

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

**LOK SABHA**  
**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1639**  
TO BE ANSWERED ON 10.03.2025

**Identification of No-Mining Zones**

1639. SHRI SAPTAGIRI SANKAR ULAKA:

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

- (a) the status of ecologically sensitive areas such as Deomali, Gandhamardan and Niyamgiri in the State of Odisha and whether these regions have been identified as no-mining zones to protect biodiversity and ensure sustainable resource use;
- (b) the extent of Gram Sabha consultations conducted before granting mining leases in Scheduled Areas, and whether any violations of the Forest Rights Act (FRA) have been reported in the State of Odisha, if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether mining and energy project clearances are being expedited through PRAGATI meetings, potentially bypassing statutory environmental and tribal welfare safeguards, if so, the details thereof;
- (d) the measures being taken by the Government to prevent environmental degradation and displacement of forest dwellers and tribal communities due to large-scale mining in the State of Odisha; and
- (e) whether the Government proposes any legislation to declare ecologically significant regions as no-mining zones and if so, the details thereof?

**ANSWER**

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

(SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH)

- (a) The Government of Odisha vide notification dated 20.03.2023 has declared an area of 18,963.898 ha of the Gandhamardan Hills (Gandhamardan Reserve Forest) between Bargarh and Balangir districts of Odisha as the 'Biodiversity Heritage Site of Odisha' under the provisions of Section 37 of Biological Diversity Act, 2002 and Rule 20 (2) of Odisha Biodiversity Rules, 2012 and as per the criteria of the Guidelines issued by the Forest, Environment and Climate Change Department, Government of Odisha. As per Government of Odisha, there is no plan for granting mining lease as per the Mineral (Auction) Rules, 2015 in these areas. The Government of Odisha has also informed that the biodiversity of Gandhamardan and its medicinal plants including the ancient Nrusinghanath and Harishankar temples existing there are intact on date.
- (b) Consultations with the Gram Sabhas before grant of mining lease in the Scheduled Areas is a statutory requirement. As per the Section 4(5) of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006. Gram Sabha is *inter-*

*alia* empowered to regulate access to community forest resources and can stop any activity, which adversely affects the wildlife, forest and the biodiversity.

(c) The important developmental projects are being monitored through PRAGATI portal, a platform to review programmes and projects of the Government of India as well as projects flagged by the State Governments for its timely implementation by duly following all statutory regulations and environmental safeguards, as applicable.

(d) The Government of India has taken several measures to prevent environmental degradation and displacement of forest dwellers and tribal communities due to mining with the aim of balancing economic development with ecological sustainability and social justice. Various Acts and Rules like Environmental Impact Assessment Notification, 2006; Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006; Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act, 2016; Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013; Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhinyam, 1980; and Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Rules, 2023 as amended from time to time, ensure the mitigation of adverse effects of mining on the environment and displaced communities.

(e) The National Mineral Policy, 2019 emphasizes protection of fragile ecosystems and prohibits mining in ecologically fragile areas. Mining is also prohibited in the Eco-sensitive Zones and within 1 km from the boundary of any Protected Area as per the judgment of the Hon'ble Supreme Court dated 26.04.2023 in the matter of IA 1000 of 2023 in W.P (C) No. 202 of 1995.

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