

**15**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
COAL, MINES AND STEEL (2025-2026)**  
**EIGHTEENTH LOK SABHA**

**MINISTRY OF COAL**

**'EXPEDITING AND SIMPLIFYING THE  
ENVIRONMENT AND FOREST CLEARANCE  
PROCESS FOR COAL MINING PROJECTS'**

**FIFTEENTH REPORT**



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT  
NEW DELHI  
DECEMBER, 2025/AGRAHAYANA 1947 (Saka)**

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PROCESS FOR COAL MINING PROJECTS'**

**Presented to Lok Sabha on 10.12.2025  
Laid in Rajya Sabha on 10.12.2025**



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT  
NEW DELHI  
DECEMBER, 2025/AGRAHAYANA 1947 (Saka)**

**CM&S No. 201**

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**COMPOSITION OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON COAL, MINES AND STEEL**  
**(2024-2025)**

**Chairperson – Shri Anurag Singh Thakur**

**Lok Sabha**

2. Shri Sukhdeo Bhagat
3. Dr. Raj Kumar Chabbewal
4. Smt. Roopkumari Choudhary
5. Shri Vijay Kumar Hansdak
6. Smt. Kamlesh Jangde
7. Shri Govind Makthappa Karjol
8. Shri Selvaganapathi T.M.
9. Smt. Jyotsna Charandas Mahant
10. Shri Bidyut Baran Mahato
11. Shri Harish Chandra Meena
12. Shri Ananta Nayak
13. Smt. Bharti Pardhi
14. Shri B.K. Parthasarathi
15. Dr. Manna Lal Rawat
16. Dr. Rajkumar Sangwan
17. Shri Kali Charan Singh
18. Shri Shatrughan Prasad Sinha
19. Smt. Dhanorkar Pratibha Suresh
20. Shri S. Venkatesan
21. Shri Aditya Yadav

**Rajya Sabha**

22. Shri Subrata Bakshi
23. Smt. Mahua Maji
24. Shri Anil Kumar Yadav Mandadi
25. Shri Manas Ranjan Mangaraj
26. Shri Rungwra Narzary
27. Shri Deepak Prakash
28. Shri Aditya Prasad
29. Shri Devendra Pratap Singh
30. Shri Pradip Kumar Varma
31. Dr. Fauzia Khan#

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#nominated w.e.f. 10.10.2024 *vide* Bulletin – Part-II, Para No. 862 dated 11.10.2024

**COMPOSITION OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON COAL, MINES AND STEEL**  
**(2025-2026)**

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20. Shri S. Venkatesan
21. Shri Aditya Yadav

**Rajya Sabha**

22. Dr. Sarfraz Ahmad
23. Shri Subrata Bakshi
24. Smt. Mahua Maji
25. Shri Anil Kumar Yadav Mandadi
26. Shri Deepak Prakash
27. Shri Aditya Prasad
28. Shri Devendra Pratap Singh
29. Shri Pradip Kumar Varma
30. Shri Milind Murli Deora\*
31. Vacant

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\*nominated w.e.f. 16.10.2025 *vide* Bulletin – Part-II, Para No. 3329 dated 17.10.2025

**Secretariat**

1. Shri Harish Chandra Bist	- Joint Secretary
2. Smt. Reena Gopalakrishnan	- Director
3. Smt. Sunanda Chatterjee	- Deputy Secretary
4. Smt. Tulika Narayan	- Assistant Executive Officer

## **INTRODUCTION**

I, the Chairperson, Standing Committee on Coal, Mines and Steel (2025-26) having been authorized by the Committee to submit the Report on their behalf, present this Fifteenth Report (Eighteenth Lok Sabha) on the subject 'Expediting and Simplifying the Environment and Forest Clearance Process for Coal Mining Projects' relating to the Ministry of Coal.

2. The Committee selected the subject for detailed examination during 2024-25. The Committee was briefed by the representatives of the Ministry of Coal on 20.08.2025. The Committee, thereafter, undertook oral evidence of the Ministry of Coal and Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change on 08.09.2025. Based on the oral and written testimonies submitted to the Committee, a report on the subject was prepared.

3. The Report was considered and adopted by the Committee at their sitting held on 08.12.2025. The Minutes of the sittings of the Committee are appended to the Report.

4. The Committee wish to express their gratitude to the Ministry of Coal and the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change for placing material information as well as tendering evidence and views before the Committee.

5. The Committee place on record their profound appreciation for the valuable assistance rendered to them by the officials of the Lok Sabha Secretariat attached to the Committee.

6. For the facility of reference and convenience, the observations and recommendations of the Committee have been printed in bold letters in Part-II of the Report.

**NEW DELHI;  
08 December, 2025  
17 Agrahayana, 1947(Saka)**

**ANURAG SINGH THAKUR  
Chairperson  
Standing Committee on  
Coal, Mines and Steel**

## **PART - I**

### **REPORT**

#### **CHAPTER I**

##### **COAL AND LIGNITE SECTOR IN INDIA'S ENERGY SECURITY**

###### **A. Overview**

1.1. Coal plays a pivotal role in India's energy security and economy, serving as a cornerstone of the nation's energy mix. With India being one of the world's fastest-growing economies and a rapidly expanding population, the demand for energy is consistently on the rise. Coal remains the primary source of commercial energy in the country, catering to nearly half of India's total energy consumption. Its abundance within India's borders ensures a reliable and steady energy supply, crucial for sustaining industrial growth, powering urbanization, and meeting the needs of a burgeoning population.

1.2. Additionally, coal-fired power plants provide a stable base-load electricity supply, essential for maintaining grid stability and meeting the growing energy demands of industries, businesses, and households across the nation. Coal also stokes many non-power industries like steel, cement, fertilizers, sponge iron, aluminium and a host of other industries.

1.3. As per Press Information Bureau release dated 04.04.2025, India has the world's fifth-largest coal reserves and as the second-largest consumer, coal remains crucial, contributing 55% to the national energy needs and fuelling over 74% of total power generation. India's energy mix is diverse, yet dominated by coal, and fuels a significant portion of the country's electricity generation.

1.4. During the briefing on the subject, the representative of the Ministry of Coal informed the Committee as under:

*“...the overall growth story of coal indicates that it has grown by 10 per cent over the past five years. In the past ten years, coal ranks third among the eight core infrastructure sectors in the industry. Cement is at number one, electricity at number two, and steel at number four, with coal contributing the most to these three sectors.”*

#### **B. Production and Projection**

1.5. With the growing demand for energy driven by industrial expansion and infrastructure development, the need to enhance and accelerate domestic coal production has become more urgent than ever. The overall demand for coal for 2023-24 was 1233.86 MT.

1.6. The Coal PSUs under the Ministry of Coal have surpassed a historic coal production, which refers to the extraction of coal from mines, of 1 billion tonnes of coal in FY 2024-25 and aim to achieve a domestic coal production target of about 1.5 billion tonnes annual production by 2029-2030 to cater to the energy requirements of the country in line with India's vision of *Aatmanirbhar Bharat* for energy security. Coal dispatch has also crossed the 1 billion tonne milestone, with total dispatch reaching 1024.99 MT (Provisional) in FY 2024-25, up 5.34% from 973.01 MT in FY 2023-24. While briefing the Committee on the subject, the Secretary of the Ministry of Coal stated as below:

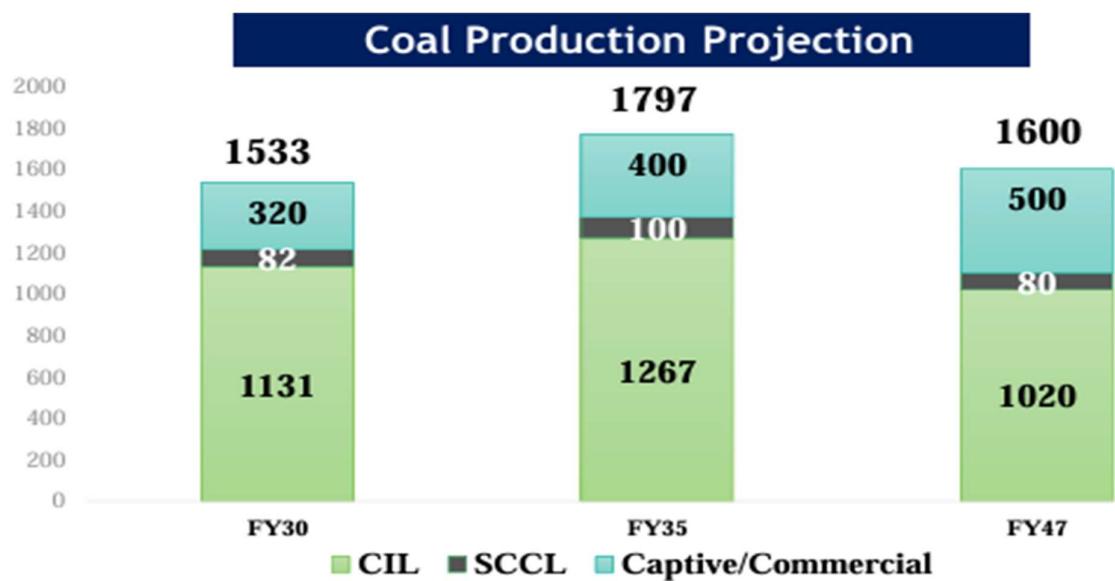
*“...domestic coal production crossed a historic milestone of one billion tonnes in the last financial year. Not only the production, the total supplies of coal despatches also crossed one billion tonnes.”*

Coal production refers to the extraction of coal from mines whereas coal dispatch refers to the process of transporting and distributing that coal to various consumers, including power plants and industrial facilities.

1.7. The country has witnessed the highest ever coal production in the year 2024-25. The all-India coal production in FY 2024-25 was 1047.52 MT. As compared to 997.83 MT during FY 2023-24, there is a growth of about 4.98% in FY 2024-25. CIL produced 781.06 MT while SCCL produced 69.01 MT of coal during 2024-25.

### C. Geographical Distribution of Coal in the Country

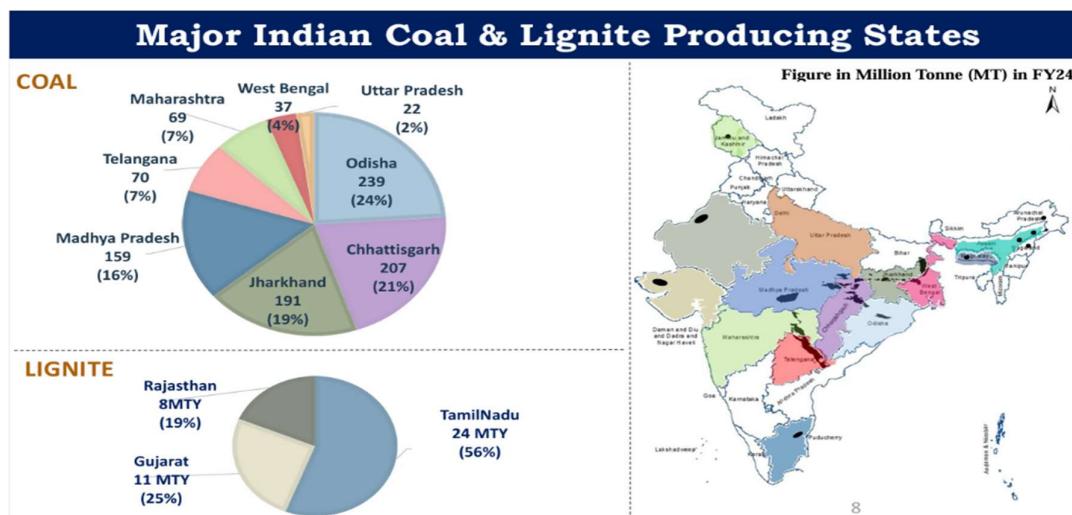
1.8. As per the Annual Report 2024-25 of the Ministry of Coal, the inventory of



Geological Resources of Indian Coal as on 01.04.2024 and up to a depth of 1200 m prepared by the Geological Survey of India on the basis of resources estimated by CMPDI, MECL, GSI, SCCL and others is 389421.34 MT. The resources have been found mainly in Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana and Maharashtra. Similarly, the Lignite reserves in the country are estimated at around 47295.61 million Tonne (as on 01.04.2024). The major deposits are located in the State of Tamil Nadu, followed by Rajasthan, Gujarat, Union Territory of Puducherry, Jammu and Kashmir, Kerala, Odisha, and West Bengal.

1.9. In a written reply, the Ministry of Coal stated that projects have been duly identified to facilitate the achievement of 1.5 BT coal production by 2030. State-wise tentative production projects for FY 2030 are given below:

State wise expected production by FY 2030	
State	Expected Production (in MT)
Odisha	494
Chhattisgarh	434
Jharkhand and West Bengal	298
Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh	137
Telangana	100
Maharashtra	70
<b>Total</b>	<b>1533</b>



1.10. It may be observed that the coal bearing areas of the country are located in forest rich geographical areas. For instance, as per the 'India State of Forest Report 2023 (ISFR 2023)' released by the Ministry for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh are among the top three States having largest forest cover area wise. Similarly, top four States showing maximum increase in

forest and tree cover are Chhattisgarh followed by Uttar Pradesh, Odisha and Rajasthan.

1.11. As per the 'Report of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Just Transition from Coal under the India-US Sustainable Growth Pillar of the Strategic Clean Energy Partnership' released by the NITI Aayog, "the coal economy has significant impacts on natural resources such as land, water, and air. Coal mining, particularly the nationally predominant opencast mining, changes the land form by creating large pits and overburden mounds. Loss of forests and biodiversity is also seen with coal-related projects. Redressal of these impacts on the local environment is a challenge that must be dealt with as part of coal mine closure. Additionally, in some cases, it may be possible to repurpose the natural and physical assets to aid in the area's redevelopment. Such options should be explored, while also addressing issues regarding the ownership of such assets."

#### **D. Import of Coal**

1.12. Out of the total coal demand of the country, about 20-25% of the demand is met from import. Import of coal mainly consists of high-quality coking coal and high GCV coal as their domestic production is limited due to either scarce reserves or non-availability. Power sector imports coal for imported coal-based (ICB) power plants setup in coastal region (as they have been specially designed to use imported coal only) and for domestic coal-based (DCB) power plants for blending purpose. Coal being under Open General License (OGL), traders and end-users (Industries) directly import coal on commercial and logistic considerations.

1.13. During 2023-2024, the import of coal was 264.53 Million Tonnes (MT) (comprising 58.81 MT Coking Coal and 205.72 MT Non-Coking Coal) as compared to

237.67 MT (comprising 56.05 MT Coking Coal and 181.62 MT Non-Coking Coal) in the corresponding period of 2022-23, showing a positive growth of 11.30%.

