

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

STARRED QUESTION NO:46

ANSWERED ON:28.07.2010

COAL RESERVES IN FOREST AREAS

Adsul Shri Anandrao Vithoba;Yadav Shri Dharmendra

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

- (a) whether the Ministries of Environment and Forests and Coal have conducted joint survey for mapping coal reserves in the forest areas;
- (b) if so, the details and the outcome thereof;
- (c) whether there is any difference of opinion between the Ministries of Environment and Forests and Coal on coal mining blocks in the forest areas;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the steps being taken to resolve the issue?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH)

(a)to (e): A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (e) OF THE LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 46 BY SHRI ANANDRAO ADSUL & SHRI DHARMENDRA YADAV REGARDING "COAL RESERVES IN FOREST AREAS" DUE FOR REPLY ON 28.07.2010.

(a) & (b): The Ministry of Environment & Forests (MoEF) through Forest Survey of India (FSI) and the Ministry of Coal through Central Mine Planning & Design Institute Limited (CMPDI) have jointly undertaken an exercise to overlay the forest cover map on the coal block boundaries in respect of 9 coalfields in the country and identified various coal blocks as category 'A' (No-Go areas) and Category 'B' (Go areas). The exercise is not yet concluded and is still on. This exercise is being coordinated by the Prime Minister Office. As per this exercise, 449 coal blocks covering about 3,80,000 ha have been categorised as category 'B' out of total number of 602 coal blocks covering about 6,48,750 ha. In addition, the Ministry of Coal is engaged in exercise requiring boundary alteration in 27 coal blocks (having area 82,540 ha) spread over 8 coal fields excluding Hasdeo Arand, which will ultimately result into addition of some more areas in Category 'B'. It may be noted here that this categorization does not pre-judge the decision to be taken by the MoEF which will be taken on the basis of the advice rendered by the FAC, a statutory body of independent expert and MoEF officials set up under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 to advice the Government.

(c) to (e) There is no difference of opinion between the Ministry of Environment & Forests and the Ministry of Coal in respect of category 'A' and category 'B' areas identified in the 9 coal fields in the country so far. However, both the Ministries have some difference of opinion on those coal blocks which have fallen in category 'A'. Incidentally, these coal blocks have been allocated to various joint ventures, corporations, private project proponents for their captive use and linked to power generation and steel manufacturing. Both the Ministries have taken following steps to resolve such differences in future:

- i. Both the Ministries are in touch with each other on day to day basis.
- ii. Ministry of Coal has taken two forest officers on deputation to advise the Ministry of Coal on forestry matter.
- iii. Advisory has been issued to seek opinion of the Ministry of Environment & Forests before allocation of coal blocks to various project proponents.
- iv. A committee has been constituted by the Ministry of Coal to explore the possibilities of underground mining.
- v. Special drive to reclaim the mined over areas quickly and hand over the same to the State Forest Department for their further management.