

41,891 ha forest land diverted in Odisha

Land diversion for mining, irrigation, power, roads, railways, industries & defence

Forest land to the tune of 41,891.25 hectares (or 1,03,515.53 acres) has been diverted in Odisha till March 6, 2013 since the enactment of Forest Conservation Act-1980 by the Centre.

The forest land diversion has been effected for various sectors like mining, irrigation, power, roads, railways, industries and defence.

Almost all standalone mine lessees and industrial players with end-use projects like National Aluminium Company (Nalco) have benefited from forest land diversion in the state.

Forest land diversion has been carried out in the state in accordance with Section 2 of Forest Conservation Act, forest minister Bijayshree Routray said in a written reply in the state assembly.

On compliance to Forest Rights Act and the August 2009 notification of the Union ministry of environment & forest, he said, "The proposals submitted to the MoEF are processed in accordance with the guidelines dated August 3, 2009 issued by the ministry in the matter of compliance of Scheduled Tribes & Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act-2006.

Certificate on five terms complying to the provisions of the above circular of MoEF is submitted by the collectors of the concerned districts who head the district level committee for settlement of Forest Rights and are annexed to the forest diversion proposal while recommending the diversion proposal to the ministry. The certificates along with the resolution of the gram sabha duly signed by the members present and its English version are sent to MoEF for consideration."

The state government is sitting over 431 proposals of forest land diversion across sectors like irrigation, industry, mining, energy, railway, roads & bridges and human habitations.

Mining sector tops the list with 205 proposals pending for diversion of forest land.

Other sectors with forest land diversion proposals in the pipeline are irrigation (27), industry (29), energy (44), railway (21), roads & bridges (37), human habitations (2) and miscellaneous (66).

It may be noted that mining activity alone has resulted in diversion of 8,194.86 hectares (or 20,249.94 acres) of forest land in Keonjhar district.