

F.No.6-48/2015 WL (34th Meeting)
Government of India
Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change
Wildlife Division

Indira Paryavaran Bhawan
Jor Bag Road, Aliganj
New Delhi-110003
Dated: 30.06.2015.

To,
The Principal Secretary (Forests)
Department of Forests
Government of West Bengal
Writers Building
Calcutta-700001.

Sub: Minutes of the 34th Meeting of Standing Committee of NBWL.

Sir,

During the 34th Meeting of Standing Committee of NBWL held on 2nd June 2015 under the Chairmanship of Hon'ble Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Environment, Forests and Climate Change, the following proposal pertaining to your State was considered. The relevant portion of the decision taken in respect of the proposal is reproduced below:

- "1. *Proposal for diversion of 86.6255 ha (18.604 ha. under Darjeeling Forest Division+12.3436 ha. under Kurseong Forest Division + 8.8489 ha under Wildlife-I Division+46.829 ha under Kalimpong Forest Division) of forest land in favour of the North-Frontier Railway, Jalpaiguri for construction of Sevoke Rongpo New Broad Gauge Railway line, West Bengal.*

The Member Secretary briefed the Committee on the proposal. He added that member Dr. R Sukumar had conducted the site inspection. Dr.R.Sukumar explained the sensitivity of wildlife corridor and elephant corridor of Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary. Representative of West Bengal mentioned that notification for Conservation Reserve would be issued shortly.

After discussions, the committee decided to recommend the proposal subject to the following conditions:

- i. No labour camps shall be located within the Mahananda WLS*
- ii. In view of the disturbances in Mahananda WLS during construction phase, mitigation measures shall be designed and adopted in close collaboration of Chief Wildlife Warden and ecologists.*
- iii. In order to prevent the entry of wild animals at entry and exit of the tunnel so that the animal should not get trapped inside the tunnel, an RCC retaining wall/ 4 meter high Gabion wall/ Mechanical barrier using discarded railway lines shall be provided along the cutting for 31m length between existing railway boundary and entry to Tunnel No.1 on the hill side at Sevoke.*
- iv. The construction of tunnels in the sanctuary area up to 30 m of over burden should only be carried out during the day time. There should be no blasting inside tunnels up to 20 m overburden, and this work should only be done by Road header/ excavator/ conventional method. The excavated debris from the tunnels should be disposed off outside the Mahananda WLS as detailed in the plan submitted by the project proponents.*

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- v. Railways should ensure that trains are run at restricted speeds in the Mahananda WLS and other precautions like provision of suitable lights on the locomotives to increase visibility on both sides of the railway track and continuous whistling in the forest area to avoid accidents to wildlife.
- vi. Modern technologies such as Wireless Animal Tracking systems, Satellite-based Navigation Systems shall be adopted where the elephants are likely to cross the railway tracks, other optical/thermal/radar Surveillance/Animal Sensor Systems in avoiding accidents.
- vii. All the project activities shall be taken up in consultation with Chief Wildlife Warden
- viii. EIA study and regular environmental monitoring shall be taken up by user agency.

Immediate steps shall also be taken by West Bengal government to secure 1408.89 hectares in the Teesta Chaur that constitutes a very important Elephant Corridor, for upkeep, as a Conservation Reserve."

Railways should be allowed to start work rightaway and appeal to NBWL if any modifications in conditions are needed.

The above recommendation(s) are subject to the existing directives of Hon'ble Supreme Court and provisions of Forests (Conservation) Act, 1980.

Yours faithfully

R. Raja Sekhar

(Rajasekhar Ratti)

Scientist 'C'/Deputy Director (WL)

Copy to:

1. The Chief Wildlife Warden, Government of West Bengal, Bikash Bhavan, North Block, 3rd Floor, Salt Lake City, Kolkata-700 091.
2. The Addl.Pr.Chief Conservator of Forests, Ministry of Environment & Forests, Regional Office(EZ), A/3 Chandra Shekar, Bhubaneswar-462016.
3. The Director (projects), Ircon International Limited, C-4, District Centre, Saket, New Delhi-110017.
4. The Joint Secretary, I.A. Division, MoEF & CC.
5. The Inspector General of Forests, FC Division, MoEF & CC.

R. Raja Sekhar

(Rajasekhar Ratti)

Scientist 'C'/Deputy Director (WL)