

Site Inspection report

Vainu Bappu Observatory, Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Kavalur submitted a online proposal in the prescribed Form B requesting renewal of the existing lease in respect of 40 ha of forest land in Inner Jawadhi Reserved Forest of Alangayam Range in Tirupattur Forest Division and we received the confirmation on 08.07.19. An inspection was conducted by me on 12.07.2019 & 20.07.2019 along with all the concerned at the proposed site. The proposed site is located in Inner Jawadhi hills at an altitude of 700 mts in Inner Jawadhi Reserved Forest area of Alangayam Range with coordinates i.e N 12.57472, E 78.82056. Forest Type is Secondary dry deciduous forests. Density of vegetation is noted as fairly dense forest. The density of the vegetation is more than 0.4 and less than 0.6. The existing infrastructure of the User Agency is furnished as below.

SL. No	Description		Area in Ha
1	Total Built up area of building	:	0.702
2	Total landscape area	:	1.243
3	Roads	:	1.073
4	Area retained as forest	:	36.982
	Total	:	40.000

They have given following justification for the diversion proposal.

- The site was chosen based on a site survey conducted throughout the southern part of the country for the installation of optical telescopes.
- The location of the observatory greatly help national and international astronomers to effectively access celestial bodies across the sky.
- The astronomical observatories are usually set up in forest lands since light and other pollution in cities render them unusable for research activities.
- Nature of the work is purely of academic interest, there is no hazard to flora and fauna of the place.
- A number of scientific discoveries have been made from the observatory and around 400 research papers have been published in national and international journals and generated more than 30 Ph.D's.

- f) The observatory has created employment for local population and exposed them to scientific research through public outreach programs.

They also stated that they occupy a small part of the land (7.5%) which was deforested and the rest of the area was maintained as forest in order to provide conducive environment for astronomical research and to avoid any kind of disturbance to the observatory. The above justification can be accepted.

The user agency approached Supreme Court for exemption of Net present value. Based on the Supreme Court direction the facts were placed before the Forest Advisory Committee meeting held on 22.03.2018 in Agenda No.4. After careful examination of the proposal by the Forest Advisory Committee, the committee recommended as under.



1. The NPV may not be chargeable on total forest land which is under the possession of the Institute, because Institute is using upto 10 Acres of forest land only for Non-Forestry purpose and rest of the forest land is maintained as forest. Hence the NPV may be chargeable on 10 Acres Forest land. NPV already deposited to be adjusted accordingly.
2. Extention plantation of indigenous species will be done by the user agency in the remaining forest land under control of institute and no further diversion of the remaining forest land for non-forestry purpose will be done by the user agency.
3. The lease period of the 40 Acres previously leased out forest land was extended for a period of ten years from 05.09.1975 and in respect of 60 acre forest land was leased out from 18.10.1976 for a period of ten years. Since the lease of forest land has already been expired, the institute require fresh renewal of lease;
4. The State Government will inform that terms and conditions of the lease granted to the Institute specifying the period of lease.

Therefore, a fresh proposal was submitted by the institute under the Forest Conservation Act 1980, for diversion of 40 ha (100 acre) of forest land under the possession of the Institute for a period of 50 years.

During inspection, it was ascertained that the conditions imposed on the User Agency by Ministry of Environment and Forests were complied during the previous lease period and violations under Forest Conservation Act were not observed.

Hence, it is recommended that the existing lease may be renewed with the usual conditions.


District Forest Officer,
Tirupattur Division,

 20/7/19
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