

Development of Closed Coal Mines as Tourist Places

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In countries such as Germany, United Kingdom and Australia, a few closed coal mines have been repurposed into tourist spots, cultural centres, reservoirs or for industrial purposes etc.

Coal and Lignite Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) have undertaken various repurposing initiatives, such as the development of eco-parks, mine tourism sites, recreational parks, pisciculture in mine voids, solar power projects and other community-oriented facilities. Some notable examples include:

- Bishrampur (Kenapara) and Ananya Vatika in South Eastern Coalfields Limited (SECL)
- Saoner Eco Park in Western Coalfields Limited (WCL)
- Kayakalp Vatika and Pisciculture at Kerketta Mine Void in Central Coalfields Limited (CCL)
- C S Azad Eco Park at Orient Mine No. 4 in Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL)
- Sindoor Eco Park and Mango Orchard at Jhanjra in Eastern Coalfields Limited (ECL)
- Parasnath Udyan in Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCCL)

In India, closure and repurposing of coal mines are now undertaken as per the Guidelines for Preparation of Mining Plan and Mine Closure Plan for Coal and Lignite Blocks-2025. These guidelines emphasize scientific and socially responsible mine closure, including land reclamation, environmental restoration and post-mining utilization for community and economic benefit. These guidelines provide detailed directions for minimizing long-term ecological damage, rehabilitating land for multiple uses and integrating activities such as agriculture, pisciculture, eco-parks, waterbody restoration, green energy projects and cultural or heritage promotion. These guidelines also encourage engagement of local communities in operation and maintenance of public spaces, fostering employment and enhancing the cultural relevance of post-mining land use.

Coal/Lignite PSUs are currently augmenting production to meet the country's growing energy needs. In cases where a mine is closed due to resource exhaustion, permanent workers are redeployed to other operating mines, ensuring continuity of employment.

Additionally, as per the Mine Closure Guidelines and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies, PSUs undertake skill development and livelihood programmes for local communities to enhance employability and create alternative income opportunities. The Guidelines for Preparation of Mining Plan and Mine Closure Plan for Coal and Lignite Blocks-2025 mandate that a minimum of 25% of the five-yearly escrow amount deposited for mine closure is to be utilized for community development and livelihood activities. Further, these guidelines stipulates that 10% of the final mine closure cost is earmarked for Just Transformation. This amount is to be used in consultation with district administration and stakeholders for socio-economic transition, skill development and sustained livelihood support in post-mining areas.

This information was given by Union Minister of Coal and Mines Shri G. Kishan Reddy in a written reply in Lok Sabha today.

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