

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 58
TO BE ANSWERED ON 20.07.2023

Pollution due to coal mining activities

58. SHRI NIRANJAN BISHI:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has taken note of the serious environmental and social concerns including, air, noise, water pollution and land degradation caused by coal mining activities;
- (b) whether the Government is aware that 83 per cent of all coal mining is undertaken by Coal India Limited and its subsidiaries which are openly flouting environmental norms and if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) the steps taken by the Government to ensure that all mines/washeries have air quality monitoring stations to facilitate online monitoring of ambient air quality?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI ASHWINI KUMAR CHOUBEY)

- (a) to (c) In order to assess the possible environment and social impacts due to various project activities including coal mining, the Central Government has devised the process of Environment Impact Assessment, as a regulatory tool under the provision of Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. Under the said Act, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) has notified the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification, 2006 and subsequently amended from time to time, which deals in the process of granting Environmental Clearance (EC) after having comprehensive analysis of EIA reports prepared by the coal companies. The coal mining projects accordingly are required to obtain the prior Environment Clearance under the EIA, Notification 2006.

It is to mention that Coal mining works are a site specific activity and may cause various impacts which can be ameliorated by taking necessary ameliorative measures. Any likely impacts due to coal mining activities on ambient air, water, land and noise levels at project site along with social impact in nearby areas, are assessed in EIA report and accordingly its mitigation measures are incorporated in the Environmental Management Plan (EMP) report.

Apart from above, the concerns of local affected persons and others who have plausible stake in the environmental impacts of the project or activity, are addressed through the process of public consultation/hearing under the EIA, Notification, 2006. The project

proponents are required to address the issues appropriately in EIA and EMP reports arising from public consultation with budgetary provision. The EIA and EMP are evaluated and assessed by Expert Appraisal Committee, comprising the domain experts of mining sector, and based on their recommendations MoEF&CC consider for granting the Environment Clearance (EC) to coal mining projects.

In addition, any forest diversion required for coal mining activities are covered under the provision of Forest (Conservation), Act, 1980. The Coal companies are required to take separate Forest Clearance (FC) under the said Act to assess the amount of land degradation.

The coal mines & subsidiaries under Coal India Limited (CIL) commence only their operation after obtaining Environment, Forestry Clearance and other statutory permissions from the State Government. The pollution control measures as per EIA/EMP reports and conditions laid down in EC and FC are required to be implemented by the project proponent to minimize the damage caused to environment due to mining. The pollution control norms are also monitored by the concerned State Pollution Control Board (SPCB) and Union Territories (UTs). The respective SPCBs/UTs issues the Consent to Operate under the provisions of Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981 and Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 to oversee the compliance of emissions/effluent standards and take action against violators under the provision of said Water and Air Acts.

As per the EIA Notification, as amended, the Project Proponents are mandated to submit six monthly compliance reports to the concerned Integrated Regional Office (IRO) of the Ministry. In order to monitor the online air quality of project site in coal mining areas/washeries, a condition for installing the Continuous Air Quality Monitoring Station (CAQMS) is prescribed with aim to integrate the environmental data with the server of Central & State Pollution Control Boards. MoEF&CC through its Integrated Regional Offices monitors the compliance of this condition on regular basis.

As per available information, M/s Coal India Limited (CIL) has installed 72 Continuous Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Stations (CAQMS) for air quality monitoring. The CIL has also installed 70 PM₁₀ Analyser through its subsidiaries namely M/s Eastern Coalfields Limited, M/s Central Coalfields Limited and M/s Bharat Coking Coal Limited including 7 PM₁₀ analysers in coal washeries.