1.14. In the backdrop of coal imports falling by 7.90% in FY25 compared to the corresponding period of the previous year, the Committee desired to know how the Ministry is balancing the imperative to increase domestic coal output with environmental safeguards. The Ministry of Coal, in a written format, replied that several major steps have been taken to increase coal production and reduce imports, including commercial mining, policy reforms, infrastructure development, and increased coal production. The Ministry has set an ambitious target of 1.5 billion tonnes of coal production by FY 2029-30 to ensure energy security and self-reliance. Additional coal projects are being identified under greenfield and brownfield projects as per the production programme, and advance actions are being taken for obtaining EC & FC of such projects. For every fresh and expansion project, detailed Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is conducted and the Environment Management Plan (EMP) is implemented, incorporating community concerns. Control measures are taken to minimize environmental impact. Regular meetings of the Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) are held to examine proposals and grant clearance. The Ministry promotes environmental sustainability through various measures such as plantation, mine water utilization, eco-park development, and mechanized coal evacuation, aiming to reduce carbon footprints and enhance community benefits.

#### **E. Sustainable Production and Responsible Mining**

1.15. Sustainable development has been defined by the United Nations as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Coal has an important role to play in India's sustainable development. With the advancement of technology and growing

awareness of sustainability issues, the question of how to make mining sustainable has come to the forefront.

1.16. Out of various dimensions, sustainability in mining involves environmental dimension that places a focus on the natural environment's sustainability and the availability of resources. Commitment to care for environment while mining coal with adequate mitigation practices has to be the guiding principle of inclusive growth while undertaking business operations.

1.17. The Ministry of Coal in its background note on the subject state that in India, coal mining projects must navigate a multi-tiered statutory clearance process designed to ensure that energy development proceeds in an environmentally sustainable, legally compliant, and socially responsible manner.

1.18. Various statutory provisions such as the approval of Mining Plan and Mine Closure Plan, Grant of Mining Lease, Environment and Forest Clearances, Consent to Establish, Consent to Operate, Wildlife Clearance, Permission for Explosive and Safety Organization (PESO) for the storage of Explosive, Land Acquisition Module, Safety Management Plan (with DGMS), Central Ground Water clearance, etc., are prerequisites for starting a coal mine. These clearances are granted by various Central Ministries and State Government departments/agencies.

1.19. Globally, in most of the developed countries (EU, USA, Canada, Australia), the EC is processed through Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA), while FC is treated under land-use, biodiversity conservation, or natural habitat protection laws.

1.20. The Global South (including India, SE Asia, Africa and Latin America) has fragmented multi-agency clearance systems. The EC and FC process in Indian context

is robust and contains scoping exercise, identification of impacts and their management, public consultation, settlement of rights associated with forest land.

## CHAPTER II

### REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR VARIOUS CLEARANCES

- 2.1. In India, coal mining projects require a multi-tiered statutory clearance process for ensuring environmentally sustainable, legally compliant, and socially responsible energy development proceeds.
- 2.2. While briefing the Committee, the Secretary, Ministry of Coal stated as under:

*"There are two types of permissions associated with coal-mining. Out of these, there are 21 permissions at the central government level and 17 permissions at the State government level. Almost all of these permissions are mandatory, except for one or two which are site specific. In the ecosystem of mining, it is done in a highly regulated and in a manner which is closely monitored both by the Central Government as well as the State Governments. Out of these 39 clearances, there are certain major clearances. Environment Clearance (EC) and Forest Clearance (FC) both are considered as major clearances."*

- 2.3. Environment Clearance (EC) focuses on environmental impact assessment and mitigation; whereas Forest Clearance (FC) ensures responsible and compensated use of forest resources. The EC and FC are the two core clearances, forming the backbone of environmental governance for coal mining. Without these, mining operations cannot legally begin, regardless of lease status or mining plan approval.

The key clearances and approvals are attached as ***Annexure I***.

- 2.4. While briefing the Committee on the subject, the representative of the Ministry of Coal navigated the Committee through the clearances required for obtaining necessary approvals for coal mining projects. From the moment the Project Proponent gets the prospecting license, whether it is a government company or a private company, the approval of the geological report is the first work for the State Government which contains information on all its substrata factors, depth, reserves etc. Lease execution gives the project proponent the legal right to mine, but operational work cannot begin until statutory clearances are secured.

2.5. After the approval of the mining plan, the Project Proponent has to move towards environmental clearance and forest clearance parallelly, and then to various other clearances. In case, part of the coal block involves forest land, then Forest Clearance (FC) under Forest Conservation Act, 1980 (and amended in 2023) has to be obtained before operationalization. Stringent guidelines, norms and higher benchmarks are mandated for compliance before any approvals are given.

2.6. Once EC, FC are obtained, Mining Lease is granted and minimum required land is acquired, the Mine Opening Permission (MOP) is sought from the Coal Controller's Organization (CCO) under the Colliery Control Rules, 2004, and is intimated to the Director General of Mines Safety (DGMS) under the Coal Mines Regulations. The mine opening/ seam opening permission is designed to streamline and expedite the process of obtaining permission for starting new coal mines or opening new coal seams. It is processed on the SWCS (Single Window Clearance System) portal and is granted by the CCO.

#### *Process to Obtain Mine Opening Permission*



## **Statutory Clearances Before Mine Opening**

### **A. Environment Clearance**

2.7. The formal basis for environmental clearance began with the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, which empowered the Central Government to protect environmental quality. Under the provisions of Environmental Protection Act 1986, the Government has issued the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification vide S.O. 1533 (E), dated 14/09/2006. As per the extant provisions of EIA Notification, 2006, Coal mines are listed at item 1(a) – Mining of minerals to the Schedule of the EIA Notification, 2006 and requires Environmental Clearance (EC) from the concerned Competent Authority.

2.8. Coal mining projects with mining lease area more than 500 Hectare fall under Category A and are appraised at the Central Level in the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change in consultation with the Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC). Coal mining projects with mining lease area of 500 Hectare and below fall under Category B and are appraised at the State level i.e., State Level Environment Impact Assessment Authorities (SEIAAs) and State Expert Appraisal Committees (SEACs).

2.9. When asked about the noticeable disparities in processing speed or conditions imposed for projects near the 500-ha threshold, it was replied as under:

“As per MoEF&CC S.O. 1886(E), Dated - 20.04.2022, it was deliberated that coal mining projects having area more than 500 ha shall be appraised as at central level as category-A projects and projects having area less than 500 ha shall be appraised at State level.

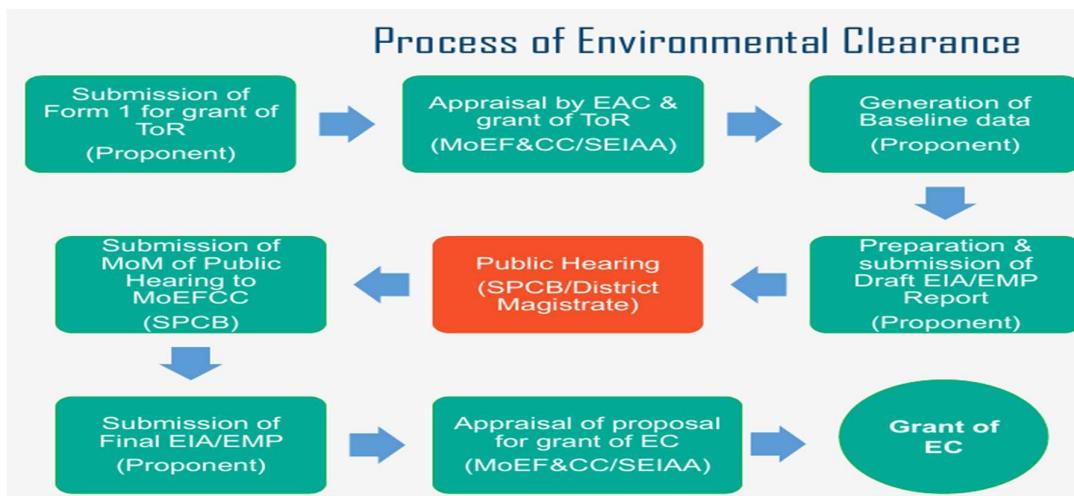
The EC process is more or less the same for both Category A & B proposals with the only difference being that the Category A projects are appraised by MoEF&CC Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) whereas Category B projects are appraised by State Expert Appraisal Committee (SEAC). This has been primarily done to decentralize and expedite the EC for projects”.

2.10. When asked the number of project applications with lease area less than 500 Ha are submitted for clearance from SEIAA, Ministry of Environment, Forest and

Climate Change in a written reply stated that since 22.04.2022, a total of 12 ECs have been granted.

2.11. The Environment Clearance process for projects comprises of four stages namely screening, scoping, public consultation and appraisal. Environment Clearances to coal mines are granted by the MoEF&CC after the appraisal and recommendation by the Expert Appraisal Committee. In order to facilitate expeditious appraisal and grant of Environment Clearance, MoEF&CC has implemented the online Portal namely PARIVESH.

The process of EC for Coal Mining Projects is as under:



2.12. The process of obtaining Environmental Clearance (EC) for coal mining projects in India is carried out in a structured sequence, with tasks falling primarily on three stakeholders — the project proponent, State-level Authorities and the MoEF&CC.

2.13. Across all three levels of responsibility, the PARIVESH portal functions as the single-window workflow system, hosting all proposal documents, details of Terms of Reference (ToR), public hearing records, and clearance orders.

*i. At the Project Proponent (PP) level*

- The Project Proponent (PP) prepares the Pre-Feasibility Report (PFR) and completes the application form, containing essential project details, location maps, and statutory information about the project. The PP uploads the proposal on the PARIVESH portal.
- The PP then makes an initial presentation for grant of Terms of Reference (ToR) to the Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) for Category 'A' projects or to the State Expert Appraisal Committee (SEAC) for Category 'B'.
- Following the presentation, the Terms of Reference (ToR) with standard and specific conditions for the project are issued. The PP is responsible for conducting the baseline environmental monitoring in line with the ToR — covering air quality, water quality, noise levels, land use, biodiversity (flora and fauna), and socio-economic parameters. Further, the PP is responsible to comply with all the conditions laid out in the ToR.
- The PP prepares the Draft Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Environmental Management Plan (EMP) on the basis the ToR and submits to the State Pollution Control Board (SPCB) for conduct of the public hearing.
- With the support of the District Administration and active involvement of the PP, the public hearing is conducted. The PP actively supports the hearing process by providing clarifications to the community and ensuring that their feedback is

properly recorded. Suggestions/objections from the public hearing are incorporated into the Final EIA/EMP by the PP.

- The PP submits the final EIA/EMP on the PARIVESH Portal.
- Throughout the appraisal, the user agency must respond promptly to any Essential Details Sought (EDS) or Additional Details Sought (ADS).
- Once clearance is granted, the PP is obligated to comply fully with all stipulated conditions and submit periodic compliance reports.

*ii. At the State Level*

- For Category 'B' projects, the State Expert Appraisal Committee (SEAC) undertakes the technical appraisal, and the State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA) takes the clearance decision, mirroring the central process for Category 'A' proposals.
- The State Pollution Control Board (SPCB) plays a crucial role in organizing the public hearing within the time period from the submission of the Draft EIA report. The hearing is chaired by the District Magistrate (DM) or Additional District Magistrate, as mentioned in the notification dated 09.05.2022 issued by MoEF&CC, who ensures that local community concerns are heard, documented, and forwarded to the appraisal body. The District Administration plays a crucial role in the safe and efficient conduct of the public hearing.
- The SPCB compiles the minutes of the public hearing, validates them, and uploads them on their web portal for use in final appraisal. The State also provides localized environmental inputs, verifies data, and participates in

monitoring compliance with EC conditions, especially in coordination with the MoEF&CC Regional Offices.

*iii. At the MoEF&CC level*

- At the Central level, the MoEF&CC receives and performs an initial scrutiny of the proposal submitted on PARIVESH. For Category 'A' coal mining projects ( $\geq 500$  ha or otherwise specified in EIA Notification, 2006), the Ministry assigns the file to the relevant Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) and schedules the ToR meeting.
- Once the user agency completes ToR requirements and submits the final application, the Ministry coordinates the appraisal process, ensuring that the EAC evaluates the adequacy of baseline data, EIA/EMP quality, and the robustness of proposed mitigation measures. If any gaps are detected, the MoEF&CC seeks clarifications from the project proponent through the portal's EDS/ADS system.
- After examining all documents, the EAC makes a recommendation to approve, reject, or request modification of the proposal upon which the final decision is taken by the Ministry (at the Central level)/ SEIAA (at the State level). The Ministry then issues the EC letter with detailed environmental management conditions, uploads it on PARIVESH for public view, and informs the PP and concerned agencies. MoEF&CC is further responsible for post-clearance monitoring, carried out through its Regional Offices, examining compliance reports, and conducting site inspections.

2.14. The Additional Secretary, Ministry of Coal summarized during a sitting of the Committee that after the submission of Form-1 and pre-feasibility report on the PARIVESH portal, scoping and Terms of Reference (ToR) are decided by Expert

Appraisal Committee (EAC) that evaluates proposals approximately once in every 15 days. Followed by this process is the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Environmental Management Plan (EMP) studies, including public consultation and hearing. Based on the appraisal by EAC/ SEIAA, Environment Clearance is granted with stipulated safeguards.

2.15. One being asked if there has been timely submission of compliance documentation on PARIVESH portal, the Ministry of Coal replied:

“EC compliance reports are submitted every six months post grant of EC and the certified compliance reports on the existing EC for the expansion proposals are being submitted as per the extant rules, which is ensured by MoEF&CC.”

#### **B. Forest Clearance**

2.16. Forest Clearance (FC) is required under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 for diversion of forest land for non-forest use, the application process for which is entirely online *via* PARIVESH 2.0 portal. Under Section 2 of the Act, this approval became mandatory for the de-reservation of reserved forests and the use of forest land for purposes other than forestry.

2.17. The *Van (Sanrakshan E�am Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 2023* sought to address multiple issues and modernize the law. A Preamble was inserted to reflect the broadened objective, expanding the focus from “*Sanrakshan*” (protection) to “*Sanrakshan and Samvardhan*” (conservation and augmentation). This included encouraging the growth of trees outside forests, enhancing forest productivity, maintaining ecological stability, and meeting both economic and livelihood needs of the people.

2.18. The approval process for diversion of forest land for coal mining involves two stages:

Stage-I (In-Principle approval): Conditional approval for diversion of forest land after review by Forest Advisory Committee (FAC) which involves CA land identification, Net Present Value payments, and other mitigation plans.

- Stage-II (Final approval): Granted upon compliance of conditions of Stage-I approval including the payments and verification.

