

Coal Ministry Initiates Comprehensive Mine Closure Strategies

Focus on Scientific Closure of Abandoned/Discontinued Mines; 299 Mines Identified so far

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In a significant move towards ensuring responsible and environmentally conscious coal mine closures, the Ministry of Coal has spearheaded initiatives to address abandoned and closed mines. Historically, mine closures have been characterized by uncontrolled processes, leaving equipment and materials abandoned and mine sites neglected. Recognizing the need for a systematic approach, the Ministry introduced Mine Closure guidelines in 2009, subsequently revised in 2013 and 2020, emphasizing safe and stable closures while minimizing environmental impact.

Mines closed before 2009 often lacked a structured closure framework, leading to non-scientific closures. Acknowledging the physical hazards and environmental consequences associated with these abandoned mines, the Ministry issued guidelines in October 2022 for managing mines closed before 2009, categorizing them as discontinued, abandoned or closed.

Coal India Ltd, aligning with the Ministry's vision, has identified and taken proactive steps towards the closure of mines. A total of 169 pre-2009 and 130 post-2009 mines, considered abandoned, discontinued, or closed, have been identified. Of these, 68 pre-2009 mines are marked for final closure, with 63 Final Mine Closure Plans (FMCPs) diligently prepared. Additionally, 14 pre-2009 mines are designated for temporary closure, with comprehensive Temporary Mine Closure Plans (TMCPs) developed for each.

Regarding post-2009 mines, Coal India Ltd is actively preparing 35 FMCPs, showcasing the commitment to responsible mine closures. Simultaneously, the Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL) has identified six pre-2009 mines for temporary closure and five post-2009 mines for final closure. Notably, mine closure activities are already underway for these identified mines, underscoring the commitment of both Coal India Ltd and SCCL to environmental sustainability.

In addition, the Ministry has appointed an expert committee to review existing mine plan guidelines to strengthen mine closure framework and to adopt best international practices.

To streamline and monitor these comprehensive closure activities, the Central Mine Planning and Design Institute (CMPDI) has developed a portal. This centralized source allows for the monitoring of closure activities, including reclamation, air and water quality post-closure, land repurposing, and social support measures. These initiatives collectively signify a paradigm shift towards responsible and scientifically sound mine closures, aligning with the Ministry of Coal's commitment to environmental stewardship and community well-being.

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