

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1327
ANSWERED ON:27.11.2000
THREAT TO ECOLOGY BY EXPLOITATION OF MINERALS
NIVEDITA MANE

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether exploitation of minerals like iron-ore, coal and other has posed a grave threat to ecology by way of endangering wildlife and forest reserves.
- (b) if so, whether the Government have made any study regarding the impact of mining, industrial and other developmental activities on wildlife and forests;
- (c) if so, the details thereof; and
- (d) the steps being taken to preserve ecology?

Answer

MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS

(SHRI T.R. BAALU)

(a) Exploitation of minerals is always associated with some disturbance to terrestrial configuration including its surroundings. The magnitude of such disturbance depends on the size of operation, location of deposit and its extent. Some environmental impacts are unavoidable during mines development and operation phases. However, impacts are minimised by adoption of appropriate management plan and conservation measures which is always ensured while granting permission for use of forest land for mining purposes.

(b)to(d) As per the provision of Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, no State Government/ authority can divert forest land for non-forestry purposes without prior approval of Central Government. The proposal received from the State Government under Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 is examined in accordance with the rules and guidelines made under the Act for detailed assessment of the likely adverse impact of mining on the environment. The proposal is approved only after ascertaining that the project is site specific and requirement of forest land is bare minimum. Further, in the case of major minerals where diversion of forest land is more than 5 hectares, detailed environment impact assessment is carried out and environment management plan is prepared for environment clearance under Environment Impact Assessment Notification, 1994. While according approval to a proposal for use of forest land for mining purposes, suitable safeguards (based on the assessment report/inspection report) such as raising of compensatory afforestation on equivalent non-forest land or double the degraded forest land, as the case may be; phased reclamation of mined out areas, etc. are stipulated to mitigate any likely adverse effects of such activities to the flora and fauna in that area.

Studies are carried out by the Experts/Institutions having specialisation in the field whenever a need is felt that non-forest activity may significantly affect the adjoining flora and fauna of the project site. The stipulated conditions recommended in the approval order are monitored by both State Government and Regional Offices of this Ministry. Wherever necessary, mid-term corrections are made in the environmental safeguards to ensure harmonious balance between exploitation of minerals and local eco-system. Several steps have been taken to preserve ecology, some of the important ones are as follows: i. For diversion of any forest land for non-forestry purposes like mining etc. prior approval of Central Government is required to be obtained. ii. State Governments have been advised not to recommend proposal for diversion of forest land for protected areas like wildlife sanctuary and national parks which are not in consonance of the proviso of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. iii. A detailed guideline has been issued to all States for submission of proposals for diversion of forest land for non-forestry purposes. iv. Whenever forest land is diverted for site specific non-forestry activities, compensatory afforestation is raised at the cost of user agency to ensure that overall forest cover is maintained. v. Afforestation programmes are taken up on forest lands.