An outline of Stage-I and Stage-II of FC is as under:

Aspect	Stage-I (In-principle Approval)	Stage-II (Final Approval)
Purpose	In principle approval to divert forest land for non-forest use	Formal prior approvals of Central Government for use of forest land for non-forestry purpose
Key Conditions Imposed	Identification of CA lands and funds for raising compensatory afforestation Stipulation of realization of Net Present Value (NPV) and other financial requirements etc	Confirmation of compliance with conditions stipulated at Stage-I along with statutory payments. Verification of compensatory afforestation raised etc

2.19. Before uploading the proposal on the PARIVESH portal, the User Agency (project proponent) undertakes preparatory work which includes:

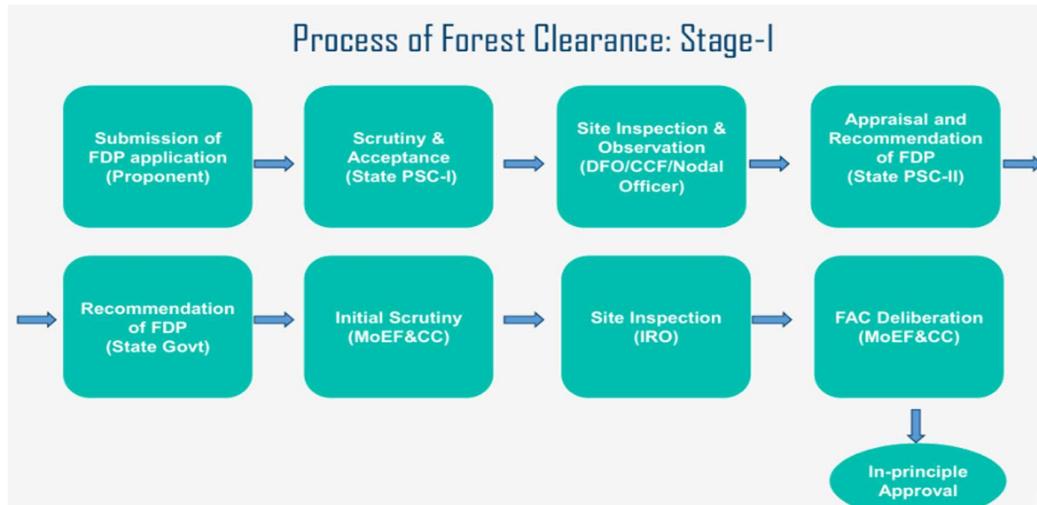
- Conducting detailed site surveys, preparing necessary maps (revenue maps, forest management maps), and conduct of DGPS surveys.
- Preparing the complete Forest Diversion proposal (FDP), including the approved mining plan, reclamation plan and supporting documents such as:
  - NOC for Revenue Forest Land involved in the project, NOC for historical places, if any, etc.
  - Geo-referenced maps of the forest area proposed for diversion.
  - Any required clearances such as from National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) if the area falls within protected wildlife zones.

- Preparing the Compensatory Afforestation (CA) plan for compensating forest land diversion, including identification, suitability and approval of CA land by the Divisional/District Forest Officer (DFO).

*a) Stage-I (In-Principle Approval)- Steps Involved*

- Upon submission of application on PARIVESH portal for diversion of Forest Land, the proposal goes through initial scrutiny and acceptance by the Project Screening Committee-I (PSC-I) at the State level, which ensures the application is complete and complies with prescribed norms.
- The proponent is required to obtain various NOCs from State and Central Authorities such as NHAI, Water Resource Diversion for Road/Nalla Diversions, if applicable.
- The DFO verifies tree enumeration, afforestation requirements, and estimates for compensatory levies (like Net Present Value (NPV), CA charges).
- Site inspections are carried out by DFO, Chief Forest Conservator (CF), and nodal officer based on the extent of forest area to assess the ground realities.
- The proposal then advances to Project Screening Committee-II (PSC-II) for appraisal and recommendations.
- The State Nodal Officer and State Government review the proposal and forward to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) or its respective Regional Office, where the Forest Advisory Committee (FAC) evaluates the proposal.

- Recommendations from FAC lead to an In-Principle clearance (Stage-I) is approved by MoEF&CC.



2.20. When the Committee asked how often does the FAC meet, the Ministry of Coal in a written reply to the List of Points stated as below: -

“Generally, the FAC meets on monthly basis wherein FC proposals (including coal mining) submitted at MoEF&CC level are discussed and the project is explained to the Committee by IG (Inspector General), Forest as well as Nodal Officer of the State Forest Department. Recommendations from FAC lead to drafting an in-principle clearance (Stage-I) which is reviewed by Designated Officers and ultimately approved by MoEF&CC.”

*b) Stage-II (Final Approval)- Process Involved*

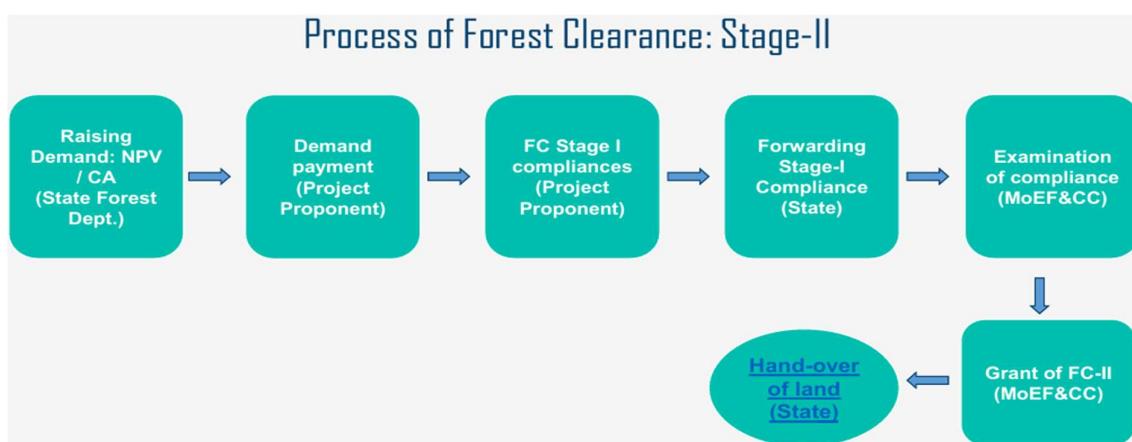
The Stage-II process confirms fulfillment of conditions stipulated at Stage-I and includes:

- Submission of compliance reports by the User Agency documenting actions such as payment of funds to Compensatory Afforestation fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) and transfer and mutation of CA land to the Forest Department.
- The DFO scrutinize the compliance documentation and forward their observations and recommendations.
- The Nodal Officer and State Secretary verify and approve the compliance reports.

- The State Government transmits the verified compliance report to the MoEF&CC or its Regional Office.
- The Officer at Forest Conservation Division, MoEF&CC verifies compliance and prepares the draft Final Clearance (Stage-II).
- The order for final forest clearance is reviewed, updated, and finally approved by MoEF&CC.
- The Stage-II clearance letter is issued to the State Government and User Agency and is uploaded on PARIVESH.

2.21. After the grant of Stage-II approval by MoEF&CC, the following actions are required for commencement of mining operations-

- The letter of final diversion order is issued by State Government to the Project Proponent.
- The DFO raises the Demand Note for numbering, cutting & logging of trees and transportation of logs.
- The Project Proponent makes the payment for the Demand raised by DFO.
- The regulatory formalities for tree felling are completed by the Project Proponent.
- After completion of tree felling and all regulatory formalities, DFO issues possession letters and hands over the parcel of forest land to the User Agency



2.22. When the Ministry of Coal was asked to provide a comparative chart showing approvals granted /time taken for EC & FC clearances in the case of public sector companies and private sector, and whether process of obtaining clearances is faster for private sector as compared to the public sector, the Ministry of Coal while negating the same presented the following table in a written reply:

Time taken by CPSU vs Private Companies		
Category	Time taken for EC	Time taken for FC
CPSUs	~15–18 months	~24–30 months
Commercial Coal Blocks (Private Sector)	~26 months	~34 months

### **C. Other Statutory Clearances**

a) National Board for Wildlife (NBWL)

2.23. The Ministry of Coal apprised the Committee that Wildlife Clearance is required to be applied separately independently of Forest Clearance, approval for which is granted under Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and is granted by National Board of Wildlife (NBWL).

2.24. Similarly, in case, the forest land proposed for diversion is located within the duly notified eco-sensitive zone around boundary of a protected area, EIA of the project needs to be placed before the Standing Committee of NBWL. In case Eco-sensitive zone has not been notified, 10 km distance from the boundary of such protected area shall be treated as eco-sensitive zone.

b) Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)/ State Pollution Control Board (SPCB)

2.25. CPCB and SPCBs function under the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981, and the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. Their role complements the MoEF&CC in implementing and enforcing pollution control measures for mining and industrial

operations. Whereas the CPCB sets national standards for air, water, and noise pollution and issues technical guidelines for pollution control in mining and industrial projects, the SPCBs implement these standards at the State level by conducting public hearings, granting Consent to Establish (CTE) before project construction, and Consent to Operate (CTO) before mining begins.

2.26. They monitor compliance with environmental clearance (EC) conditions through site inspections and review of six-monthly reports from project proponents. Together, CPCB and SPCBs act as the key regulatory bodies ensuring pollution prevention and environmental compliance throughout the mine development and operation cycle.

c) *Directorate General of Mines Safety (DGMS)*

2.27. The DGMS grants permission under the Coal Mines Regulations, 2017 for approval of safety and technical plans, after ensuring compliance with safety codes, availability of EC and FC, and readiness of mining infrastructure and manpower.

## CHAPTER III

### INTER-MINISTERIAL DIGITAL INTEGRATION: THE PARIVESH 2.0 AND SWCS MECHANISM

3.1. In pursuance of the spirit of Minimum Government and Maximum Governance, a Single-Window named PARIVESH (Pro-Active and Responsive facilitation by Interactive, Virtuous, and Environmental Single Window Hub) was launched in 2018 by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change through National Informatics Centre.

3.2. PARIVESH is a single window platform for Environmental, Forest, Wildlife and Coastal Regulation Zone Clearances to streamline and automate the process of granting green clearances, enhancing both efficiency and transparency.

3.3. The scope of the same has been further expanded in 2022-23 onwards to incorporate advanced technologies, significantly transforming green governance in India.

3.4. By integrating all major green clearances EC, FC, WL, and CRZ on a single platform in true sense, PARIVESH has completely transformed green governance in India. The transformation brought about by PARIVESH and its successor PARIVESH 2.0, has ensured that development projects proceed with robust environmental safeguards, contributing to sustainable development by reducing the time taken for clearances, streamlining processes, enhancing transparency and accountability at every stage.

3.5 PARIVESH 2.0, besides providing an enabling ecosystem for regulatory authority to make a fast and effective decisions, also facilitates in the compliance

reporting and improving ease of doing business. During a sitting of the Committee, a representative of the MoEF&CC added:

*"It is an online portal through which all green clearances - environment clearance, forest clearance, wildlife clearance, Coastal Regulation Zone clearance are processed. It is an end-to-end portal right from the application to different stages of appraisal. The entire process is paperless and entire uploading of documentation, the minutes, finalisation, everything is done through this".*

3.6. On the other hand, Single Window Clearance System (SWCS) is the innovative endeavour of the Ministry of Coal to create a platform to obtain various clearances for the operationalization of coal mines in the country. This Single Window Platform is proposed to facilitate project proponent to apply for various clearances through a unified user registration to various Central Ministries as well as to State Government departments/agencies with a feature of auto-fetch provision of data from preceding clearances/approvals.

3.7. Integration of the SWCS and the PARIVESH portal have improved transparency and efficiency by enabling tracking, and monitoring of coal mining clearances. The integration is further helping reduce duplication and improve coordination. These steps are aimed at ensuring that the ambitious coal production and energy security targets envisioned by the Hon'ble Prime Minister can be achieved without compromising environmental safeguards.

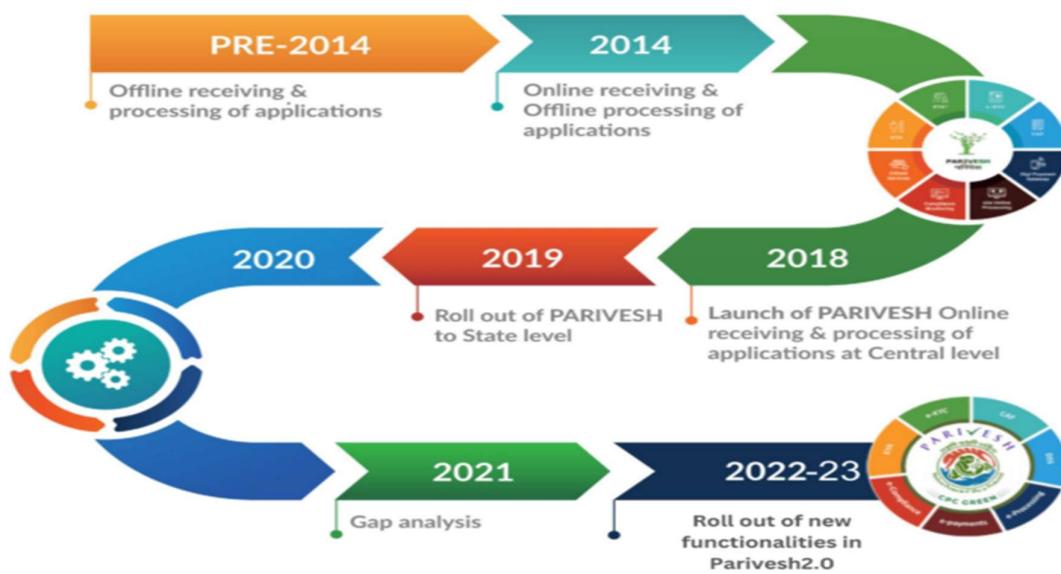
#### **A. PARIVESH Portal and Mining Clearances**

3.8. All the proposals for Environment Clearance, Forest Clearance and Wildlife Clearance for Coal mining projects are now processed through PARIVESH 2.0 Portal. All coal PSUs and the project proponents seeking these clearances are registered on PARIVESH portal.

In a written reply the Ministry of Coal elaborated as under:

"PARIVESH 1.0 (launched 2018) was a single-window hub for processing EC, FC and WLC. PARIVESH 2.0 (launched in 2022-23) incorporates further advancements like Know Your Customer (KYC), Dashboard, MIS & Analytics, Common Application Form (CAF), Auto Communication & Alerts, fully paperless management, compliance monitoring, and integration framework. It provides ecosystem for faster decisions, better compliance, and ease of doing business."

