
CIL to expect headway in prospecting coal reserves

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The Hindu Business Line reported that Coal India Limited may finally expect some headway in prospecting coal reserves in forest areas.

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests following an inter ministerial meeting has decided to relax the existing norms for pilot projects.

The MoEF, it is learnt may go for suitable policy changes in this regard based on detailed impact assessment of the pilot projects. It recently appointed a nodal officer to deal with CIL application for pilot drilling in three such blocks in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Orissa.

According to sources in Coal India, the company had planned a 4 fold increase in its drilling activity beginning this year. Accordingly CIL R & D arm, Central Mine Planning & Design Institute Limited, appointed Mineral Exploration Corporation Limited to undertake drilling of exploratory wells.

However, the existing MoEF guidelines on drilling in forest land proved to be the stumbling block for MECL keen on prospecting coal in at least 8 blocks to 10 blocks mostly located in prime coal bearing zones.

Mr A K Singh chairman and MD of CMPDIL said that “The existing guidelines allow drilling of 1 bore to 1.5 bore holes in every square kilometers of forest land. However, the standard reserve assessment norms require drilling of 8 to 10 such wells a square kilometers.”

Mr Singh added that “Naturally, as per our assessment, drilling of 8 to 10 wells per square kilometers is unlikely to cause any major adverse environmental impact on the forest.”

The issue was discussed threadbare at a meeting between the Mr Sriprakash Jaiswal union coal minister and Mr Jairam Ramesh union minister for environment and forests of India in June.

The meeting identified three blocks where environmental norms might be relaxed for undertaking drilling on a pilot basis. It was suggested that long term policy decision in this regard would be taken after a detailed environmental impact study on these blocks.

(Sourced from thehindubusinessline.com)

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