

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 2688
TO BE ANSWERED ON 06.03.2020

Destruction of Forest Area

2688. SHRI JUAL ORAM:

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

- (a) the total number of sal trees felled and the total hectares of forest land destroyed in the Joda and Bonai sector of Keonjhar and Sundargarh districts of Odisha as a result of mining activities during the last three years, mine-wise; and
- (b) the steps taken by the mine owners and companies for compensatory afforestation in such areas?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI BABUL SUPRIYO)

- (a) During the last three years (2016-2019), 1766.74 hectare of forest areas has been approved for mining purposes under Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 and 33416 number of Sal trees have been enumerated for removal under such mining proposals in Keonjhar and Sundargarh districts of Odisha including Joda and Bonai sector.
- (b) Compensatory Afforestation (CA) is a mandatory requirement and mitigation measure against every proposal for which forest area is approved for non-forestry purpose including mining activity. Such afforestation on equivalent non forest land (NFL)/double degraded forest land is ensured to minimize any possible impact of non-forestry use of forest land. During the last three years 2628.06 hectare land (with plantation of more than 26,28,060 trees) has been stipulated for CA against the approvals for mining in forest areas in Keonjhar and Sundargarh districts of Odisha.

In case of approved mining proposals, a number of mitigation measures such as, implementation of Wildlife Conservation Plan, Soil Conservation Plan, minimum tree felling, phase wise mining operations, stabilization of overburdens, concurrent reclamation of mined out areas, maintenance of safety zone/green belt, *etc.* on case to case basis, are also taken up by user agencies and state Governments.

Further, in case of mining projects, following guidelines and conditions stipulated in approvals granted under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, by the Central Government provide for rehabilitation or conservation of affected flora and fauna:

- (i) Mining operations in forest areas are to be carried out as per the approved Mining Plan and Progressive Mine Closure Plan which stipulates that after cessation of mining activities, forest area is rehabilitated/reclaimed technically and biologically, as per the provisions of Mining Plan, before it is handed over back to the Forest Department.
- (ii) Safety Zone in the form of a 7.5 meters wide strip all along the inner boundary of mining lease is to be maintained as green belt with dense canopy cover in the area. No mining is allowed in the safety zone and regeneration is allowed to come up in this area under the supervision of the State Forest Department.
- (iii) No mining is allowed in the buffer of 250 meters around the water bodies such as wetlands, rivers, lakes, etc.
- (iv) Storage of top soil generated during the mining operations is to be stored at designated place in the mining lease for its subsequent use in reclamation of mined out areas.
- (v) Central Government vide its guidelines dated 17.01.2020, issued in pursuance of Hon'ble Supreme Court order dated 8.01.2020 has instructed all State Governments/Union Territories Administrations to ensure re-grassing the mining area, and any other areas which may have been disturbed due to mining activities and restore the land to a condition which is fit for growth of fodder, flora, fauna, etc.