3.9. Further, the revamped PARIVESH 2.0 includes, among others, Geographical Information System (GIS)/Management Information System (MIS) based Know Your Approval (KYA) tool, GIS-based Decision Support System (DSS), Colour coding to the project proposals with investment more than 500 Cr for fast-track processing and monitoring. The transition from the pre-PARIVESH stage in 2014 to the roll of new functionalities may be seen as under:



3.10. Mining like any other developmental activity, does have an impact on Environment. However, such impact in case of mining is generally contained within the project area itself. The impact of mining on the environment is assessed during EIA process, on a project-to-project basis. The prior Environmental Clearance granted for mining projects shall be valid for the project life as laid down in the mining plan

approved and renewed by Competent Authority, from time to time, subject to a maximum of thirty years, whichever is earlier.

3.11. It is mandatory for the project proponent to submit half-yearly compliance reports in respect of the stipulated prior EC terms and conditions through PARIYESH. Compliance & Monitoring Division (C&MD) Division established in the MoEF&CC for monitoring and compliance of stipulated EC conditions imposed on the projects/activities while granting EC. C&MD is supported by Eleven (11) Regional Offices (ROs) and Nine (9) Sub Regional Offices (SROs) of the Ministry. ROs/SROs are responsible for ensuring compliance to the prescribed EC conditions and submission of factual status of the project on the basis on site inspection and other detailed ground level review of the project. Action against observed non-conformities with respect to Category A projects to be taken by the Ministry at Central level. Action against observed non-conformities with respect to Category B projects to be taken by the SEIAA at State level.

3.12. Reforms in clearance management under the PARIYESH portal have significantly streamlined the regulatory process by transforming it into an efficient, transparent, and fully digitized single- window system. With the launch in August 2018 (at the Centre) and August 2019 (at the State level) in line with the 'Digital India' vision and further its continuous upgradation in 2022 onwards (PARIYESH 2.0) ensures sustainable development alongside of economic growth of India, transforming green governance in India.

3.13. The entire work flow from submission of application to the grant of the clearance and further submission of compliances is automated in the PARIYESH portal without any manual intervention and is being auto updated on real time basis.

In this context, when the Committee asked the Ministry of Coal whether the Portals suffer from technical glitches, in a written reply, it was submitted as under:

“For instance, name of the Project Proponent can be changed by using updated e-KYC option. However, e-KYC facility may also be allowed through the OTP via mail (at present OTP is being received only on mobile). Though the size of uploading of the additional document has been increased from 5 MB to 20 MB, it needs to be further increased to at least 100 MB.”

### **B. Single Window Clearance System (SWCS) Portal**

3.14. A Single Window Clearance System has been conceptualized by the Ministry of Coal that facilitates obtaining clearances and approvals required for the smooth operationalization of coal mines in India through a single gateway, including approval of mining plans and mine closure plans in a time-bound manner and its integration with the National Single Window Clearance System (NSWCS). The portal is designed not only to map the relevant application formats but also to map the process flow for the grant of approvals/clearances and integrate with online portals through Application Programming Interface (APIs).

#### **Modules Within the SWCS Portal**

##### *i) PRIMS Module*

3.15. A module named PRIMS (Project Information Management System) has been made operational, in which basic information related to coal blocks is stored, such as the act under which the mine is allocated, the time allocated for completion of all milestones, method of mining, type of coal, the status of the coal block (explored, unexplored), details of reserves, peak rated capacity, life of the mines, along with the date of operationalization. It displays a list of milestones with the due and actual completion dates, which are needed to be completed by the bidders in order to get the coal mine operational. It also tracks the coal production of each mine on a daily and

monthly basis, helping the Ministry monitor coal production and further expeditious implementation of coal mines. Additionally, it tracks the details of coal dispatch from the mines.

*ii) Mine Opening Permission and Exploration Modules*

3.16. When enquired of the number of projects that have utilized the Mine Opening Permission and Exploration Modules within SWCS to avoid manual delays, in a written reply, the Ministry of Coal apprised the Committee as under:

“The Mine Opening Permission module was made live on 07.11.2024. Since then, a total of 37 proposals have been received, out of which 23 have been approved, 7 rejected, and 7 are under process.

The Exploration Module was launched on 04.07.2025, and as of now, 4 proposals have been received, all of which are currently under process.”

**C. Status of Projects since the Integration of PARIVESH 2.0 and SWCS**

*a) Status of proposals submitted through SWCS to the PARIVESH portal*

3.17. When asked about the status of proposals that have been submitted to the Ministry of Coal through SWCS to the PARIVESH portal, the Ministry of Coal in its written reply stated that: -

“With the integration of SWCS with the PARIVESH portal, the proponent is redirected from the SWCS to the PARIVESH portal, where they register and log-in and submit proposals for EC, FC, and WL clearances. The actual submission and processing of proposals take place entirely on PARIVESH, while only the relevant common data fields captured in SWCS are auto-fetched to PARIVESH to avoid duplication.”

In a written reply to the List of Points, the Ministry of Coal has stated that: -

“Since the launch of PARIVESH 2.0 portal by MoEF&CC in 2022, no EC-FC proposals of coal companies have not been rejected and process efficiency has increased. According to information received from MoEF&CC, the total number of Environment Clearance (EC) and Forest Clearance (FC) proposals for coal mining projects submitted, rejected, pending and cleared, on the PARIVESH 2.0 portal from April 1, 2023, to September 16, 2025 is given in below tables: -

Status of proposals for EC and FC of Coal Mining projects submitted through PARIVESH portal				
Environment Clearance (EC):				
Financial Year	Total No. of Proposals Received	Pending with Project Proponent	Under Consideration at MoEF&CC	Granted
FY 2023-24	40	13	Nil	27
FY 2024-25	23	5	Nil	18
FY 2025-26	18	2	4	12
Grand Total	78	25	4	49
Forest Clearance (FC):				
S. No.	Financial Year	Total No. of Proposals Received	Granted Stage-I Approvals & Pending for Stage-II approvals	Granted Stage-II Approvals (FY 2022 to 2026)
1	2023-2024	1	0	1
2	2024-2025	10	5	3
3	2025-2026	19	4	0
Grand Total		30	9	4
				17

*b) Projects requiring other clearances*

3.18. Citing an example of a case where highway diversion is needed for a mining project requiring an overlap of clearance from National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and forest department, it was enquired whether there a single framework or cell that manages all these clearances together and in cases requiring approvals from multiple agencies, how the Ministry coordinate to prevent conflicts or duplications. To this, the Ministry of Coal in a written reply stated as under:

“Presently, clearances related to Environmental, Forest, and Wildlife are aligned and secured through the centralized PARIVESH portal, which streamlines approvals, minimizes duplication, and eases conflict resolution for overlapping requirements like those between NHAI and forest diversion for mining projects.

A Single Window Clearance System (SWCS) has also been launched. This digital platform ensures that project proponents can track, and manage all related applications in one place, reducing delays and creating clear accountability for each step.

In contrast, approvals such as DGMS permissions and NOCs from other agencies like the Central Ground Water Authority (CGWA) and Water Resources Department are handled through separate, individual processes outside PARIVESH.

In addition to above, approval of Mine Plan & Mine Closure Plan and Geological Report are processed and granted through SWCS."

*c) Coal Subsidiary Company-wise status of Projects*

3.19. On the issue of stage-wise delays in clearance of EC and FC, the Ministry of Coal in a written reply stated that: -

"Obtaining Environment Clearance is faster as compared to Forest clearance and usually does not cause undue delay. Forest Clearance generally requires the longest time for approval due to multi-agency work flow, non-availability of authenticated land schedules in some States, Compensatory Afforestation (CA) land finalization, resistance from local villagers for NoC under Forest (Rights) Act 2006 etc.

Reason for delay is usually extraneous and not in control of either Project Proponent or Ministry and issue is mainly related to State government, authenticated land schedule, NoC under FRA 2006 etc. In Last 5 years the time taken for securing Forest Clearance for the proposals of coal companies varied from State-to-State averaging around 2.5 Years for Stage-I FC and around 10 months for Stage-II FC.

<b>Average time taken in FC for CIL mining projects submitted on PARIVESH</b>		
Subsidiary	Time taken for Stage-I (Days)	Time taken for Stage-II (Days)
Central Coalfields Limited (CCL)	1444	111
Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL)	906	62
Northern Coalfields Limited (NCL)	665	577
South Eastern Coalfields Limited (SECL)	1050	311
Western Coalfields Limited (WCL)	690	678
Overall Average Time taken	996	319

*d) Status of reduction in clearance delay*

3.20. When asked whether there has been the actual reduction in the clearance delay since the introduction of SWCS and PARIVESH portal, the Ministry of Coal in a written reply stated the following: -

“End to end processing for the approval of Mining Plan, grant of Mine Opening Permission and approval of Geological report are being done online through Single Window Clearance System (SWCS). The average time of approval of Mining Plan processed through SWCS in last 4 years is 4 ½ Months whereas the average time taken for the same before SWCS was 9-12 Months. Similarly, the average time in grant of Mine Opening Permission processed through SWCS is 15-17 days where as the average time taken for the same before SWCS was about 1 Month. The module for approval of Geological report has been introduced recently in July, 2025.

Process efficiency got improved through PARIVESH portal and according to MoEF&CC, the average of processing time of Environment Clearance (EC) proposals of coal mining on PARIVESH portal is reduced to 63 (FY 2024-25) days from 83 days 2021-22.”

3.21. When the MoEF&CC was queried that whereas the official data shows that PARIVESH 2.0 has cut down average EC time from 83 days in FY2021-22 to 63 days in FY2024-25), industry often cites 15–18 months for EC, the Ministry clarified that:

“As per extant provisions of EIA Notification 2006, the prescribed timelines for appraisal process for grant of Environmental Clearance (EC) is 105 days from the date of receipt of the complete application by the project proponent. The said timeframe is excluding the time frame involved in public hearing or additional information submission by the project proponent. The MoEF&CC further stated that the Ministry has undertaken various systemic reforms through amendment in Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification, 2006 and issuance of Office Memorandums in order to streamline the Environment Clearance process by taking into account the imperative need for development while balancing the same with due environmental safeguards in line with the concept of sustainable development. Due to these initiatives, the average number of days taken for grant of Environmental Clearance are within the stipulated timeline of 105 days.”

## CHAPTER IV

### INITIATIVES/ REFORMS UNDERTAKEN TO EXPEDITE COAL MINING PROPOSALS

4.1. The Ministry of Coal, in coordination with MoEF&CC, has undertaken several measures to ensure that the processes of Environmental Clearance and Forest Clearance are expedited to manage the rising workload and remain responsive to the sector's growing requirements.

4.2. During the Oral Evidence on the subject, the representative of the MoEF&CC said:

*"The Terms of Reference (ToR) validity has also been increased from three to four years. The project proponents are given the flexibility to do the baseline studies even before the grant of ToR. We have also standardised the Terms of Reference. The Terms of Reference can be auto-generated through the Parivesh Portal. For underground coal mining, standard Terms of Reference have been issued. Then, we have also reformed the public hearing process and the timeline for the reschedule of public hearing has been reduced from 30 to 15 days. The SDMs are authorised to chair the public hearing committees especially when it is from local sub-division.*

*For the coal, dispensation of expansion was given for 40-50 per cent expansion. We allowed it without any revision of EIA, EMP report which could be submitted subsequently. Then, we have also simplified the procedure for grant of certified compliance reports for the purpose of expansion. The ToRs and the ECs have been fast tracked, particularly for critical and strategic minerals and many of them are being allowed on out of turn consideration.*

*The timeline, within which we are processing these applications, is in the range of 70 to 80 days for each EC. The average timeline is 70 to 80 days as against the statutory timeline of 105 days. So, we have really brought it down particularly for the coal mining sector. Again, for non-coal mining sector, there are 114 ECs which have been granted and about 472 MTPA capacity has been approved. The timelines in this sector are also coming down."*

#### A. Initiatives taken to expedite the Environment Clearance in coal projects

4.3 The Ministry of Coal regularly reviews the progress to expedite the process of obtaining Environmental Clearances and actively engages with State Governments

and the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change to streamline the grant of such approvals.

4.4. The MoEF&CC in consultation with Ministry of Coal has undertaken several measures as under to streamline and accelerate project approvals-

- i) Provisions have been introduced to allow capacity expansion of up to 50% without the need for a fresh public hearing.
- ii) Decentralized and delegated powers to State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA) for dealing with coal mining projects less than 500 hectares.
- iii) Enhancement of the validity of EC of coal projects, making it co-terminus with the Mining Lease of the project.
- iv) The Consent to Establish (CTE) has been integrated with the Environmental Clearance (EC) approvals.
- v) To promote underground (UG) mining and reduce EC approval time, MoEF&CC issued an OM to consider UG mining proposals on an out-of-turn basis in addition to standardization of ToR and EC conditions for UG mining.
- vi) To facilitate faster clearances, the Single Window Clearance System (SWCS) portal which is enabled for the online approval of Mining Plans, grant of Mine Opening Permissions, and approval of Geological Reports, is integrated with the PARIVESH portal.

**B. Initiatives taken to expedite the Forest Clearance in coal projects**

4.5. Reforms introduced recently by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) have eased and streamlined the forest clearance process for coal sector projects.

- i) *Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Rules, 2023* introduced several procedural reforms by establishing Project Screening Committees at the State level, redefined the delegation of powers to Regional Offices, and promoted conservation principles in Compensatory Afforestation (CA).
- ii) Stage-II clearance can now be granted without insisting for the notification of CA land as Reserved Forest and the notification is mandated for handing over of the forest land. This will save 4 to 6 months of time in operationalization of mines.
- iii) Reintroduced the option of allowing degraded forest land double in extent (DDFL) of forest land being diverted in lieu of non-forest land as Compensatory Afforestation (CA), for Central PSUs and for the captive coal blocks of State PSUs.
- iv) General Approval under Section 2(2)(iii) of the Forest (Conservation) Act continues to apply for forest land located within the safety zone—provided it will not be used for mining—where CA and NPV have already been paid by the user agency.
- v) Exploration activities in forest areas, including pitting and trenching, are now permitted without the requirement of NPV or CA. The NOC process for conducting the permitted exploration activities in forest land has been simplified.
- vi) The validity of forest clearances for land acquired under the Coal Bearing Areas (Acquisition and Development) Act, 1957 has also been extended, making it co-terminus with the validity of Mining Lease.
- vii) Initiatives such as auto forwarding the EDS/ADS raised and the submission of compliance was introduced in PARIVESH 2.0 for saving time in processing.

### **C. Initiatives to improve capacity building and maintain expertise**

4.6. Some of the major initiatives taken for capacity building are as under:

- i) Regular training programs and workshop are conducted for executives involved in environment related activities
- ii) Recruitment of environmental professionals and GIS experts.
- iii) Strengthening of Sustainable Development Cells with adequate manpower across CIL Subsidiaries
- iv) Association with expert agencies (ICFRE, NEERI etc) and academic institutions (IITs, IIMs etc) for regular training and capacity building.
- v) Engagement of Functional Area Expert in Ecology & Biodiversity in CMPDIL for strengthening of EB related studies
- vi) Review of EIA/EMP proposals at CMPDIL & subsidiary level prior to submission to EAC for appraisal. Training of personnel through *iGOT Karmayogi* portal launched by Government of India.

