

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF COAL

RAJYA SABHA  
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 4028  
ANSWERED ON 30.03.2026

**DELAYS IN ENVIRONMENTAL AND FOREST CLEARANCES FOR COAL  
MINING PROJECTS**

**4028 SHRI S NIRANJAN REDDY:**

Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government has taken note of the findings of the Standing Committee on Coal, Mines and Steel (2025) that the average time for granting Environmental Clearances (ECs) is 15–18 months for PSUs and around 26 months for commercial coal blocks, while Forest Clearances take 24–30 months for PSUs and up to 34 months for commercial blocks;
- (b) the reasons for such delays; and
- (c) the steps taken or proposed to improve inter-ministerial coordination, streamline approval processes and reduce clearance timelines for coal mining projects in line with the Committee's recommendations?

**ANSWER**

**MINISTER OF STATE FOR COAL AND MINES  
(SHRI SATISH CHANDRA DUBEY)**

**(a) and (b):** The time taken for grant of Environmental Clearance (EC) and Forest Clearance (FC) varies from project to project and depends upon multiple site-specific and statutory factors. These include the location of the project, type and extent of land involved (forest/non-forest), category and density of forest cover, presence of wildlife habitats, requirement of public consultation, compliance status, submission of requisite studies, and the overall environmental sensitivity of the area.

The observed variation in average timelines between Central Public Sector Undertakings (CPSUs) and commercial coal blocks of the private sector is largely attributable to such project-specific considerations rather than any differential treatment in the appraisal mechanism. In the case of Forest Clearance, certain structural differences may also contribute to variations, for instance, a special provision allows CPSUs (including captive coal blocks of State PSUs) to undertake compensatory afforestation over degraded forest land, which is double in extent to the forest area being diverted. This flexibility is not extended to private sector proponents, who may face additional challenges in identifying and acquiring equivalent non-forest land, thereby contributing to longer timelines.

It is also submitted that the appraisal of EC and FC proposals is undertaken by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and the concerned State authorities in accordance with the prescribed statutory framework to ensure due diligence and compliance with environmental safeguards.

(c): The Government has undertaken several measures to improve inter-ministerial coordination, streamline processes, and reduce clearance timelines including:

**(1) Strengthening coordination and monitoring**

- Regular review meetings with MoEF&CC, State Governments, and project proponents to resolve bottlenecks.
- Establishment of a Project Management Unit (PMU) as a help desk for assisting proponents and addressing EDS/ADS queries.
- Continuous engagement with States for issues such as land availability, digitization of records, and timely issuance of clearances.

**(2) Process simplification and policy reforms (EC)**

- i. Introduction of provisions to allow capacity expansion of up to 50% without the need for a fresh Public Hearing.
- ii. Facilitating UG mining on out of turn basis for faster approval along with introduction of Standardised ToR.
- iii. Allowing exemption to ‘Pilot Projects of UCG’ from the requirement of EC.
- iv. Decentralization and delegation powers to State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA) for dealing with coal mining projects less than 500 hectares.
- v. Integration of Consent to Establish (CTE) with the Environmental Clearance (EC) approvals.

**(3) Process simplification and policy reforms (FC)**

- i. Provision of issuing of Stage-II FC without notification of CA/ACA land as Reserved Forest.
- ii. Reintroduction of the option of allowing degraded forest land double in extent (DDFL) of forest land being diverted in lieu of non-forest land as Compensatory Afforestation (CA), for Central PSUs and for the captive coal blocks of State PSUs.
- iii. Permitting exploration activities in forest areas, including pitting and trenching, without the requirement of NPV or CA. The NOC process for conducting the permitted exploration activities in forest land has been simplified.
- iv. Permitting survey and explorations in the forest area, up to 62 boreholes (of up to 6-inch diameter) per 10 sq. km for bedded stratiform and tabular deposits, and up to 80 boreholes (of up to 6-inch diameter) per 10 sq. km for lenticular ore bodies, in both cases subject to a maximum of 25 boreholes per sq. km.
- v. Extending the validity of forest clearances for land acquired under the Coal Bearing Areas (Acquisition and Development) Act, 1957, making it co-terminus with the validity of Mining Lease.
- vi. User agencies can attend the meetings of Forest Advisory Committee (FAC) to enable real-time clarifications and ensure expeditious disposal of forest clearance proposals.

The Government remains committed to streamlining the clearance ecosystem through continued policy reforms, digital integration, and enhanced inter-ministerial coordination to ensure timely approvals while maintaining environmental safeguards.

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