

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF COAL**

**RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 43
ANSWERED ON 20/07/2026**

ILLEGAL RAT-HOLE COAL MINING IN NORTH EAST

43 Shri Pramod Boro:

Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government is aware of the continued instances of illegal rat-hole coal mining in some States of North East Region;
- (b) the details of the action taken by Central Government, in coordination with Governments of Meghalaya and Assam respectively and other concerned agencies, to curb illegal rat-hole mining which is creating life threat to the labourers during the last three years; and
- (c) whether such rat-hole mining be legalized without jeopardizing existing traditional practices and tribal laws since there is demand for coal for meeting energy demands of the nation?

ANSWER

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

(a): The Government of Assam and the Government of Meghalaya have informed of incidents of illegal rat-hole coal mining.

(b): Mining of coal by some individual land holders in Meghalaya is carried out unscientifically, unplanned and lacks environmental safeguards without compliance to Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 (MMDR Act, 1957), Mines Act, 1952 and Environmental Protection Act, 1986.

Under the provisions of Schedule VI of the Constitution of India, the tribal individual and community landowners in the State of Meghalaya have the surface rights as well as sub-soil rights and mineral rights over the lands owned by them.

They can lease out their lands to eligible persons for mining of coal therefrom. In compliance with the directions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in Civil Appeal No. 10611 of 2018 for carrying out scientific mining in Meghalaya, a draft SOP was issued by the Government of Meghalaya in consultation with the Central Government for grant of prospecting license and/or mining lease (PL/ML) for coal in the State of Meghalaya on 05.03.2021. The SOP requires the Government of Meghalaya to obtain previous approval of the Central Government for grant of PL/ML for coal.

In addition, the State Government has notified the authorized officers under Section 21(4) of the MMDR Act, 1957 for seizing any mineral which has been mined or transported unlawfully along with vehicles, tools and equipment. Procedure has been laid down under Section 21(5) of the MMDR Act, 1957 to recover illegally mined or illegally transported mineral and to recover price of mineral in case it is disposed. In addition, in exercise of power conferred under Section 22 of the MMDR Act, 1957, officers have been authorised to make written complaint before Court for offences punishable under MMDR Act, 1957.

Further, the State Government has taken various steps such as formation of Joint Operation teams consisting of Police, Mining Department and Transport, creation of a Helpline Number to receive complaints/information on illegal coal mining and illegal transportation, provision for Rs. 5000 Cash Reward to persons providing credible information on illegal coal mining and illegal transportation, high security challans with QR codes, fugitive ink and hologram to prevent misuse of Transport challans, installation of CCTVs at check gates, launching of a project called Meghalaya Mineral Truck Scanning and Monitoring System (MMT-SMS) to set up smart integrated check gates to detect vehicles carrying coal without valid documents.

Government of Assam has taken following steps to curb illegal rat-hole mining in the state of Assam -

(i) A State Level Monitoring Committee has been constituted under the Chairmanship of the Director General of Police of Assam.

(ii) The Director of Geology and Mining, Assam has prepared a detail SOP on seizure, storage and deposit of illegal coal to the Department.

(iii) FIRs are lodged by the Directorate of Geology and Mining, Assam, whenever illegal mining, storage or transportation of coal is detected anywhere in the State. The illegally extracted or seized coal is confiscated and disposed of through auction in accordance with the applicable legal provisions.

(iv) The Government of Assam had requested Central Mine Planning and Design Institute (CMPDI) to undertake the scientific closure of unsafe pit holes/rat holes in the vicinity of the incident site at Kalamati, Umrangso, Dima Hasao district. Accordingly, a multidisciplinary technical team from CMPDI, along with officials of the Government of Assam, visited the area, provided technical guidance for the scientific closure of the rat holes.

(c): Mining can only be undertaken in accordance with the provisions of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, Rules made under this Act, and applicable environmental and labour laws, mine safety regulations.
