

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 3982
TO BE ANSWERED ON 18.08.2025

Fast-Track Clearances for Critical-Mineral Mining

3982. SHRI SAPTAGIRI SANKAR ULAKA:

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

- (a) the reasons for "critical-minerals" lane was added to PARIVESH 2.0 along with the date of incorporation of this change;
- (b) whether any steps mandated by the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 or Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), 2006 are waived off, if so, the details thereof along with legal basis;
- (c) the criteria for listing the 25 minerals and the review schedule for this list;
- (d) the reasons for linear projects extracting > 20,000 m³ of earth are exempted from environmental clearance along with the safeguards in place for cumulative impact;
- (e) the details of new scrutiny timelines set by Central and State Expert Appraisal Committees (EACs); and
- (f) the monitoring, public consultation and grievance mechanisms to protect forests, wildlife and local rights once fast-track clearances are granted?

ANSWER

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

(SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH)

(a) & (b) Ministry of Mines through Office Memorandum (OM) dated 20.02.2025 requested the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change to fast track Environmental Clearance proposals of Critical and Strategic mineral mining projects. Vide aforesaid OM, Ministry of Mines stated that recent amendment in Mines and Minerals (Development & Regulation) Act, 2023 have been done with an objective to ensure self-sufficiency in supply of Critical minerals which are essential for advancement of many sectors including high-tech electronics, defence, etc. It is also stated that National Critical Mineral Mission has been approved by the Union Cabinet. The Mission encompasses all stages of the critical minerals value chain, including mineral exploration, mining, beneficiation, processing, and recovery from end-of-life products. The mission will intensify the exploration of critical minerals within the country and in its offshore areas. It aims to create a fast track regulatory approval process for critical mineral mining projects.

Accordingly, to facilitate the grant of Terms of Reference (ToR) and Environmental Clearance (EC) to Critical and Strategic mineral mining proposals, this Ministry vide OM dated 13.03.2025 informed Ministry of Mines that a provision has already been made in the application

form with inclusion of sub activity related to Critical and Strategic mineral on the Parivesh portal of the Ministry.

Further, a sub category named mining of Critical minerals has also been added under major category of Mining on Parivesh to ease the tracking and monitoring of these proposals submitted under the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam 1980 for prior approval of the Central Government.

(c) As per the information received from Ministry of Mines, the Central Government has amended the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 [MMDR Act, 1957] through the MMDR Amendment Act, 2023 with effect from 17.08.2023. Through the said amendment, the Central Government has been empowered to exclusively auction mining lease and composite licence for 24 Critical minerals listed in the new Part-D of the First Schedule to the said Act, which includes minerals such as Lithium, Nickel, Tungsten, Titanium, Graphite, etc. These 24 minerals have been specified as Critical and Strategic minerals primarily because of lack of resources within India and supply risk because of concentration of production and supply in limited geographies around the world. These minerals are vital for the development of India's industrial and technological advancement and also to power the transition to a low-emission economy, and the renewable technologies that will be required to meet the 'Net Zero' commitment of India by 2070. So far, the Central Government has successfully auctioned 34 mineral blocks of critical and strategic minerals in the country.

(d) Large linear projects such as construction of highways, railway lines, etc., require large quantities of earth during their construction.

The Ministry, in consultation with the concerned Ministries and Experts, issued a detailed SOP along with necessary environmental safeguards vide Notification No. S.O. 1223(E) dated 17.03.2025 for the extraction, sourcing, or borrowing of ordinary earth for linear projects by amending the EIA Notification, 2006.

(e) Timelines for disposal of applications of Terms of Reference and for appraisal of applications of Environmental Clearances have been specified under EIA Notification, 2006.

(f) The 'land' is a subject matter of the State Government. The forest areas and the legal boundaries thereof are determined and maintained by the concerned State Government. The primary responsibility of protection of forests from various threats including encroachment/violation lies with the respective States and Union Territories (UTs). The respective State Governments and Union Territories Administrations take action against the illegal possession of forest land, as per the extant acts, rules and regulations made there under. The State Governments and Administrations, besides taking legal actions against encroachment/violation as per the extant acts, rules and regulations, also take various other measures such as demarcation and digitization of forest boundaries, strengthening infrastructure for forest protection, involving fringe area forest communities such as Joint Forest Management Committees, Eco Development Committees etc. to prevent and control encroachments. Moreover, any violations of the provisions of Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980 are dealt as per section 3A and 3B of the Adhiniyam.
