

Coal Mines Expansion in Chhattisgarh

Why in News?

The <u>Forest Advisory Committee (FAC)</u> of the environment ministry has accorded an "in-principle" approval for expansion and opening of a number of mines in Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Meghalaya and exploratory drilling in Assam's wildlife rich Doyang reserved forest.

Key Points

- Three of the mines are in Chhattisgarh's Korba district. These are Gevra mine, Kusmunda mine, and Dipka Opencast coal mine.
- In Chhattisgarh, FAC recommended "in-principle" approval:
 - for the additional diversion of 94.293 hectares of forest for expansion of Gevra mine.
 - to expansion of **Kusmunda mine** for diversion of an additional 43.942 ha of forest land.
 - Kusmunda opencast mine flows adjacent to a Hasdeo tributary which makes it a
 particularly vulnerable area.
 - to South Eastern Coalfield Limited (SECL) Dipka Opencast coal mine for diversion of additional 0.093 ha of forest land in Korba's Katghora forest.
- FAC has recommended that Chhattisgarh government ensure treatment of the catchment area and directed SECL to follow the rules imposed by the Water resource department for conservation of the Hasdeo river.

Forest Advisory Committee (FAC)

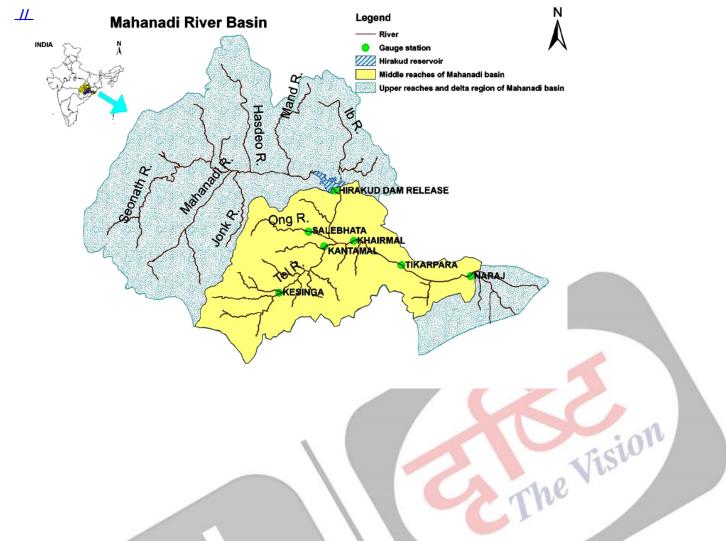
- It is a statutory body which was constituted by the Forest (Conservation) Act 1980.
- It comes under the Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change (MoEF&CC).
- It considers questions on the diversion of forest land for non-forest uses such as mining, industrial projects, townships and advises the government on the issue of granting forest clearances. However, its role is advisory.

South Eastern Coalfields Limited (SECL)

- SECL is the highest coal producing company of India. The coal mines of SECL are spread across two states namely Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh.
- It operates 65 coal mines, of which 39 coal mines lie in Chhattisgarh State, while the rest 26 coal mines are situated in Madhya Pradesh. Out of these 65 coal mines, 46 mines are worked by underground method of mining while rest 19 mines are Opencast mines.

Hasdeo River

- The Hasdeo river is a **tributary of the Mahanadi river** which originates in Chhattisgarh and flows through Odisha into the Bay of Bengal.
- The Hasdeo forests are also the catchment area for the **Hasdeo Bango Dam** built across the Hasdeo river which irrigates six lakh acres of land, crucial to a State with paddy as its main crop.
- Besides, the forests are ecologically sensitive due to the rich biodiversity they offer and due to the presence of a large migratory corridor for elephants.



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