4.7. On the question of capacity building, the Secretary, Ministry of Coal submitted during a sitting of the Committee that the programmes for capacity building are being undertaken periodically and the Ministry of Environment Forests & Climate Change (MoEF&CC) is also involved in some of the programmes.

4.8. When the Committee enquired about the manner in which the MoEF&CC ensures that EAC/SEAC members maintain updated expertise in rapidly evolving mining technologies, superior alternatives to check/inspect a site, etc., the MoEF&CC in a written reply informed the Committee as under:

“The Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC)/State Expert Appraisal Committee (SEAC) is a multi-disciplinary sectoral appraisal committee comprising of various subject matter experts in the following fields:

- Environment Quality: Experts in measurement, monitoring, analysis and interpretation of data in relation to environmental quality
- Sectoral Project Management: Experts in Project Management or Management of Process or Operations or Facilities in the relevant sectors.

- Environmental Impact Assessment Process: Experts in conducting and carrying out Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and preparation of Environmental Management Plans (EMPs) and other Management plans and who have wide expertise and knowledge of predictive techniques and tools used in the EIA process
- Risk Assessment
- Life Science (Floral and Faunal Management)
- Forestry and Wildlife
- Environmental Economics with experience in project appraisal
- Public Administration or Management covering various developmental sectors and environmental issues.

As part of the due diligence, during reconstitution of EACs/SEACs, no-conflict of interest certificates are also obtained from the expert members based on their expertise in relevant field. The Ministry also conducts quarterly review meetings with SEIAAs and SEACs to monitor performance, discuss emerging technologies, and address procedural bottlenecks.”

**D. PARIVESH Helpdesk**

4.9. On being asked whether the MoEF&CC is considering a central helpdesk or periodic directive to standardize interpretation and reduce delays stemming from State-level ambiguity, the Ministry in a written reply stated as below: -

“To facilitate smooth functioning and enhance user support, a dedicated Help Desk has been established in the Ministry. The Help Desk serves as a single-point contact for addressing queries and grievances of user agencies related to the approval process as well as the functioning of the PARIVESH portal. This initiative has significantly improved accessibility, responsiveness, and confidence among stakeholders.

Further, to ensure uniformity and transparency, the Ministry proactively addresses issues of divergent interpretation by issuing comprehensive clarifications, advisories, and guidelines. These measures not only resolve operational challenges but also strengthen compliance, streamline processes, and foster greater trust between the Ministry, State Governments, and user agencies.”

## CHAPTER V

### **REGULATORY AND IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES IN THE COAL SECTOR CLEARANCE MECHANISM**

5.1. Several initiatives and reforms have been made by the MoEF&CC in consultation with the Ministry of Coal for expediting and simplifying the grant of Environment Clearance and Forest Clearance process for coal mining projects. However, a few areas of concern are being faced for the timely operationalization of coal mines to meet the growing energy needs of the country towards '*Aatmanirbhar Bharat*'. Some of these issues are summarized as below:

#### **A. Availability and Cost Hurdles in Compensatory Afforestation for Coal Mining Projects**

5.2. The Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act, 2016 (CAF Act) provides the legal framework for compensating the loss of forest and ecosystem services due to diversion of forest land for non-forestry purposes as per provisions of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. The CAMPA funds, including Net Present Value (NPV), are received from various user agencies as compensatory levies in lieu of diversion of forest land and are project specific.

5.3. The Committee have been informed that the identification of Compensatory Afforestation (CA) land is a critical and time-consuming activity, and absence of land banks by State Governments cause delay in facilitating timely CA implementation.

5.4. On being asked about the concerns in this context during the oral evidence, the representatives of the Ministry of Coal brought the following challenges around CA land to the notice of the Committee: -

a. Non-consideration for the void for CA land: - The representative of the Ministry of Coal, among other issues, highlighted that:

*“...the third thing is consideration of the void for CA land. .... So far, the State government was taking the forest diversion, which is remaining. Now I feel that they are not taking the void for our Goleti OC. They are saying that the void will differentiate. Being wide will increase the resistance of the forest area and it will be a positive thing for the eco system and biodiversity. There is a void in the middle of the entire forest area and it is filled with water, not taking it does not seem right. We have requested to make a void.”*

It is inferred that mine voids, including those filled with water, are not allowed to be used as compensatory afforestation land, which otherwise would be a positive step for the ecosystem and biodiversity.

b. Non-availability of non-forest land: - An instance was highlighted in the oral evidence meeting that in the initial days in Jharkhand, coal mining was mainly done by diverting forest land. In exchange of the forest land that was diverted initially, and after that the void created in the mine was filled and afforestation was done again. However today, afforestation in Accredited Compensatory Afforestation (ACA) is not being able to be used again due to the abundance of forest land in Jharkhand. Similarly, Himachal Pradesh, which is barren land, but on paper it is written as forest land. Hence, compensatory afforestation funds are not able to get utilized.

c. Varying cost of CA per hectare of land: - The Committee note that the CA land cost is not standardized as in some States the user agencies are being charged Rs 9 lakh and others, they are being charged as high as Rs 22 lakh.

## **B. Challenges in Formalizing Compensatory Afforestation Land Banks Across States**

5.5. When asked whether any State has reported progress in identifying and reserving CA land for future coal projects, the Ministry of Coal in a written reply stated that as per the guidelines, '*a State Government or Union territory Administration as the case may be, for the purpose of compensatory afforestation, may create a land bank under the administrative control of the Department of Forest*' and also provided that, land under Accredited Compensatory Afforestation (ACA) can also be included in the land bank.

5.6. The Ministry of Coal further apprised the Committee in a written reply as under:

"MoEF&CC has facilitated to raise ACA over non-forest land acquired under Coal Bearing Area (CBA) Act, 1957. MoEF&CC has introduced proactive mechanism for ACA (Accredited Compensatory Afforestation) which allows practice of proactive afforestation over non-forest land to be used for obtaining FC. Clauses 7(ii) and 7(iii) encourage participation in ACA mechanism outlined by MoEF&CC. These provide '*State/UT shall make available in public domain, the model scheme for raising afforestation for different agro-climatic zone, the use by the aspiring persons/agencies to prepare their afforestation scheme for 5 years and schemes for existing afforestation for the same proposed afforestation, as the case may be.*

*Any person or agency keen to register in the ACA Scheme may submit viz. maps, authenticated copies of non-forest land and/or existing afforestation scheme and/or composition of existing afforestation, prepared on the basis of model scheme of the concerned State/UT.*"

5.7. The Ministry of Coal further stated that information related to land bank is available with the State Forest department, and that creation of land banks by State Governments would be very helpful in enhancing the efficiency of the Forest Clearance process. Handing over of forest land is carried out by State government after final forest approval and obtaining NOC under the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006. Process of handing over forest land, tree felling and possession is carried out in parts and vary from State to

State. At present, in lieu of diversion of forest land, CA is being raised over non-forest and/ or degraded forest land provided by State government as per availability.

5.8. While briefing of the Committee, the Secretary, Ministry of Coal, said:

*“Among the various approvals required at the Central and State levels, the most time-consuming has historically been the Forest Clearance (FC) process. This is primarily because it involves multiple steps such as identification and notification of compensatory afforestation (CA) land, tree enumeration, preparation of land schedules that match with DGPS survey maps, and settlement of rights under the Forest Rights Act (FRA).”*

### **C. State-Level Bottlenecks in Forest Land Transfer and Tree Cutting Permissions**

5.9. After the grant of final approval, i.e., FC-II, the Central Government grants its prior approval under the *Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980*. State Governments, after obtaining the prior approval of the Central Government, hand over the land to the user agency.

5.10. In a written reply MoEF&CC has stated as below:

*“Land, being the State Subject, the discretion of handing over the forest land, after obtaining the prior approval of the Central Government, vests with the State Government concerned. Raising of demand note, tree cutting permission, disposal of trees etc. are governed in accordance with the provisions of the State specific tree felling Act, rules or laws.”*

5.11. In a meeting, the Secretary, Ministry of Coal submitted:

*“In addition, delays often occur at the State level in issuing diversion orders and handing over of land even after Stage-II FC is granted.”*

5.12. In this context, it was further submitted by a representative of the Ministry of Coal expressing the following concern:

*“After environmental clearance, FC-1 and FC-2, the actual work starts when the project land is handed over, and that there is no timeline in that. Currently, the process that is done with the State government for handing over forest land has more than 12 steps. Most of the steps are already complied with while taking FC-2. It gets repeated and because there is no timeline set from there, there is a delay in mining.”*

5.13. It was suggested before the Committee that there should be a timeline for handing over forest land and tree cutting, so that the forest land is handed over within that timeline and the project starts.

5.14. It was further informed as under:

*"In the recent amendment in the FC Act, 1980, it was said that all the State governments should update the records of the year 1980. A case is going on in the Supreme Court, in which the Hon'ble Supreme Court has also said that the States should update the forest records. If the State government updates its records in it, then whatever records are updated in the context of the 1980 Act, only that will be considered forest. A list of deemed forests is also being prepared in it"*

5.15. In order to update the records in the *Jamabandi*, it was informed to the Committee that the representatives of the Ministry have also held continuous meetings with the State governments and are persuading them to update the records. They are hopeful that once the records are updated, then everything will be clear as to which is forest land, where diversion will be applicable and where it will not be applicable.

#### **D. Issues at the stage of Gram Sabha and Public Hearing**

5.16. The Gram Sabha plays a crucial role in granting consent for land acquisition and diversion of forest land under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006, ensuring that the rights of local and tribal communities are recognised before mining begins. Its approval is recorded through resolutions and public consultations and is a mandatory step at the public hearing stage of Environmental Clearance and Stage-I of Forest Clearance. The State Government must certify settlement of community rights under FRA ensuring that local participation cannot be bypassed.

5.17. In a meeting with the Ministries of Coal and MoEF&CC, it was highlighted that much time is taken at the Gram Sabha stage. A representative of the Ministry of Coal stated that:

*"Sir, the Gram Sabha itself takes a little more time. What you are saying is of two years, any big project, sometimes comes in two districts also. Like Kotre-Basantpur example. It comes in Ramgarh and Bokaro districts. If there are five-seven villages here and there in two districts, then sometimes there is initial*

*objection. Managing that and dedicating time to DC at both the places takes five to six months. The rest of the one and a half years to two and a half years that is being talked about, this includes EC, FC stage one, FC stage two. But initial public consultation, in Gram Sabha, is a time taking process. Many times, different things keep happening in the district also. There is a local election, somewhere there is assembly election, somewhere there is parliamentary election. At that time DC also takes one or two months. It is not like we will go today and do it tomorrow. We have to coordinate with both the State Pollution Control Board. But we have received tremendous help over the last three years.”*

5.18. Public consultation remains a statutory requirement under the EIA Notification, 2006 (and amendments) for all Category 'A' and Category 'B1' projects. This ensures both site-level public hearings and written feedback from stakeholders.

5.19. As regards reforms at this stage, in a written reply, the Ministry of Coal apprised the Committee of an initiative of the MoEF&CC that allows expansion of production capacity up to 50% without requiring a new public hearing. They further stated as under: -

“The Ministry issued an OM dated 11.04.2022 for expansion in production capacity, within existing land, up to 50% without requirement of public hearing. As per the said OM, proposals are submitted with Environment Management Plan for 50% enhanced capacity EC along with certified compliance report by Regional Offices (MoEF&CC). EC proposal is scrutinized at MoEF&CC and detailed appraisal is done by EAC. Post recommendation of EAC, EC is granted. Also, EC is granted in three phases (20%, 20% and 10%) for enhanced capacity with EAC deliberation and review of environmental safeguard conditions in every phase for which compliance report are submitted to MoEF&CC regularly. Additionally, public consultation through written communication is also done for the last 10% expansion, through State Pollution Control Board (SPCB) and raised concern are addressed.

Besides, provision has been made for exemption from fresh public hearing for legacy revalidation cases and inclusion of view of public through consultation only. Among the nine stages of EC, public hearing is the major time-consuming stage.”

Steps involved in EC process	Average durations for each step of the EC process for coal mining projects
Issuance of ToR	90 Days
Draft EIA/EMP submission	90 Days (Considering Baseline data is available. In case of baseline data generation, data is to be generated for 3 months of non-monsoon season)
Public Hearing	90 Days
Final EIA/EMP submission	60 Days
Appraisal and grant of EC	90 Days

#### **E. Concern over mandatory Fly Ash Utilization**

5.20. The Fly Ash Notification S.O. 5481(E), dated 31st December 2021, made it obligatory for coal mines within 300 km of a Thermal Power Plant (TPP) to undertake backfilling or mixing of fly ash with overburden (OB) under Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and to ensure 25% ash-overburden (OB) mixing. However, the Ministry of Coal states that the provision is inconsistent with the Polluter Pays Principle since fly ash is generated at TPPs and not at coal mines.

5.21. Polluter Pays Principle is environmental law concept that holds that those who cause pollution should be financially responsible for its management and for the costs of remediating any resulting environmental damage. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) is an environmental policy approach where the producers, importers, and brand owners (PIBOs) are made responsible for the entire lifecycle of their products, especially for their post-consumer waste management.

5.22. The Ministry of Coal submitted that scientific studies by reputed institutions indicate that mixing of 25 % fly ash with OB reduces the Factor of Safety, creating risks of slope instability and dump failure. From an environmental perspective, transporting fly ash up to 300 km for disposal in mines only shifts the problem from TPPs, while

generating carbon emissions. Managing fly ash at source within TPP premises is more sustainable and avoids unnecessary transport-related pollution.

5.23. Mixing ash with OB increases dump volume and land requirements, which already pose challenges due to limited land availability and costly rehabilitation and resettlement obligations. The financial burden of complying with the current provisions is extremely high, running into tens of thousands of crores annually, diverting resources away from mine reclamation and core operations.

5.24. The Committee was apprised that in order to address these issues, the Ministry of Coal constituted a Central Level Working Group (CLWG) with MoEF&CC, Central Electricity Authority (CEA), CPCB, and DGMS to identify suitable voids for ash backfilling. The CLWG recommended using abandoned or closed mines instead of active OB dumps. Therefore, the Ministry of Coal has requested MoEF&CC to amend the notification to remove coal companies from EPR obligations and the mandatory 25% mixing clause.

5.25. When the MoEF&CC was queried on this topic, the Ministry in a written reply stated that a meeting was held with the Ministry of Coal to review the matter on 25.07.2025 and has been requested to share the studies conducted in mines bringing out safety and operational challenges, if any.

