

Odisha sitting over 431 forest diversion proposals

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

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"The proposals for forest land diversion are under scrutiny. These proposals will be examined as per provisions of Forest Conservation Act-1980 and recommended to the Centre", forest minister Bijayshree Routray said in a written reply in the state assembly.

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 8194.86 hectares- ha (or 20249.94 acres) of forest land in Keonjhar district.

Forest land has been diverted to accommodate mining activities for all major miners- Tata Steel, Steel Authority of India Ltd (SAIL), Odisha Mining Corporation (OMC), Odisha Minerals Development Company (OMDC), Indian Metals & Ferro Alloys Ltd (IMFA), Rungta Mines, Essel Mining & Industries Ltd, Sarada Mines and Indrani Patnaik.

For Bolani iron ore mines operated by SAIL, 1050.15 ha of forest land has been diverted. Tata Steel's Joda east iron ore mines has seen diversion of 567.08 ha of forest land. Similarly, for Essel Mining & Industries Ltd, 173.03 ha forest land has been diverted for its Kasia iron ore and dolomite mines while 75.49 ha has been diverted for its Jiling Longlota iron & manganese mines.

Forest land has been diverted for mining purpose for other miners as well – OMDC's Bhadrasahi iron & manganese mines (702.05 ha), Boula chromite mines of Ferro Alloys Corporation (FACOR)- 187.03 ha, KJS Ahluwalia's Nuagaon iron ore mines (371.19 ha), Joda west iron ore & manganese mines (436.67 ha) and Gandhamardhan-B iron ore mines of OMC (232.43 ha).