamata Banerjee, Shibu Soren and Dr. Manmohan Singh, who was also the Prime Minister. It is about the lessons learnt before Parakh met any of these dignitaries. It is an account that startles with never-before revealed information.

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- Rank: #5355785 in Books
- Published on: 2014-01-31
- Dimensions: .0" h x .0" w x .0" l, .99 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover

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