

Coal Ministry ensures utmost Environ care while Enhancing Coal Production

Mines falling under Lemru Elephant Corridor, Chhattisgarh de-notified on Request

Over Forty New Coal Blocks of Chhattisgarh kept out of Mining

Three Lignite Mines of Tamil Nadu Excluded from Auction Process on Request

New Focus on Underground Coal Mining

Green Cover Creation Enhanced to 2,734 hectares in FY 2023-24

Posted On: 19 OCT 2023 4:32PM by PIB Delhi

The goal of Ministry of Coal is to enhance coal production and to ensure adequate availability of coal for the fast growing economy of the country. As a result of efforts of the Ministry, the share of imports in total coal consumption reduced from 26% to 21% during last five years. Still, India is importing more than 200 Million Tonne (MT) of coal annually by incurring huge foreign exchange outflow. Last year, India spent more than Rs. 3.85 lakh crores on import bill of coal. India has fourth largest deposits of coal. It is, therefore, prudent to enhance domestic production so as to reduce import dependence.

Coal bearing areas of the country are located in forest rich geographical areas. While Government of India is committed to protect and promote conservation and preservation of forests, however, keeping in view the need of the economy and energy demand, more and more coal mines are required to be made operationalized. At the same time, Ministry of Coal is deeply conscious of protecting forests therefore, only minimum forest area required is diverted and double the area is compensated for lost forest area.

For operationalization of any coal mine, it is mandatory to obtain required Environmental Clearance (EC) apart from other statutory clearances. In case, part of the coal block involves forest land, then, approval under Forest Conservation Act has to be obtained before operationalization. Stringent guidelines, norms and higher

benchmarks are mandated for compliance before any approvals are given.

Ministry of Coal has always kept in view the recommendations of MoEFCC and State Governments. No coal mine has even been auctioned by ignoring suggestions of MoEFCC. For example, the request of Government of Chhattisgarh to de-notify coal mines falling under Lemru Elephant Corridor have been accepted. Coal mines of Coal India Ltd (CIL) are also not being developed and captive coal blocks have also been kept out of purview of auction. Areas beyond 'Lemru Elephant Corridor' have also been considered for exemption on the request of Government of Chhattisgarh. Over 40 new coal blocks having about 10% of reserve of Chhattisgarh has been decided to be kept out of coal mining. Nine coal mines falling in dense Hasdeo-Arand coal field have also been kept out for further round of auctions of coal blocks. Similarly, the request of Government of Tamil Nadu for exclusion of three lignite mines from further auction process has also been accepted. These decisions of Ministry of Coal clearly indicate our responsibility to protect forest areas despite industry demands to put them under auction.

The Ministry is conscious of the fact that promotion of underground coal mining can help in conservation of environment. Accordingly, policy has been approved to promote underground coal mining. Use of technology through deployment of continuous miners, high-wall and long-wall have been promoted. MoEFCC has also permitted exemption from compensatory afforestation requirement for underground mines. In operationalization of mines through private sector, incentive provisions are being considered to attract interest into underground mining.

Under the guidance of Ministry of Coal, Coal/Lignite Public Sector Undertakings have made remarkable progress for sustainable and environmentally friendly initiatives. Notably, they have successfully increased green cover by planting over 265 lakh saplings, covering approximately 12,358 hectares from FY 2018-19 to FY 2023-24. In FY 2023-24 alone, they exceeded their target by planting 51 lakh saplings, covering 2,734 hectares. They have also developed fifteen eco-parks and mine tourism sites over the past five years, with seven integrated into the local tourism circuit, and plans for 19 more in coal mining areas to promote sustainable tourism and environmental conservation. In fact, afforestation undertaken by CPSEs on non-forest deoiled land, is now permitted to be used as land bank for future compensatory afforestation, accordingly over 2800 hectare afforested land has been offered for accredited compensatory afforestation.

The objective of Ministry of Coal is to maximize coal production in the country but not at the cost of serious damage to the environment. By adopting environment friendly practices and excluding mines falling under dense forest area, the Coal Ministry has adopted a transparent & fair process for allocation of coal mines by striking a right balance between preserving the environment and increasing the coal production in the country.

BY/RKP

(Release ID: 1969085)