

Press Release

Jharkhand Can Repurpose 45,000 ha of Coal Mining Land for Green Steel and EVs: iFOREST

23rd December 2025: A new study by the environment think tank, International Forum for Environment, Sustainability and Technology (iFOREST) says Jharkhand can play a pivotal role in India's net-zero transition by repurposing mining land, leveraging legacy energy assets and scaling low-carbon industrial pathways.

Released on Tuesday at the state-level conference *Pathways for Just Transition and Green Growth in Jharkhand*, the report presents the first comprehensive assessment of the state's transition prospects across coal mining and power, steel, automobiles, and other key industries. With industry contributing over 41% of Jharkhand's Gross State Value Added, the study highlights the state's strategic importance in India's low-carbon development pathway.

The report highlights coal transition as a major opportunity for green investment and employment generation in the state if planned early. More than **11,000 hectares of land are already available from closed and non-operational coal mines**. As nearly **60% of mines approach transition** due to exhaustion of mineable reserves and declining economic viability systematic repurposing of land associated with these mines over the next decade could unlock large additional land parcels, particularly in districts such as Dhanbad, Bokaro and Ramgarh.

Jharkhand also has a massive potential to scale up renewable energy to support its green transition. With an estimated **77 GW of renewable energy potential**, the study recommends environmentally responsible expansion using repurposed mining land, industrial wastelands and waterbodies for floating solar, supported by public-sector utilities such as the Damodar Valley Corporation in legacy coal regions.

The steel sector and its value chain represent another major opportunity. With nearly **12% of India's crude steel capacity**, Jharkhand is well placed to lead in green steel and green hydrogen adoption. A phased shift to low-carbon steel pathways—anchored by companies such as Tata Steel and the Steel Authority of India Limited—can enable early pilots, scale up green hydrogen and create jobs across the value chain.

The automobile sector presents another major opportunity. By strengthening the Jamshedpur–Adityapur auto cluster, Jharkhand can emerge as a leader in the EV transition in eastern India. With nearly three-fourths of the state's auto-component manufacturers being micro and small

enterprises, targeted support—focused on technology upgradation, improved access to finance and demand-aligned skilling—will be critical to enable the shift to EVs.

“Just transition in Jharkhand is an opportunity to support economic and industrial transformation in the state in the next 10 years. By repurposing land and energy assets the state can attract green investments and generate employment in transition districts, so that local communities can benefit from this shift. The state is already creating an enabling environment to boost industry investments through simplified permitting processes etc,” said Srestha Banerjee, Director – Just Transition and Climate Change, iFOREST.”

“For any economic development land is a critical resource. For Jharkhand, it is an important opportunity to repurpose and reuse mining land to support this. Besides to support a green growth we will need to mainstream climate and just transition considerations in various economic sectors and also allocate state budgets accordingly,” said Shri Aboobacker Siddique P, IAS (Secretary, Department of Forest, Environment & Climate Change, Government of Jharkhand).

“Mining isn’t going to stop in the next 30-40 years. Therefore, we have time to plan. But this planning need to create the right alternatives by repurposing land, based on local opportunities, knowledge and skills, so that people can shift for naturally. For the coal industry it is also important to use clean coal and move to green mining and transportation practices to reduce emissions, and also improve environmental performance,” said Shri Nilendu Kumar Singh (Chairman-cum-Managing Director, Central Coalfields Limited).

"Energy transition is actually a livelihood transition. We need to prioritise who needs livelihood or skilling support and develop interventions accordingly. Also to improve employability, we need strong skilling, including placement of candidates post training. Jharkhand is taking measures through ITIs and the skill development society," said Shri Jitendra Kumar Singh, IAS, Secretary, Dept. of Labour, Employment and Skill Development, Govt. of Jharkhand.

Key highlights of the report:

- Over **11,000 hectares of land available immediately** from closed and non-operational coal mines. Overall, about **45,000 ha of land can be planned for repurposing** in next 5–

10 years, provide a major opportunity to repurpose mining land for green investments such as renewable energy, green manufacturing, logistics, and allied activities, supporting economic diversification and job creation in coal-dependent districts.

- With a cumulative **District Mineral Foundation (DMF) accrual of about ₹16,977 crore**, Jharkhand has a major opportunity to finance just transition-aligned investments in coal districts in the initial phases, including livelihood diversification, skilling, and other welfare activities.
- The study aligns Jharkhand's transition pathway with recent national policy developments, including the Coal Mine Closure Guidelines, 2025, which explicitly recognise “just transformation” and mine land repurposing. It also highlights the strategic role of DMF funds in financing livelihood creation, skilling and green infrastructure in mining-affected districts.
- The report identifies eight priority districts—**Dhanbad, Bokaro, Ramgarh, Chatra, Hazaribagh, Saraikela-Kharsawan, East Singhbhum and West Singhbhum**—as transition hotspots over the next decade.
- The state should develop a Comprehensive Just Transition Policy for coordinated action and implementation.

“Around 32% of Jharkhand's revenue comes from fossil fuels, so the impact will be significant. The key challenge is in transitioning informal workers and the wider ecosystem. This requires education and alternative livelihoods,” said Shri Ajay Kumar Rastogi, Chairperson, Taskforce on Sustainable Just Transition, Government of Jharkhand.

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