5.26. On being further asked upon the status of implementation of fly ash utilization in construction across India and whether any assessment has been done to gauge or scale up its success implementation, the Ministry of Coal replied that the implementation with regard to utilization of fly ash comes under the purview of Ministry of Power. They further provided the status of implementation of fly ash utilization in construction across India during FY 24-25 and in FY 25-26 is tabulated below as per the information received from Central Electricity Authority, Ministry of Power: -

Fly Ash Utilization							
FY	Total Ash Generation (LMT)	In Making of Fly Ash based/Brick/Blo cks /Tiles etc. (LMT)	In Manufacture of portland pozzolana cement (LMT)	In Construction of Highways & Roads including flyovers (LMT)	Part replacement of cement in concrete (LMT)	In Hydro power sector in RCC Dam construction (LMT)	Total utilisation in construction sector (LMT)
2024-25	3420.54	478.92	926.00	1074.84	70.51	3.04	2553
01.04.2025-12.09.2025	1193.65	151.70	334.68	347.36	24.64	0.00	858

#### **F. Repeated EDS/ADS Queries in Clearance Applications**

5.27. The Essential Details Sought (EDS) and Additional Details Sought (ADS) mechanisms are meant to ensure that proposals submitted for environmental clearance are complete and accurate. An EDS is generally raised only once, at the stage when shortcomings or gaps are noticed in the application, while ADS pertains to project-specific clarifications that may be needed later based on technical or contextual factors.

5.28. It was further informed by the representatives of MoEF&CC that Member Secretaries, who are scientists, have been advised to avoid raising multiple rounds of EDS or ADS so as to prevent procedural delays.

5.29. When asked the reason behind issuing piecemeal EDS/ ADS instead of a comprehensive set at first appraisal, the Ministry in a written response stated that instructions have been issued to all Regional Offices and processing authorities to raise a comprehensive set of queries in one instance and subsequent EDS, if any,

emanates from the incomplete information furnished in reply to the comprehensive EDS.

#### **G. Blanket Clearance for Special and Clean Coal Projects**

5.30. There are certain special projects like Underground mines (UG) and Underground Coal Gasification (UCG) projects and Clean Coal technology-based pilot-scale projects. Underground coal mining offers several advantages, particularly from environmental, land-use, and social perspectives. Since underground mining causes minimal disturbance to surface features, it results in reduced damage to infrastructure, agricultural land, forests, and habitation areas. This method of mining leads to lower land reclamation and rehabilitation costs after mining activities cease. Underground mining leaves comparatively less surface footprint, thereby contributing to lower indirect greenhouse gas emissions associated with land degradation and loss of vegetation. It is also well-suited for extracting deep-seated coal reserves, which are often of higher quality. Underground mine operations are generally less susceptible to adverse weather conditions, which can disrupt surface mining operations. This makes underground mining more feasible throughout the year under varying climatic conditions.

5.31. The Ministry of Coal informed the Committee that MoEF&CC *vide* OM dt: 17-03-2025 has directed that UG projects shall be considered on an out of turn basis and clearances shall be issued expeditiously. Further, MoEF&CC *vide* OM dt: 25-07-2025 has issued a standard term of reference (ToR) and standard EC for UG mines. As on 08.09.2025, UG mining proposal of CIL are yet to be taken up on the basis of aforementioned OMs.

5.32. In view of the relatively low environmental impact associated with underground coal mining, the standard ToR has been introduced and these proposals are being considered on out of turn basis for expeditious processing of EC.

5.33. In a meeting, the Secretary, Ministry of Coal acknowledged the suggestion of the Committee on a standard ToRs, SOPs and single window of clearance for open cast mining in line with UG mines.

5.34. Underground Coal Gasification (UCG) has been recognized as an emerging clean coal technology with potential for minimal surface disturbance and lower environmental footprint. It is a method that extracts energy from deep coal seams without conventional mining. The Committee is informed that at present, a pilot UCG project is under implementation in Kasta Coal Block, Jharkhand, under the research and development framework.

5.35. The Ministry of Coal stated that in case of UCG, exemption is sought from obtaining EC for coal gasification pilot project to understand the behaviour of geo-mining characteristics/parameters for UCG. This is required for establishing the commercial feasibility of UCG production and associated environment impact.

5.36. When asked the reason behind not categorizing such projects under the B2 category, the Ministry of Coal stated that UCG is still at a pilot and experimental stage in India and has not yet been commercially proven under Indian geo-mining conditions. The environmental and operational impacts, such as groundwater contamination, land subsidence, and potential gas leakage, are not fully understood at this stage. In the absence of adequate baseline data and practical experience, it would not be advisable to classify UCG as a low-risk (B2) category project. Categorizing the projects is under the scope of MoEF&CC.

5.37. The Committee asked the MoEF&CC on the prevailing system at present for giving EC for such projects and whether the Ministry will consider placing UCG under Category B2, with simplified and faster conditional EC for pilots and full EC at commercial stage. The Ministry replied that UCG as a technology has not been extensively used globally and remains unproven under Indian conditions, particularly due to the high ash content in coal and other environmental concerns. Since the actual development of UCG and production of syngas through pilot projects is yet to be demonstrated, this matter requires detailed deliberation in the EAC (Industry-II). Accordingly, the issue has been included as an additional agenda item in the upcoming EAC meeting. The same has been communicated to the Ministry of Coal, with a request to depute an expert with technical expertise in UCG to provide inputs and clarifications before the Committee. This will enable the EAC to take an informed decision.

#### **H. Non-invitation of Project Proponent in the meetings of FAC for grant of FC**

5.38. The Coal Ministry apprised the Committee that their participation in the EC and FC approval processes of coal projects can ensure better coordination and faster resolution of issues.

5.39. As the presence of project proponent in the Forest Advisory Committee (FAC) meetings will promptly address concerns of committee, coal company representatives should be allowed to be present in the FAC meetings for grant of FC of the respective project. Further, MoEF&CC, as a collaborative approach has allowed presence of Ministry of Road Transport & Highways officials in appraisal of their EC-FC proposals and vice versa, to properly understand and address issues. The Ministry of Coal further informed that MoEF&CC has been requested to allow their participation in the FAC and EAC meeting of the coal mining projects.

5.40. When the MoEF&CC was asked whether project proponents or Ministry of Coal officials are allowed to attend FAC meetings to clarify issues, the MoEF&CC in a written reply stated that as per provisions contained under EIA, 2006, project proponent is invited for participation in the Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) meetings. Further, as per EIA, 2006, Chairman of EAC can co-opt an expert as a Member in a relevant field for a particular meeting of the Committee. Accordingly, representatives from Coal Ministry participated in the EAC meetings for Underground Coal Mining Standard ToR finalization. Hence, representative from Coal ministry can participate in the EAC meetings for Environment Clearance.

5.41. As for the Forest Clearance, the Ministry of Coal stated that generally, the FAC meets on monthly basis wherein FC proposals (including coal mining) submitted at MoEF&CC level are discussed and the project is explained to the committee by IG (Inspector General), Forest as well as Nodal Officer of the State Forest Department. Although, Project Proponents or Ministry of Coal officials are not allowed to attend FAC meetings but, as per Clause 5(6) of *Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Rules*, 2023, it has been provided that "*the user agency may be allowed to attend the meeting of the Advisory Committee for such duration as may be necessary to furnish such information or clarify any issue which may pertain to it.*"

5.42. Further, the MoEF&CC furnished that 'Land' is a State Subject and accordingly, the proposal seeking prior approval of the Central Government under the *Adhiniyam*, 1980 is submitted by the State Government. Designated Nodal Officer for the purpose makes all correspondences with the Central Government and communication on behalf of State Government and attends the meeting of the Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee examines or appraises the proposal from ecological perspectives. Various ecological parameters viz. vegetation density, land proposed for compensatory

land proposed proposals, optimum requirement of forest land, alternatives explored etc. are appraised by the Committee. To ensure proper assessment of various ecological considerations, the Nodal Officer of the State dealing with the forest conservation matters and Regional Office of the Ministry assist the Committee in the appraisal process. User Agency is also allowed to make presentation of their proposals and specific issues pertaining to them, whenever, the Advisory Committee desires such presentation from the user agency.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **STATUS OF VARIOUS COAL MINING PROJECTS**

6.1. As informed by the Ministry of Coal, time required for securing forest clearance vary from State to State generally taking around 24–30 months. Sometimes FC may take longer time due to site specific issues. After grant of FC, handover and physical possession of forest land also sometimes delay the operationalization of mines. Present status of some of the coal mining projects are as under: -

#### **A. Chitra Opencast Project (ECL, Jharkhand)**

6.2. The Chitra Opencast Project in Jharkhand falls under the Eastern Coalfields Limited (ECL), a subsidiary of Coal India Limited. Stage-II FC for Chitra OC (124.28 Ha) was accorded on 10.07.2019. Whereas handover first issued for 79.10 Ha on 17.10.2022. As on 08.09.2025, handover of 24.16 Ha forest land is awaited approval from State government of Jharkhand.

#### **B. Kotre Basantpur Pachmo Opencast Project (CCL, Jharkhand)**

6.3. The Kotre Basantpur Pachmo project in Jharkhand falls under the Central Coalfields Limited (CCL), a subsidiary of Coal India Limited. The proposal involving 855.17 Ha of forest land was first submitted to DFO on 01.07.2019. Stage-I Forest Clearance was granted on 27.02.2023, followed by Stage-II Forest Clearance on 14.03.2024, taking an overall period of approximately 4.5 years.

#### **C. Chandragupta Opencast Project (CCL, Jharkhand)**

6.4. The proposal of Chandragupta OCP involving 699.38 Ha of forest land was submitted to DFO on 03.12.2021. Stage-I Forest Clearance was granted on

27.05.2024, followed by Stage-II Forest Clearance on 23.04.2025, taking an overall period of approximately 3 years.

**D. Durgapur Deep Extension Opencast Project (WCL, Maharashtra)**

6.5. Stage-II FC for 121.58 Ha of Durgapur Deep Extn. OC of WCL was issued by MoEF&CC on 22.12.2021. Possession/ Diversion Order was issued by the Maharashtra Government on 26.09.2023. Tree felling activity is held-up due to ongoing Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in Hon'ble Bombay High Court.

## PART-II

### OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 1. Energy security in tandem with environmental responsibility

Coal continues to be the backbone of India's energy security and industrial growth contributing approximately 55 per cent to the national energy needs and fuelling about 74 per cent of total power generation through thermal coal. Coal mining in India is permitted with a statutory clearance process which have a structured mechanism for various clearances including the Environmental Clearance and the Forest Clearance which are granted by the various Central Ministries and State Government departments/agencies to ensure that energy development proceeds in an environmentally sustainable, legally compliant and socially responsible manner. The Committee note that the country has achieved a historic milestone of one billion tonne of coal production in FY 2024-25 and the Ministry has set a target of 1.5 billion tonnes of coal production by the year 2030. The Committee, while appreciating the efforts undertaken by the Ministry of Coal to enhance domestic coal production and reduce import dependence, also note that steps are being taken to reduce carbon emissions from coal mines by creating carbon sinks through plantations, adoption of clean coal technologies like coal gasification and diversifying in renewable energy projects including solar, wind and geo-thermal energy and emphasize on environmental protection and community welfare.

(Recommendation No. 1)

## **2. Environmental Clearance for coal mining projects**

The Committee note that Environmental Clearance (EC) for coal mining projects is a statutory prerequisite mandated under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 and the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification, 2006. The Notification classifies coal mining under “Mining of Minerals,” requiring prior EC from the competent authority depending on the size of the lease area. Projects with mining lease area exceeding 500 hectares are categorized as Category-A and appraised at the Central level by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) through its Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC), while those of 500 hectares or less fall under Category-B and are appraised by the respective State Environment Impact Assessment Authorities (SEIAA) and State Expert Appraisal Committees (SEAC). This bifurcation between Category-A and B was introduced to expedite clearances. The Committee observe that since the notification came into effect from 22.04.2022, a total of only 12 environmental clearances have been granted for projects below 500 hectares. The Committee may therefore be apprised of the number of applications received for environmental clearances for projects below 500 hectares and the number of applications rejected and the reasons thereof.

(Recommendation No. 2)

## **3. Process of Environment Clearance for Coal Mining Projects**

The Committee note that the EC process comprises four key stages—screening, scoping, public consultation, and appraisal. The process comprises the Project Proponent (PP), State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs), District

Administration, EAC, MoEF&CC, SEAC, SEIAA. The entire EC workflow has been digitized through the PARIVESH Portal functioning as a single-window online system integrating proposal submission, public hearing records, expert committee appraisal, and final clearance orders. The Committee commend this initiative as a step towards transparency, traceability, and efficiency in the EC process. The Committee note that the State Pollution Control Boards facilitates the public hearing with support of the District Administration. The Committee also note that the EAC meets once in 15 days to review proposals, based on which ECs are granted by the MoEF&CC with stipulated safeguards. The Committee desire that any bottlenecks in the process may be identified to resolve them in order to speed up the process of environmental clearances.

(Recommendation No. 3)

#### **4. Process of Forest Clearance for Coal Mining Projects**

The Committee note that Forest Clearance (FC) is a mandatory statutory requirement under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 for diversion of forest land for non-forest use, including coal mining operations. With the enactment of the *Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 2023*, the focus of forest governance has been widened from mere protection (*Sanrakshan*) to both protection and promotion (*Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan*), underscoring a progressive and holistic approach towards sustainable forest management. The Committee further note that the FC process is bifurcated into two stages: Stage-I (In-Principle Approval) and Stage-II (Final Approval). Stage-I represents the preliminary acceptance of diversion proposals subject to conditions such as identification of Compensatory Afforestation (CA) land and payment of Net

Present Value (NPV), while Stage-II clearance is accorded after verification of compliance with all Stage-I conditions. The Committee find that this two-tier process ensures environmental safeguards and accountability involving multiple layers of scrutiny at both the State and Central levels. The Committee further note that the appraisal process involves several tiers of examination from the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) and Chief Conservator of Forests (CCF) through the State Project Screening Committees to the Forest Advisory Committee (FAC) in the MoEF&CC. The FAC generally meets once every month to examine proposals. While appreciating this institutional structure, the Committee desire the Ministry to look into the aspect of increasing the frequency of meetings of FAC so as to speed up the project approvals.

(Recommendation No. 4)

##### **5. Time Taken for Environment Clearance and Forest Clearance**

The Committee are informed that the average time taken for EC for Central Public Sector Undertakings is roughly 15 to 18 months and the same for commercial coal blocks of private sector is around 26 months, whereas, the average time taken for FC approvals ranges from 24–30 months for Central Public Sector Undertakings (CPSUs) and up to 34 months for commercial coal blocks of private sector. The Committee therefore may be apprised of the reasons for this difference in average time taken and are of the view that efforts may be made to reduce the average time taken for environment and forest clearances for public and private sectors. The Committee are also of the view that a system to coordinate between the stakeholders like project proponent,

state level environment authority, Ministry of Forest, Environment and Climate Change and others may be explored to expedite the clearances.

