

Moving Beyond Extraction: India's First National Workshop on Mine Closure & Repurposing Held at Neyveli

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The two-day National Workshop on Mine Closure & Repurposing was successfully conducted on 23rd and 24th February 2026 at Neyveli, Tamil Nadu, under the aegis of the Ministry of Coal and NLC India Limited. Inaugurated by Shri G. Kishan Reddy, Union Minister of Coal and Mines, the workshop marked India's first national-level initiative focused exclusively on structured mine closure planning and sustainable post-mining land repurposing. The workshop was graced by the august presence of Shri Vikram Dev Dutt, Secretary (Coal), Smt. Rupinder Brar and Shri Sanoj Kumar Jha, Additional Secretaries, Shri Sajeesh Kumar N, Coal Controller, along with other senior officials of the Ministry of Coal.



The workshop brought together 147 Nodal Officers from mines identified for closure, along with representatives from coal sector PSUs, private mining companies, regulatory bodies, NGOs, policymakers, financial institutions, academia, bilateral and multilateral organisations. In total, over 500 participants attended the workshop. The diverse participation reflected a shared commitment to transforming mine closure from a compliance-driven process into a catalyst for long-term regional regeneration.



The key highlight of the workshop was the conduct of nine thematic sessions featuring 29 eminent speakers from government, industry, research institutions, development organisations, and international agencies. These domain experts shared their practical insights and on-ground experiences in mine closure and post-mining transitions, providing valuable guidance to nodal officers and participants on planning and implementing sustainable, community-oriented mine closure strategies.

The sessions explored a wide spectrum of post-mining pathways including regenerative agriculture, agroforestry, livestock-based livelihoods, aquaculture in mine voids, renewable energy integration, tourism development, cultural enterprises, skill development centres, policy convergence, accessing international finance, and global best practices in structured mine closure. The deliberations strongly focused on creating diversified and sustainable livelihood opportunities in post-mining landscapes. Speakers also underscored the critical role of community engagement and livelihood generation in ensuring inclusive and sustainable development in mined-out regions.

Speaking on the occasion, Union Minister of Coal and Mines Shri G Kishan Reddy emphasized that mine closure should not be perceived as the end of mining activity, but rather as the beginning of renewed socio-economic opportunities for communities in mining regions. He highlighted the importance of scientific reclamation, environmental restoration, effective utilization of mine closure funds, and the creation of sustainable livelihood opportunities in mining-affected regions.

As part of the workshop, participants also visited the reclaimed and de-coaled areas of NLC India Limited, where mined-out lands have been transformed into eco-tourism destinations featuring boating facilities, rejuvenated water bodies, and thriving bird habitats. The field visit provided a firsthand demonstration of how scientific reclamation and integrated planning can convert degraded mine areas into biodiversity-rich and economically productive landscapes.



The workshop also acknowledged a significant national milestone, noting that 25 mines have been successfully closed in a scientific manner, marking an important step towards strengthening systematic, transparent, and accountable mine closure governance in the country.

To advance this vision, the Ministry of Coal has been implementing several key initiatives, including the mandatory allocation of 25% of escrow funds for community development. To facilitate its effective on-ground implementation, the Ministry has already released the RECLAIM Framework (Reach Out, Envision, Co-create, Localize, Act, Integrate, and Maintain), a comprehensive guide to facilitate active community engagement in mining-affected regions.

In addition, to promote sustainable repurposing of mined-out lands, the Ministry had earlier introduced the LIVES Framework and developed an interactive online tool called SUVIKALP, to help the project proponents to identify and implement suitable repurposing projects.

Building on the momentum generated through the workshop, the Coal Controller Origination under the Ministry of Coal plans to organise a series of National Webinars. These webinars will focus on specific thematic areas such as livelihood diversification, renewable energy integration, accessing international finance, tourism-led development, skill ecosystems, and adoption of global best practices to ensure sustained knowledge exchange and capacity building among stakeholders.

The successful conduct of the workshop reaffirms the Government's commitment to ensuring that mine closure becomes not merely a statutory obligation, but a transformative opportunity for environmental restoration, inclusive growth, and long-term socio-economic resilience in mining regions across India.

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