

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF COAL  
RAJYA SABHA  
STARRED QUESTION NO - 5  
TO BE ANSWERED ON 04.12.2023

**COAL MINING IN DENSELY FORESTED AREAS**

\*5. SHRI BINOY VISWAM:

Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that the Environment Ministry, in 2018, opined against mining in 15 coal blocks because of their high biodiversity value;
- (b) the opinion sought by the Ministry of Coal from Central Mine Planning and Design Institute (CMPDI) regarding 15 coal blocks situated in densely forested areas and details of the findings by the CMPDI;
- (c) the details of the bidding for the coal blocks in densely forested areas, and justification given for the same; and
- (d) the results of bidding for coal blocks situated in Singrauli of Madhya Pradesh and Hasdeo Forest in Chattisgarh?

**ANSWER**

**MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS, COAL AND MINES  
(SHRI PRALHAD JOSHI)**

(a) to (d): A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

**Statement referred to in reply to parts (a) to (d) of Rajya Sabha Starred Question No. 5 for answer on 04.12.2023 asked by Shri Binoy Viswam regarding Coal mining in densely forested areas**

(a): Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) in August, 2018 has informed that 15 coal blocks fall in the area which needs to be conserved and should be avoided for mining.

(b): A meeting with Central Mine Planning and Design Institute (CMPDI) was held in Ministry of Coal in April, 2022 to discuss whether the aforesaid 15 coal blocks can be considered after taking out some portions that may be fragile. It was decided that it may not be possible to carve out some portion from the blocks, therefore, these 15 blocks may not be considered for allocation.

(c): After further deliberation on allocation matter of these 15 coal blocks in July, 2022, it was decided to consider the coal blocks which do not fall under Sanctuaries, National Parks and ESZ (Eco-sensitive zones) for underground mining after taking up the matter with MoEF&CC. Out of aforesaid 15 coal blocks, 5 coal blocks (Tara, Tandsi-III & Tandsi-III (Extn.), Vijay Central, Mahan and Mara II-Mahan) do not fall in any Sanctuaries/National Parks/ESZ.

Further, in a "Bio Diversity study in the entire Hasdeo-Arand Coalfield comprising of Tara, Parsa, Parsa East & Kanta Basan and Kente Extension coal blocks in Chhattisgarh" carried out by Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE) and report submitted to Govt. of Chhattisgarh, it was recommended that Tara coal block can be considered for mining with strict environmental safe guards including appropriate conservation measures for management of surface water and biodiversity. Considering recommendations in Bio diversity study report for mining in Tara Coal Block, comments of MoEF&CC were sought for allocation of Tara coal block for mining through open cast mining and other 4 coal blocks ( Tandsi-III & Tandsi-III (Extn.), Vijay Central, Mahan and Mara II-Mahan) for underground mining.

MoEF&CC in Dec, 2022 replied that all mining proposals are processed on case to case basis. Apart from other regulatory approvals like Environmental Clearance etc., in case any forest land is involved, in any particular mine, then before starting actual mining operations in the forest land, approval of the Central Government under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 must be taken by the concerned user agency.

Accordingly, 4 coal blocks namely Tara, Tandsi-III & Tandsi-III (Extn.), Mahan and Mara II-Mahan were put up for auction in the 7th round of auctions of commercial coal blocks launched in March, 2023.

(d): For Tara coal block in Chhattisgarh, multiple bids were received in the auction process, however, pursuant to request received from the state of Chhattisgarh, the coal block was withdrawn from the auction process. The other 3 coal blocks from Madhya Pradesh i.e. Mahan, Mara II Mahan and Tandsi III & Tandsi III Extn. received single bids in the 7th round of auctions process and could not be allocated.

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