

**Coal blocks endangering fresh water sources and  
forest areas in the country**

SHRI MOHD. NADIMUL HAQUE (West Bengal): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, today, I would like to draw the attention of the House towards the issue that how the present Government is willing to overlook policy meant to preserve its forest, fresh water and wildlife for increasing their coal production.

Sir, in order that mining activities do not affect the forest areas and fresh water, the Forest Survey of India (FSI) had assessed 835 coal blocks based on the draft parameters for identification of inviolate forest areas. Similarly, the Union Environment Ministry also had recommended excluding 250 metres on either side of a major water stream while marking the boundaries of coal blocks. As per the information received on a RTI, presently 417 out of 835 current and future coal blocks must be categorized as 'inviolate areas', according to hydrological parameters adopted by this Ministry. The Forest Survey of India has noted in a communication to the Union Environment Ministry that 121 of the 835 coal blocks assessed had on-going mining activities, and of these, four were in 'inviolate forest' areas, and 117 were affected by the hydrological layer, which means they encroached upon river beds or water streams. Hence, Sir, it cannot be claimed that the Environment Ministry is unaware of these activities. Sir, I think the Ministry of Environment and Forest does not want to take a firm stand on its policy of protecting its forests and fresh water resources and is willing to drag its feet on this policy, while the Ministry of Coal is going ahead with auctioning and allotting these precious forest areas.

Sir, I would request the Minister of Environment to take immediate steps for protecting the forest areas and fresh water resources by taking a firm stand so that these mining activities are immediately stopped in all the inviolate areas of the country and these resources are protected especially in the drought-affected areas.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you. Shri Arvind Kumar Singh.

SHRI D. BANDYOPADHYAY (West Bengal): Sir, I associate myself with the issue raised by the hon. Member.

PROF. JOGEN CHOWDHURY (West Bengal): Sir, I also associate myself with the issue raised by the hon. Member.

SHRI B. K. HARIPRASAD (Karnataka): Sir, I also associate myself with the issue raised by the hon. Member.