

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2744
TO BE ANSWERED ON 17.03.2025

Impact of Open Cast Mining on Flora and Fauna

2744. SMT. DHANORKAR PRATIBHA SURESH:

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

- (a) whether it is a fact that dust from mining operations is harming flora and fauna, if so, the details in this regard along with the stand of the Government thereon;
- (b) whether the forest area is being destroyed due to open cast mining, if so, the details of the steps proposed to be taken by the Government in this regard; and
- (c) whether the Government has any proposal to implement any new scheme for the conservation and restoration of forest areas, if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH)

(a) The potential impact on the flora and fauna of the area is evaluated prior to granting approval under the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980 and the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. To mitigate or minimize the possible impact of dust from mining operations on the environment including flora and fauna, a range of measures are prescribed, including compensatory afforestation to offset the loss of vegetation, implementation of a wildlife conservation plan to address adverse effects on fauna, greenbelt development in safety zone to prevent dust propagation outside the mine lease area and phased reclamation of mined-out areas for land restoration. All such measures are mandated to be executed at the cost of the project proponent.

Further, Environmental Clearances (ECs) are granted under the provisions of the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification, 2006, under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. EIA Notification, 2006 includes four stages of evaluation before grant of Environmental Clearance namely screening, scoping, public consultation and appraisal. The projects/activities are assigned Terms of References based on scoping by the Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) to prepare Environment Impact Assessment Report (EIA)/ Environment Management Plan (EMP). These reports are then appraised by the EAC as mandated in EIA, Notification, 2006. The EIA/ EMP report prepared by the Project Proponents through accredited consultants are based on scientific study by taking into consideration of environmental sensitivity such as ecological area, wildlife sanctuary/ National Parks, etc. Based on the evaluation of EIA/EMP report and after thorough discussion/deliberation, EAC recommends the mining projects with certain specific and standard conditions to safeguard

environment including the flora and fauna. Additionally, mining projects have been directed to comply the Office Memorandum dated 24.07.2024 of the Ministry, wherein it is stated that the plantation of saplings shall be carried out in the earmarked 33% greenbelt area as part of the tree plantation campaign “EK Ped Ma ke Naam” (एक पेड़ माँ के नाम) and the details of the same shall be uploaded in the Meri Life portal.

(b) & (c) As per the provisions of Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980, the prior approval of the Central Govt. is required for using any forestland for non-forest purposes. The Central Government considers the proposals for diversion of forest land on case to case basis and in case the use of forest land is unavoidable, the bare minimum forest land is allowed to be used with appropriate mitigation measures including the Compensatory Afforestation (CA), payment of Net Present Value (NPV), Soil and Moisture Conservation works, Catchment Area Treatment Plan and Wildlife Management plan etc. on case- to-case basis. Further, the guidelines issued by the Ministry provide that the mining lease holder shall, after ceasing mining operations, undertake re- grassing the mining area, and any other areas which may have been disturbed due their mining activities and restore the land to a condition which is fit for growth of fodder, flora, fauna, etc.

Beside above, the Ministry is actively implementing several schemes for the conservation and restoration of forest areas. These include the National Mission for a Green India (GIM) under the National Action Plan on Climate Change, which aims at afforestation and ecosystem restoration across forest and non-forest landscapes. The Nagar Van Yojana (NVY) focuses on creating green spaces in urban areas to protect forests from degradation and encroachment. The "School Nursery Yojana" engages students in environmental conservation by fostering an appreciation for plant biodiversity. Additionally, the Government has launched the "Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats & Tangible Incomes" (MISHTI) to restore mangrove ecosystems along India's coastlines. Furthermore, funds under the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) are utilized for forest and wildlife conservation efforts, including afforestation initiatives. These measures collectively contribute to environmental sustainability and biodiversity conservation.
