

Sustainable Development Cell of Ministry of Coal

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Source: *PIB*

The Ministry of Coal has decided to establish a 'Sustainable Development Cell' **in order to promote environmentally sustainable coal mining in the country** and address environmental concerns during the decommissioning or closure of mines.

Role of Sustainable Development Cell

- The Sustainable Development cell (SDC) will **advise, mentor, plan and monitor the mitigation measures taken by the coal companies for maximizing the utilization of available resources in a sustainable way, minimizing the adverse impact of mining and mitigating it for further ecosystem services and will act as nodal point at Ministry of Coal level in this matter.**
- This cell will also formulate the **future policy framework** for the environmental mitigation measures including the **Mine closure Fund.**

Tasks of the Cell:

The SDC will **adopt a systemic approach, starting from collection of data, analysis of data, presentation of information, planning based on information;** by domain experts, adoption of best practices, consultations, innovative thinking, site-specific approaches, knowledge sharing, and dissemination and finally end with an aim to ease the lives of people and communities in general. All of the above will be done by executing the following tasks in a planned way:

- 1. Land amelioration and afforestation: In India,**

approximately 2,550 sq Km areas are under different coal mines and there are also plans to bring more areas under it. These land masses required both extensive and intensive amelioration measures

2. Air quality, emission, and noise management:

- To advise coal companies for effective implementation of environmental mitigation measures (water sprinkling, dust suppression methods, noise barriers, etc.) related to air and noise pollution generated due to mine activities, heavy earth moving machines (HEMMs), transport of coal, etc.
- It also works towards energy efficiency in the mining operation, noise, and emission reduction in the case of HEMMs.
- Analysis of **Environment Management Plans** (EMP) of different companies and will advise coal companies to make it more effective.

3. Mine Water Management

- Collection of data regarding present quantity, quality, surface runoff, drainage of mine water, the future availability of water collected in UG or OC coal mines, etc., and to analyze it on a GIS-based platform to prepare model Coal Mine Water Management Plans (CMWMP).
- The plan will **suggest ways and also have innovative planning to storage, treatment, and re-use of such water for drinking, irrigation, fisheries, tourism, industrial or any other sustainable purpose.**

4. Sustainable Overburden Management

- The cell will also **check feasibility and suggest measures to reuse, recycle and rehabilitation of overburdened dumps** in a sustainable manner.
- Will examine and plan out the use of overburdened material for use in different infrastructure projects, earthen bunds, etc.

5. Sustainable Mine Tourism

- To explore and conceptualize a plan for the beautification & creation of eco-parks in the reclaimed areas and which will also include water bodies etc., for re-creation activities and tourism purposes.
- It will also explore tourism potential and plan it out in a few underground mines.

6. Planning and Monitoring:

- Analysis of **Mine Closure Plans (MCP)** of different companies and advise to make it more effective.
- To help Coal companies to finalize a timeline for the execution of different mitigation activities/projects in all mines in a phased manner.
- Will also monitor the **effective utilization of Mine Closure Fund and Environment Budgets** of Different Coal Companies.
- To formulate future guidelines for the mine closure plan, mine closure fund, etc.

7. Policy, Research, Education, and Dissemination:

- Will hire experts/ institutions/organizations to conduct specific studies for establishing a robust knowledge base.
- Will organize consultative meetings, workshops, field visits, exposure study tours, etc., to enrich the knowledge base, known best global and ideas for environmental mitigation planning and monitoring.
- Will conduct regular workshops and seminars for the company level officials to educate them in new methods, technologies, approaches and also global practices.

Thus the Sustainable Development Cell envisages to address the environmental mitigation measures in a systemic manner and to provide a better environment to people working and residing in

the vicinity of Mines.