(Recommendation No. 5)

**6. Transformation of Green Governance through PARIVESH**

The Committee observe that the launch of the PARIVESH portal in 2018 mark a significant reform in the environmental clearance regime by providing a single-window online platform for processing Environment, Forest, Wildlife, and Coastal Regulation Zone clearances. The Committee view this as a step towards the vision of the Government in improving e-Governance and enhancing ease of doing business. The Committee are happy to note the successful upgradation of PARIVESH 1.0 to PARIVESH 2.0, thereby expanding its scope and leveraging on technological advancements such as Geographical Information System (GIS)/ Management Information System (MIS) based Know Your Approval (KYA) tool, GIS-based Decision Support System (DSS), Advance Data Analytics, etc. The Committee also note that PARIVESH 2.0 has introduced a comprehensive automation of the clearance process — covering the entire workflow from submission of applications to grant of clearances and post-clearance compliance monitoring — without manual intervention, with real-time updating. The Committee appreciate that the platform has made clearance processes more efficient, transparent, and paperless, in alignment with the Government's vision of "Minimum Government, Maximum Governance". The Committee are of the view that suggestions by Project Proponents regarding more technical features to be incorporated in PARIVESH 2.0 may also be looked into for better

project documentation.

(Recommendation No. 6)

**7. Single Window Clearance System of the Ministry of Coal**

The Committee note that the Ministry of Coal has conceptualized a Single Window Clearance System (SWCS) to streamline the process of obtaining various statutory clearances and approvals necessary for the operationalization of coal mines in the country. The system aims to act as a unified gateway encompassing approvals such as mining plans, mine closure plans, and other statutory permissions in a time bound manner. The Committee appreciate that the portal has been designed with a modern digital framework capable of mapping the application formats and also the process flow of clearances through Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) with existing online systems of concerned Ministries and Departments. The Committee further note that the integration of Single Window Clearance System of the Ministry of Coal with PARIVESH 2.0 is a progressive step towards inter-ministerial digital coordination which enables seamless tracking, monitoring, and auto-fetching of data across clearances, thereby reducing duplication and enhancing transparency. The Committee also appreciate the operationalization of the Project Information Management System (PRIMS) module under the Single Window Clearance System which serves as a centralized digital repository of data pertaining to project specific information relating to coal blocks.

(Recommendation No. 7)

## **8. Permissions Processed Outside PARIVESH and SWCS**

The Committee note that in addition to the integrated clearance system offered by PARIVESH and SWCS, several other permissions continue to be processed independently and separately. These include approvals from agencies such as the Directorate General of Mines Safety (DGMS), Central Ground Water Authority (CGWA), and Water Resources Department, which remain outside the ambit of the integrated digital framework. The Committee are of the view that in complex cases involving inter-sectoral overlaps, a single harmonized coordination mechanism may lead to non-duplication, accountability and timely clearance and execution of projects. Although SWCS offers a platform for submission and tracking of applications, its integration with external agencies beyond the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change is still limited. Hence, the Committee recommend that permissions and NOCs from other agencies like the DGMS, CGWA and Water Resources Department etc. that are currently being handled through separate, individual processes outside the integrated system of PARIVESH and SWCS may be brought under a single window.

(Recommendation No. 8)

## **9. Initiatives to expedite Forest Clearance in Coal Projects**

The Committee note that the recent reforms under the *Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Rules, 2023* were introduced for decentralisation and simplification of the forest clearance process. The establishment of Project Screening Committees at the State level and the delegation of powers to

Regional Offices have contributed to faster decision-making while ensuring oversight. The Committee also observe that permitting Stage-II clearance prior to the notification of CA land as Reserved Forest has significantly reduced delays, cutting operationalisation time by nearly six months. Similarly, the reintroduction of the option of degraded double forest land (DDFL) as CA for Central and State PSUs has provided flexibility in land management, particularly in coal-bearing areas with limited availability of non-forest land. Further, it has been observed that the exploration activities in forest land are now permitted without payment of NPV or CA, thus promoting preliminary geological assessment without procedural burdens. The automatic forwarding of EDS/ADS queries and the digital submission of compliance reports under PARIVESH 2.0 have also contributed to procedural efficiency. At the same time, the Committee note that certain challenges persist in identification and transfer of CA lands, reconciliation of forest area records between States and user agencies, and in uniform interpretation of delegation of powers at regional levels. The Committee hope that adequate efforts will be taken to streamline the above towards timebound final approval and Coal mine operationalisation.

(Recommendation No. 9)

#### **10. Initiatives to Improve Capacity Building and Update Expertise**

The Committee note that the Ministry of Coal has undertaken several initiatives for capacity building to enhance the institutional and technical capabilities of personnel involved in environmental management and clearance-related functions. Regular training programmes and workshops are conducted for executives engaged in environment-related activities, with the participation

of the MoEF&CC. The Committee note with appreciation the initiatives taken for enrolment of environmental professionals, GIS experts, experts in Ecology and Biodiversity, etc. and are of the view that the members of the EACs and SEACs maintain updated expertise in rapidly evolving mining technologies and environmental management tools. While acknowledging these measures, the Committee observe that continuous professional development of EAC/SEAC members will maintain the quality of environmental appraisals. The Committee are also of the view that the scale and frequency of such trainings and capacity-building initiatives may be enhanced across subsidiaries and States.

(Recommendation No. 10)

**11. Cost of Compensatory Afforestation per hectare across States**

The Committee observe that the cost of CA per hectare varies significantly across States, from ₹9 lakh to ₹22 lakh. Such inconsistent costs across the States not only leads to uncertainty for user agencies but also results in disputes and delays in project execution. The Committee may therefore be apprised of the reasons of this disparity and proposed action to minimise this.

(Recommendation No. 11)

**12. Creation of State-level Land Bank**

The Committee observe that since the identification of Compensatory Afforestation land is a critical and time-consuming activity towards grant of Forest Clearance for coal mining projects, the creation of land banks by State Governments will be beneficial in timely CA implementation. Since there are guidelines from MoEF&CC permitting the creation of land banks under the

administrative control of State Forest Departments, the Committee recommend that the MoEF&CC and the Ministry of Coal should pursue the matter with the States for pre-identified land banks of degraded forest land and non-forest land suitable for compensatory afforestation.

(Recommendation No. 12)

**13. Timely Issuance of No Objection Certificates at State Level**

The Committee observe that in view of the importance of protection of forest rights, there is a pressing need to harmonize administrative processes for issuing of NOCs under the provisions of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006. The Committee are therefore of the view that issuance of No Objection Certificates (NOCs) may be ensured in a time bound manner in order to save time and cost overruns. In order to strengthen state-level engagement, the Committee desire that the Ministry of Coal may communicate with the States to address forest clearance bottlenecks by reducing delays in the process.

(Recommendation No. 13)

**14. Digitization of State Land Records**

The Committee note that 'Land' being a state subject, all matters pertaining to forest land and related data come under the purview of respective State governments. The process for issuing diversion orders and tree felling permissions is discretionary and governed by variable State-specific laws, leading to significant and unpredictable delays. The Committee observe that updated and accurate State Forest records are a prerequisite for expediting

environment and forest clearances. This in turn requires close coordination among coal bearing States resolution of outdated and conflicting forest records that frequently hinder timely commencement of projects. The Committee emphasise that handing over of forest land to the coal companies after grant of Stage II Forest Clearance by the MoEF&CC along with issuance of demand note, tree cutting permissions, disposal of felled timber etc. need to be prioritised and done in a time bound manner. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Ministry of Coal and MoEF&CC should pursue States to publish digitized *Jamabandi/ Khesra* maps clearly distinguishing between recorded forest, deemed forest and non-forest land. In the light of the recent directions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India, the Committee recommend issuing directive to all States and Union Territories to finalize the identification of forest areas and compile a consolidated digital record of forest lands, including those

categorized as unclassed or deemed community forests.

(Recommendation No. 14)

#### **15. Streamlining and Standardizing Gram Sabha Consultation**

The Committee recognize the important role of Gram Sabha in land acquisition and forest diversion under the Forest Rights Act, 2006, protecting the rights of local and tribal communities before mining projects begin. This approval of Gram Sabha, obtained through resolutions and public consultations, is a mandatory step for securing Environment and Forest Clearances for coal mining projects. However, the Committee note that delay in getting clearance by Gram Sabhas under the Forest Rights Act, 2006 is one of

the most cited causes of delay in Forest Clearance. These delays are primarily due to the complexities of coordination across multiple districts and management of local objections, aggravated often by local elections or the need to align schedules of various authorities such as the Deputy Commissioner (DC) and the State Pollution Control Board. In this context, the Committee recommend that the Ministry of Coal, in consultation with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, develop a standardized protocol for Gram Sabha resolutions and verification procedures under the Forest Rights Act, 2006 across all coal-bearing States. The Ministry of Coal and MoEF&CC may also jointly develop standardized digital templates for Gram Sabha certification and make them available on the PARIVESH portal to enable uniform online submissions and verifications.

(Recommendation No. 15)

#### **16. Optimizing Public Hearings and Addressing Local Issues**

The Committee are cognizant of the significance of Public Hearing stage in the process of obtaining environment and forest clearances as it provides a platform for local communities to express their concerns and for project proponents to ensure transparency and accountability. At the same time, the Committee note that repeated or lengthy Public Hearings delay projects. This lengthy process has led to reforms allowing up to 50% expansion in production capacity without the requirement of a fresh public hearing. The Committee are of the considered view that the process can be further streamlined by allowing hybrid modes of public consultation with online hearings to reduce redundancy

and procedural delays, while ensuring genuine participation.

(Recommendation No. 16)

**17. Support Desk for Project Proponents to Address EDS/ADS Requirements**

The Committee note that the Essential Details Sought (EDS) and Additional Details Sought (ADS) mechanisms aim to ensure that proposals submitted for environmental clearance are complete and accurate. However, issuing multiple rounds of piecemeal EDS/ADS requests instead of one comprehensive query has caused procedural delays. In this regard, the Committee welcome the initiative taken by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, in instructing officials to avoid raising successive queries on incomplete responses. The Committee observe that delays also arise due to project proponents not submitting complete responses to EDS/ADS. The Committee therefore recommend that the Ministry of Coal may explore the possibility of a technical help desk to help PSUs and private players in responding comprehensively to EDS/ADS queries.

(Recommendation No. 17)

**18. Policy Simplification for Underground Mine Projects**

The Committee note that Underground Mines (UG), Underground Coal Gasification (UCG) projects and Clean Coal Technology-based pilot projects represent special categories of coal sector initiatives that offer significant environmental and operational advantages. Underground coal mining minimizes surface disturbance, thereby preserving land, forests, and infrastructure while reducing land reclamation costs and indirect greenhouse

gas emissions. This method also allows access to high-quality, deep-seated reserves and ensures year-round operations regardless of weather conditions.

However, the Committee note that despite low environmental impact, several UG projects undergo the same clearance and documentation processes as in the case for large open-cast coal mines, thereby reportedly facing delays. The Committee, therefore, emphasize the need for policy simplification and standardized protocols for UG coal mining practices in India. The Committee also desire to explore the feasibility of placing standard ToRs, SOPs on the single window clearance system for open cast mining in line with UG mines.

(Recommendation No. 18)

#### **19. Policy Support for Underground Coal Gasification Projects**

The Committee observe that Underground Coal Gasification is another emerging clean coal technology, that promotes cleaner fuel alternatives and supports India's transition towards sustainable energy. While UCG holds promise for enhancing the country's energy security, this driving innovation is currently working under a pilot mode. In order to accelerate deployment of innovative technologies such as UCG pilot projects, R&D initiatives and clean coal technology demonstration with significantly lower environmental footprint and risk profile, the Ministry of Coal may explore the feasibility of establishing a Joint Sub Committee along with MoEF&CC and Directorate General of Mines Safety to vet such projects through a single appraisal process. Further, integrated guidelines on emerging coal technologies may also be framed defining the clearance route and environmental safeguards in accordance with the carbon impact they tend to make. A dedicated Standard Operating

Procedure (SOP) for UCG could help streamline approvals by defining site-specific study requirements, risk assessment protocols, and compliance monitoring mechanisms. The Committee would also like to be apprised of the deliberation in the EAC (Industry-II) Committee meeting on the feasibility of classifying such projects under B2 category containing projects having minimal environmental impact.

(Recommendation No. 19)

**20. Participation of Project Proponent in Forest Advisory Committee Meetings**

The Committee note the that the participation of the Ministry of Coal and Project Proponents in the Forest Advisory Committee meetings can facilitate better coordination and faster resolution of project-related issues. While the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has stated that user agencies may be invited on a need-basis as per Clause 5(6) of *Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Rules, 2023*, the Committee desire that the participation of Coal Ministry representatives and project proponents may be institutionalized in FAC meetings to enable explanations in real-time on issues and ensure expeditious disposal of forest clearance proposals.

(Recommendation No. 20)

**21. Rationalization of Fly Ash Utilization Provisions**

The Committee note that under the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), coal mines have to ensure 25% fly ash mixing with overburden (OB) as per norms. The Committee also note the Ministry of Coal's view regarding provision to be made according to the Polluter Pays Principle since fly ash is

generated by thermal power plants. The Committee are apprised of the alternate avenues for fly ash utilization, such as manufacture of cement, bricks, blocks, tiles, etc. The Committee further note that both the Ministry of Coal and the MoEF&CC are in consultation on the issue of fly ash utilization. The Committee may, therefore, be apprised of the updated information in this regard.

