

No one has yet officially responded to the citizens of Bor to the question why they continue to breathe increasingly polluted air when in March 2015 the state guaranteed that the problem would be eliminated by commissioning a new smelter.

It was mentioned that the new ore smelting plants would eliminate 98 percent of all harmful particulates, primarily sulfur dioxide, and that the air above Bor would be as it was from the early 20th century, before the mine was opened.

However, the so-called new smelter had been in the alleged trial for almost two years, so these effects could not be measured, and when the Chinese took over the management and increased production, all investment deficiencies are “gone with the Bor wind”.

This investment does not appear to have produced the necessary effects, although the production volume in Bor has not yet reached the maximum to which it was supposedly designed.

On several occasions last year, citizens protested downtown and in front of the Zijin company directorate over air pollution, blaming increased production.

- The state provided guarantees and money to build a new smelter. Formally, it was presented to citizens as building a new one, but rarely did anyone know that it was actually a reconstruction of the old one. In addition, the starting price of about 130 million euros has increased over time to the official 350 million, although it is unofficially mentioned as much as half a billion. It is also said that the new smelter resolves air pollution in Bor to production of 80,000 tonnes of copper. The Chinese had just reached 60,000, and that reconstruction was supposed to “swallow” this amount of production and to provide clean air above the city. The Chinese know it, though they do not mention it, but already they are announcing that they will build a new one to solve the pollution problem. Still, it is no small investment and will certainly take several years to build. The move is now on for the municipal government, who must nonetheless respond and demand a reduction in production in order to protect the health of the population - says one of the professors at the Bor Technical Faculty who deals with environmental issues, adding that this, reasonable request from local authorities, is difficult to fit into the economic calculations of Zijin, which plans to gradually increase copper production to 200,000 tons.

Although the technical capabilities of the reconstructed smelter were practically hidden from the citizens and the Chinese partners, the Zijin Company refrained and stated that enjoying a clean air and fresh natural environment was a right that every citizen should have.

Responding to questions, they point out that taking care of ecology is “a systematic and continuous process, and, unfortunately, environmental problems have been ignored for over

a hundred years.”

- Unfortunately, many years ago, the previous RTB company neglected the necessary measures of exhaust gas desulfurization during the construction of the smelter, so that sulfur dioxide could not be effectively and completely processed before discharge, and the smelter equipment is very outdated. The consequence of all this is the inability to stabilize the production process over a long period of time, so problems are inevitable. This historical legacy cannot be settled overnight, and we have never and will never ignore it. In fact, after taking over RTB, Zijin gave great importance to environmental protection, invested a lot of money and started big business. The overall state of the environment has already improved a lot - they say in Zijin.

They recall that they repaired measuring stations in Krivelj and Slatina to better monitor air quality, bought two and then in December 2019 two more sprinklers to reduce dust in the air (so-called water cannons) as well as special so called mouth cleaning equipment for converters, which should reduce the concentration of sulfur dioxide in the air.

They also state that at the same time as maintaining production, they continue to adjust and optimize operating modes and regularly repair and maintain smelter production facilities.

- We are trying to overcome the old and unstable effects of the production system, considering all other possible ways, with the aim of reducing gas emissions to a minimum, without a desulphurisation plant. In order to further reduce gas emissions and improve air quality, in addition to various measures taken, we will install a smoke elimination hood, build a desulphurisation plant and make technical upgrades to the smelter to improve the efficiency and stability of its operation and production process - says Zijin and emphasizes hope that it will “achieve sustainable development in an environmentally friendly manner and, at the same time as creating employment opportunities for the inhabitants of Bor, make the blue sky of Bor more fresh and beautiful.”

Source: danas.rs