

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF COAL

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1627
TO BE ANSWERED ON 10.12.2025

Environmental Audit of Open Cast Mines

†1627. **Shri Ummeda Ram Beniwal:**

Will the Minister of **Coal** be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has conducted environmental audit of open cast mines;
- (b) if so, the details of key findings of these environmental audit;
- (c) whether the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has conducted an audit of the Kapri/Kapurdi lignite mine in Barmer district of Rajasthan;
- (d) if so, the details of findings of that audit and the action taken in this regard so far;
- (e) whether the Union Government has failed to effectively implement mine rehabilitation and reclamation policies across the country; and
- (f) if not, the details and the key actions taken so far?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF COAL AND MINES
(SHRI G. KISHAN REDDY)

(a) All coal and lignite mines are mandated to obtain prior Environmental Clearance (EC) from MoEF&CC (Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change)/ SEIAA (State Level Environment Impact Assessment Authority) and consent from the respective State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) for undertaking mining operations. In addition, periodic compliance reports are regularly submitted to the competent authorities and inspections are undertaken by officials of MoEF&CC and the concerned SPCBs.

Third party environmental clearance compliance audits of opencast coal mines are being undertaken at specified intervals by engaging reputed agencies like National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE), IIT-ISM etc., in compliance to the conditions of Environmental Clearances.

To further strengthen the environmental compliance framework for projects operating under various environmental laws, including for coal mines, the Government has notified the Environment Audit Rules, 2025. The Rules establish a structured mechanism for systematic environment audit through Registered Environment Auditors to verify compliance with environmental safeguards, examine emissions and waste management systems, and report violations. This audit mechanism supplements the existing monitoring carried out by the Central and State Pollution Control Boards.

(b) The key findings of the environmental clearance compliance audits are as follows:

- i. Regular examination must be carried out to look for slope failure on open cast mine faces, and overburden benches etc. Any abnormal condition, if observed must be brought immediately to the notice of the concerned.
 - ii. Regular observation for checking land erosion will be made around the mining and dumping areas.
 - iii. Schedule planned for green belt development may be checked after every year and any alteration required should be implemented. Post plantation status should be regularly checked in every season.
 - iv. The environmental department must be in regular touch with surrounding villages to monitor the implementation of various developmental schemes. Confidence in people in surrounding villages regarding functioning of the project in the area need be generated.
 - v. Fugitive dust emission (Total Suspended Particulate (TSP)) should be monitored for personal and nearby surrounding area exposure assessment and worker safety at critical prone area in mine premises such as haul road, crusher, near drilling and blasting point, loading and unloading point of coal, etc. with the help of Respirable Dust Sampler (RDS).
 - vi. Coal Company may explore the possibility of developing a scientific policy towards use of fly ash in the mines so as to ensure environmental sustainability.
 - vii. All the CAAMS stations should be regularly calibrated
 - viii. The sprinklers maintenance should be carried out regularly
 - ix. The garland drains size to be maintained properly and de-silted at regular intervals. Any blockage due to silting or accumulation of loose materials will be checked on a regular basis. Stone pitching, brick mounds etc. on drain shall also monitored.
- Coal Companies are complying with the observations and suggestions of the EC compliance audit reports.

(c) & (d) Yes. Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has conducted the audit of M/s Barmer Lignite Mining Company Limited (BLMCL), a Government of Rajasthan Enterprise, the owner of Kapurdi Mines. Though the Audit report for the FY 23-24 did not record any Significant Audit Findings, following are the Incidental Audit Findings:

- i. Blockage of funds amounting to Rs 159.90 crore due to non-availability of land, which further resulted in an undue cost escalation of Rs 68.59 crore.
- ii. Inaccurate interest calculation leading to an over payment of Rs 0.20 crore.
- iii. Non-compliance with the provisions of the Rajasthan Transparency in Public Procurement Rules, 2013.

In this regard, BLMCL has furnished its detailed replies to each of the audit paras vide letter dated 29.01.2025. The company, in the reply made to CAG has clarified the circumstances relating to the observations and the corrective measures initiated.

(e) & (f) It is submitted that the Union Government is effectively implementing mine rehabilitation and reclamation policies. All coal mining companies, undertake reclamation and rehabilitation as per the approved Mining Plans (including the Mine Closure Plans) and Environment Management Plans. These activities are governed by the Mine Closure Guidelines issued by the Ministry of Coal and the provisions of the EIA Notification, 2006 issued by MoEF&CC.

The Ministry of Coal has issued a series of comprehensive guidelines to strengthen the mine closure framework, including those released in 2009, 2013, 2020, 2022 and the latest revised guidelines dated 31.01.2025. As per these guidelines, the mine owner is responsible for executing all protective, reclamation and rehabilitation works and must submit annual progress reports to the Coal Controller.

In accordance with the guidelines, Coal Companies carry out progressive and final mine closure works and submit half-yearly and annual reports to CCO (Coal Controller Organisation). Third-party audits are being conducted through accredited institutions, and mine closure funds deposited in ESCROW accounts are released in a phased manner. Environmental monitoring of air, water and noise is also undertaken through CPCB-recognised and NABL-accredited agencies during mining operations and post-closure stages, ensuring effective implementation of rehabilitation and reclamation activities.