(Recommendation No. 21)

NEW DELHI;  
08 December, 2025  
17 Agrahayana, 1947(Saka)

ANURAG SINGH THAKUR  
Chairperson  
Standing Committee on  
Coal, Mines and Steel

## ANNEXURES

### **Annexure I**

#### **Clearances/approvals/permissions to be processed at Central Government Level**

SN.	Name of Clearances	Approving Authority	Act/Rules/Guidelines/Regulations
1	Notification u/s Sec. 4 of CBA Act 1957 as applicable	Ministry of Coal (MoC)	CBA Act, 1957
2	NOC for prospecting if >2.5 BH per sq km	RO, MoEF&CC	Van (Sanrakshan E�am Samvardhan) Adhiniyam Act, 1980
3	Approval of Geological Report	MoC	MMDR Act, 1957
4	Mining Plan Approval	MoC	Mineral Concession Rules, 1960
5	Forest Clearance	MoEF&CC	Van (Sanrakshan E�am Samvardhan) Adhiniyam Act, 1980
6	Environmental Clearances	MoEF&CC	Environment (Protection) Act, 1986
7	Permission to draw water, if any	Central Ground Water Authority	Environment Protection Act, 1986
8	Wildlife Clearances	National Board for Wildlife/State Board for Wildlife	Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972
9	Notification u/s Sec. 11 as per CBA Act	MoC	CBA Act, 1957
10	Approval for use of Explosive & License for storage of Petroleum	Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organization (Ministry of Petroleum)	Indian Explosive Act, 1884
11	Magazine License	Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organization (PESO)	Indian Explosive Act, 1884
12	Mine Opening Permission	Coal Controller, MoC	Mines Act/ MCR, 1960
13	DGMS Permissions	Director General Mines & Safety	Mineral Concession Rules, 1960
14	Approval for Diversion of Power line (Transmission line)	Central Electrical Authority, - Ministry of Power	
15	Approval for Diversion of National Highway	NHAI	National Highway Act, 1956
16	Permission for use of Radio Frequency communication system	Ministry of Information and Broadcasting/Ministry of Communication	Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1933
17	Labour related Permission	Ministry of Labour & Employment	Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970

18	Seam Opening Permission	Coal Controller, MoC	Mineral Concession Rules, 1960
19	Grade Declaration	Coal Controller, MoC	Mineral Concession Rules, 1960
20	Control Blasting Permission	Director General of Mines & Safety(DGMS)	Indian Explosive Act,1884
21	NOC from Airports Authority of India	DGCA	National Highway Act, 1956

#### **Clearances/approvals/permissions to be processed at State Government Level**

SN.	Name of Clearances	Approving Authority	Act/Rules/Guidelines/Regulations
1	Prospecting License by State Govt.	State Government	MMDR Act, 1957
2	NOC if <2.5 BH per sq km	Divisional Forest Officer	Van (Sanrakshan E�am Samvardhan) Adhiniyam Act, 1980
3	NOC Under FRA, 2006	Collector, DFO	Van (Sanrakshan E�am Samvardhan) Adhiniyam Act, 1980
4	Schedule Area approval Under PESA Act	District Collector	PESA Act, 1996
5	NOC for Revenue Forest Land(Deemed Forest)	District Collector	Van (Sanrakshan E�am Samvardhan) Adhiniyam Act, 1980
6	Certificate from DFO regarding i. distance of notified Forest ii. National Park, Sanctuary and Bio Diversity within 10 KM iii. Eco Sensitive Zone. iv. No Mining Zone	Divisional Forest Officer	-
7	Grant & Execution of Mining Lease by State Government	State Govt.	MMDR Act, 1957
8	Award of Land Acquisition under LARR Act, 2013	District Collector	RCFTLARR, 2013
9	Acquisition of land u/s 247(4) of Surface Right	District Collector	Relevant State Land Revenue Codes & Regulations
10	Acquisition of land under Direct Purchase	District Collector	RCFTLARR, 2013
11	Consent to Establish	State Pollution Control Board	Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974/ Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981

12	Consent to Operate	State Pollution Control Board	Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974/ Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981
13	Tree-cutting permission in case of forest land	Divisional Forest Officer	Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam Act, 1980
14	Weight and Measures for Weighbridge and Petrol pump	Department of Legal Metrology	Legal Metrology Act, 2009
15	Approval for Nallah/River Diversion	Water Resource Department	-
16	Approval for Diversion of other than NH	Public Works Department	-
17	Permission for Draw Power/Sub-Station	State Electricity Board	-

**Annexure II**

**MINUTES OF THE TWENTY EIGHTH SITTING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE  
ON COAL, MINES AND STEEL (2024-2025) HELD ON 20.08.2025 FROM 1500 HRS.  
TO 1645 HRS. IN COMMITTEE ROOM NO. 'B', PARLIAMENT HOUSE ANNEXE,  
NEW DELHI.**

**PRESENT**

**Shri Anurag Singh Thakur- Chairperson**

**Lok Sabha**

2. Smt. Roopkumari Choudhary
3. Shri Vijay Kumar Hansdak
4. Smt. Kamlesh Jangde
5. Shri Govind Makthappa Karjol
6. Shri Bidyut Baran Mahato
7. Shri Harish Chandra Meena
8. Shri Ananta Nayak
9. Dr. Manna Lal Rawat
10. Dr. Rajkumar Sangwan
11. Shri Kali Charan Singh
12. Shri Shatrughan Prasad Sinha

**Rajya Sabha**

13. Shri Anil Kumar Yadav Mandadi
14. Shri Deepak Prakash
15. Shri Aditya Prasad
16. Shri Devendra Pratap Singh
17. Shri Pradip Kumar Varma

**SECRETARIAT**

1. Shri Harish Chandra Bist	-	Joint Secretary
2. Smt. Jagriti Tewatia	-	Director
3. Smt. Sunanda Chatterjee	-	Deputy Secretary

**MINISTRY OF COAL**

1. Shri Vikram Dev Dutt, Secretary
2. Smt Rupinder Brar, Additional Secretary
3. Shri Sanoj Kumar Jha, Additional Secretary
4. Shri Bhabani Prasad Pati, Joint Secretary
5. Shri N Sajeesh Kumar, CCO
6. Shri Asheesh Kumar, OSD

**COAL PSUs**

1. Shri P M Prasad, Chairman, Coal India Limited
2. Shri Prasanna Kumar Motupalli, NLCIL

3. Shri N. Balram, CMD, SCCL
4. Shri Uday A Kaole, CMD, MCL
5. Shri Harish Duhan, CMD, SECL
6. Shri Nilendu Kumar Singh, CMD, CCL
7. Shri B. Sairam, CMD, NCL
8. Shri Satish Jha, CMD, ECL
9. Shri Samiran Dutta, CMD, BCCL
10. Shri Jai Prakash Dwivedi, CMD, WCL

2. At the outset, the Chairperson welcomed the Secretary and other representatives of the Ministry of Coal and its Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) to the sitting of the Committee convened to have a briefing by the representatives of the Ministry of Coal on the subject '*Expediting and Simplifying the Environment and Forest Clearance Process for Mining Projects*'. The Chairperson then drew their attention to Direction 55(1) of the Directions by the Speaker, Lok Sabha regarding confidentiality of the proceedings. Thereafter, he directed the representatives to introduce themselves.

3. After customary introduction, the Secretary briefed the Committee on the recent achievements of the Ministry of Coal in terms of coal production growth. The Additional Secretary, Ministry of Coal gave a PowerPoint Presentation, elaborating therein about various clearances/ approvals/ permissions required from the Central and State level by the Coal PSUs for operationalizing coal mines, which may be both general as well as site/mine-specific. She further apprised the Committee on the Stage I and Stage II process of forest clearance, and various initiatives taken by the Ministry for expediting and simplifying both the environment and forest clearances. The functioning of Ministry of Coal Single Window Clearance System (SWCS) and its integration with the PARIVESH portal, various studies and reports required for environment clearance and dual stages of forest clearance were also summarized.

4. The Committee, thereafter, sought further clarifications on the environment and forest processes explained by the Ministry of Coal, sequential process of Environmental Clearance (EC) followed by Forest Clearance (FC) instead of parallel clearance and issues around the PARIVESH portal. They also sought the rationale behind the suggested way forward for expediting EC and FC by the Ministry of Coal in consultation with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) viz. modification of fly ash notification for “removing coal companies from Extended Product Responsibility obligations for fly ash management”; and increase in duration of tree felling permission and possession of land from 1 year to 5 years. The Committee further sought to know the time taken for obtaining EC and FC by public sector companies vis-à-vis private companies and the global average in this regard, coordination mechanism available between Central government, State government and MoEF&CC and other issues/problems being faced by the Ministry of Coal in obtaining environment and forest clearances within reasonable time period.

5. The representatives of the Ministry of Coal replied to some of the queries of the Members. The Chairperson then directed them to furnish written replies to the queries raised by the Members which remained unanswered during the Sitting of the Committee.

6. Hon'ble Chairperson thanked the Members of the Committee and Officials of the Ministry and Coal PSUs for their active participation in the Sitting of the Committee.

A copy of verbatim record of the Sitting of the Committee has been kept separately.

***The Committee then adjourned.***

**Annexure III**

**MINUTES OF THE TWENTY NINTH SITTING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
COAL, MINES AND STEEL (2024-2025) HELD ON 08.09.2025 FROM 1000 HRS. TO  
1245 HRS. IN COMMITTEE ROOM NO. '2', PARLIAMENT HOUSE ANNEXE  
EXTENSION, NEW DELHI.**

**PRESENT**

**Shri Anurag Singh Thakur- Chairperson**

**Lok Sabha**

2. Smt. Roopkumari Choudhary
3. Shri Vijay Kumar Hansdak
4. Smt. Kamlesh Jangde
5. Shri Govind Makthappa Karjol
6. Shri Selvaganapathi T.M.
7. Smt. Jyotsna Charandas Mahant
8. Shri Bidyut Baran Mahato
9. Shri Harish Chandra Meena
10. Shri Ananta Nayak
11. Smt. Bharti Pardhi
12. Dr. Manna Lal Rawat
13. Dr. Rajkumar Sangwan
14. Shri Kali Charan Singh
15. Shri Shatrughan Prasad Sinha
16. Smt. Dhanorkar Pratibha Suresh
17. Shri S Venkatesan
18. Shri Aditya Yadav

**Rajya Sabha**

19. Smt. Mahua Maji
20. Shri Manas Ranjan Mangaraj
21. Shri Rungwra Narzary
22. Shri Deepak Prakash
23. Shri Aditya Prasad
24. Shri Devendra Pratap Singh
25. Shri Pradip Kumar Varma
26. Dr. Fauzia Khan

**SECRETARIAT**

1. Shri Harish Chandra Bist	-	Joint Secretary
2. Smt. Jagriti Tewatia	-	Director
3. Smt. Sunanda Chatterjee	-	Deputy Secretary

**MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

1. Shri Tanmay Kumar, Secretary
2. Dr Amandeep Garg, Additional Secretary

3. Shri R. Raghu Prasad, Inspector General of Forest (Forest Conservation)

### **MINISTRY OF COAL**

7. Shri Vikram Dev Dutt, Secretary
8. Smt Rupinder Brar, Additional Secretary
9. Shri Sanoj Kumar Jha, Additional Secretary
10. Shri Bhabani Prasad Pati, Joint Secretary

### **COAL PSUs**

11. Shri P M Prasad, Chairman, Coal India Limited
12. Shri Prasanna Kumar Motupalli, NLCIL
13. Shri N. Balram, CMD, SCCL
14. Shri Uday A Kaole, CMD, MCL
15. Shri Harish Duhan, CMD, SECL
16. Shri Nilendra Kumar Singh, CMD, CCL
17. Shri B. Sairam, CMD, NCL
18. Shri Satish Jha, CMD, ECL
19. Shri Samiran Dutta, CMD, BCCL
20. Shri Jai Prakash Dwivedi, CMD, WCL
21. Shri Niladri Roy, Director (Technical), BCCL

2. At the outset, the Chairperson welcomed the Secretaries and other representatives of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), Ministry of Coal and its Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) to the sitting of the Committee convened to have oral evidence of the representatives of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and Ministry of Coal on the subject '*Expediting and Simplifying the Environment and Forest Clearance Process for Mining Projects*'. The Chairperson then drew their attention to Direction 55(1) of the Directions by the Speaker, Lok Sabha regarding confidentiality of the proceedings. Thereafter, he directed the representatives to introduce themselves.

3. After customary introduction, the representative of the MoEF&CC gave a brief power point presentation before the Committee elaborating therein about the Environment Clearances (EC) process under Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) notification, 2006, and the Forest Clearance (FC) process under Van (Sanrakshan Evar Sanvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980, stages and safeguards for sustainable mining and transforming green governance in India, systemic EC and FC reforms brought about over a period of time including e-Governance in EC/FC through PARIVESH 1.0 and 2.0 Portal was also outlined.

4. The Committee, thereafter, sought further clarifications related to various stages involved for granting the EC and FC and issues related thereto both at Central and State level, transition of data from PARIVESH 1.0 to PARIVESH 2.0 and modalities involved for granting approval during the transition period, modification of fly ash notification for “removing coal companies from Extended Product Responsibility obligations for fly ash management”, definition of forest and compensatory afforestation, provisions of eco sensitive zones, creation of Land Banks by the State Governments, etc. The Committee further sought to know the prescribed time line and time taken for obtaining EC and possible way to reduce the time taken for public consultation to expedite EC and FC, coordination mechanism available between Central and State governments, especially in obtaining forest clearance for coal and lignite mining projects. The EC and FC related issues as raised by the Ministry of Coal and its PSUs were also answered by the representatives of MoEF&CC.

5. The representatives of both the Ministries replied to some of the queries raised by the Members. The Chairperson then directed them to furnish written replies to the queries raised by the Members that remained unanswered during the Sitting of the Committee.

6. Hon'ble Chairperson thanked the Members of the Committee and Officials of the MoEF&CC, Coal and Coal PSUs for their active participation in the Sitting of the Committee.

The witness then withdrew.

A copy of verbatim record of the Sitting of the Committee has been kept separately.

***The Committee then adjourned.***

**Annexure IV**

**MINUTES OF THE EIGHTH SITTING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON COAL,  
MINES AND STEEL (2025-26) HELD ON 08<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER, 2025 FROM 1845 HRS  
TO 1915 HRS IN COMMITTEE ROOM NO. '1', PARLIAMENT HOUSE ANNEXE  
EXTENSION, NEW DELHI**

**PRESENT**

**Chairperson – Shri Anurag Singh Thakur**

**Lok Sabha**

2. Shri Sukhdeo Bhagat
3. Smt. Roopkumari Choudhary
4. Shri Vijay Kumar Hansdak
5. Smt. Kamlesh Jangde
6. Shri Govind Makthappa Karjol
7. Shri Bidyut Baran Mahato
8. Shri Harish Chandra Meena
9. Shri Ananta Nayak
10. Smt. Bharti Pardhi
11. Dr. Manna Lal Rawat
12. Dr. Rajkumar Sangwan
13. Shri Kali Charan Singh
14. Smt. Dhanorkar Pratibha Suresh

**Rajya Sabha**

15. Dr. Sarfraz Ahmad
16. Smt. Mahua Maji
17. Shri Deepak Prakash
18. Shri Aditya Prasad
19. Shri Devendra Pratap Singh
20. Shri Pradip Kumar Varma

**SECRETARIAT**

1. Shri Harish Chandra Bist	- Joint Secretary
2. Smt. Reena Gopalakrishnan	- Director
3. Smt. Sunanda Chatterjee	- Deputy Secretary

2. At the outset, Chairperson welcomed the Members to the Sitting of the Committee.

3. The Committee thereafter took up the consideration of the Draft Report on the subject 'Expediting and Simplifying the Environment and Forest Clearance Process for Coal Mining Projects' pertaining to the Ministry of Coal.

4. After due deliberations, the Committee adopted the Draft Report without any modification.

5. The Committee then authorized the Chairperson to finalize the Report in light of the factual verification received from the Ministry of Coal and Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, and present and lay the same in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha respectively.

*The Committee, then, adjourned.*