

## **Regarding the issue of environmental degradation**

**SHRI PRADYUT BORDOLOI (NAGAON):** I would like to draw your attention to a very important issue prevailing in the country today. It is about environmental degradation.

Sir, the land under forest cover is being sold to mining and forest mafia all over the country especially in the State of Assam. I would like to draw to your attention that since 2013, 1300 square kilometres of forests have been lost in Assam. There is a wildlife protected area Dehing Patkai Wildlife Protected Sanctuary in Upper Assam. This has been kept open for illegal mining. Similarly, there is a Sonaikuchi Reserve Forest in Middle Assam in Nagaon district. That has also been mined and destroyed. The Ramsar Sites Deepor Beel and Bharalu are also being opened to the forest mafia.

Sir, five States accounted for 60 per cent of all tree cover loss between 2001 to 2023. Assam recorded the highest tree cover loss at 324000 hectares compared to the national average of 66000 hectares.

Sir, what is more important is that there is a phenomenon happening in the North Eastern States, that is, rat hole coal mining.

Sir, you are aware that on 6<sup>th</sup> June, 2025, nine people were buried alive in Umrangso of Dima Hasao district of Assam. In the heat of the moment, the Government closed down officially 220 rathole coal mines in Dima Hasao district and another 234 rathole coal mines in Tinsukia district. But after that, things are again back to square one. Now, all over Assam, in certain areas of Tinsukia district, Dima Hasao district, Karbi Anglong district, also in neighbouring Meghalaya and Eastern Arunachal Pradesh, Kharsang in Changlang district of Arunchal Pradesh. Sir, the illegal rathole coal mining is galore everywhere. Coal is being extracted illegally. Movement of coal is allowed everywhere. I just want to tell you here that the National Green Tribunal declared that the rathole coal mining is illegal and that the same view was endorsed by hon. Supreme Court. Why did the Governments of Assam and Meghalaya are allowing the rathole coal mining to flourish? As a result, certain areas in Assam and also Meghalaya have been turned into death valleys.

Sir, this is very important matter. The Government of India must step in and take action.