



Chhatisgarh Bachao Andolan | Chhattisgarh | 10 Jan 2024

Why in News?

The **Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) in Chhattisgarh has extended its support to the proposed citizens' protest** march in Hasdeo Arand against the large-scale cutting of trees for [coal mining](#).

- **Hasdeo Arand forests** are considered **bio-diversity rich**, with the catchment area of Hasdeo River providing **crucial help for drinking water** in underdeveloped areas.

Key Points

- The [deforestation](#) of **137 hectares of biodiverse forest** in Hasdeo for the Parsa East and Kanta Basan (PEKB) coal blocks in Chhattisgarh will have detrimental effects. This includes **impacting the river Hasdeo, escalating human-elephant conflicts**, and causing negative consequences for the local biodiversity.
- A total of **five billion tonnes** of coal is estimated to be **sitting under the dense forest area**.
 - The latest deforestation marks the second stage of clearances for PEBK; the first stage included **sanctioning of the open mine for coal extraction to supply electricity in Rajasthan and neighbouring state**.
- The ongoing **deforestation** will displace and **impact the livelihoods of 700 indigenous families from** neighbouring villages in **Surguja district of northern Chhattisgarh such as Sahli, Tara, Janardhanpur, Ghatbarra, Fatehpur and Hariharpur**.
- Tribal rights activists from Hasdeo Aranya Bachao Sangharsh Samiti, Save Hasdeo Forest Committee as well as Gram Sabha leaders have been actively protesting the relentless tree felling.
- **Mining Activity in Hasdeo Arand Coal Field (HACF) Region:**
 - The HACF is spread over nearly 1,880 sq km and **comprises 23 coal blocks**.
 - The area was **declared as a 'No-Go Zone' for mining by the Centre in 2009**.
 - The **demand for mining picked up around 2010**, when the Chhattisgarh government recommended forest clearance for diverting forest land for PEBK coal fields.
 - **In 2012, Forest Clearance was granted by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF)** for mining in phase I of PEBK coal mines.
 - Though cases are pending in various courts, **in March 2022 the Chhattisgarh government approved the second phase of mining in the PEBK coal block**.

Hasdeo Arand Forest

- Hasdeo Arand, a sprawling forest in the **northern part of Chhattisgarh is known for its biodiversity and its coal deposits**.
- The forest falls under **Korba, Sujapur and Surguja districts** with significant tribal population.
- The **Hasdeo river, a tributary of Mahanadi**, flows through it.
- Hasdeo Arand is the **largest un-fragmented forest in Central India consisting of pristine Sal (Shorea robusta) and teak forests**.
- It is a **noted migratory corridor** and has a significant **presence of elephants**.



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