

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1116
ANSWERED ON:12.08.2013
CLEARANCE TO COAL FIELDS
Maadam Shri Vikrambhai Arjanbhai

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

- (a) whether the Government has categorised some of the coalfields for granting clearance as 'inviolable' areas in the country;
- (b) if so, the details of coalfields categorised as 'inviolable' areas and the meaning of 'inviolable' areas;
- (c) whether any consultations have been held with the Ministry of Coal before categorization;
- (d) if so, details thereof ; and
- (e) if not, the reasons therefor and the steps taken by the Government in this regard?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN)

(a) to (e) The Group of Ministers (GoM) constituted to consider the environmental and developmental issues relating to coal mining and other development projects in its fifth meeting held on 20th September, 2011 inter alia suggested that identified pristine forest areas where any mining activity would lead to irreversible damage to the forests should be barred from any kind of non-forest activity. The GoM further recommended that all such forests which can never be regenerated to the desired quality should be protected and suggested that a committee comprising of experts in the field can be constituted to identify such forests.

Accordingly, Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) constituted a Committee under Chairmanship of the Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests to formulate parameters for identification of such areas. The Committee recommended that identification of such 'inviolable areas' be based on six parameters namely; forest cover, forest type, biological richness, landscape integrity, wildlife value and the hydrological value. A copy of the report of the said Committee was placed on website of the MoEF for submission of comments by the stakeholders. Comments from the concerned Ministries/ Departments, in the Central Government, including the Ministry of Coal, on the report of the said Committee have also been sought by the MoEF.

As the parameters for identification of 'inviolable areas' are still being finalised, so far no coalfield has been categorised as 'inviolable area'.