



ENVIRONMENT & FORESTS(FR.10)
DEPARTMENT, SECRETARIAT,
CHENNAI 9.

Letter No.15941/FR.10/2020-4, Dated: 26.02.2021

From
Dr. Sandeep Saxena, I.A.S.,
Additional Chief Secretary to Government .

To
✓ The Assistant Inspector General of Forests (Central),
Government of India,
Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change,
Integrated Regional Office (South Eastern Zone),
1st & 2nd Floor, HEPC Building,
No.34, Cathedral Garden Road,
Nungambakkam, Chennai-34.(w.e)

Sir,

Sub: Forests - Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 – Vellore Circle / Tirupathur Forest Division – Proposal for diversion of 3.439 ha of forest land in Necknamalai Reserved Forests of Tirupathur Forest Division for formation of road from Muniranvattam to Necknamalai to a length of 5.525 km in Tirupathur District in favour of the Block Development Officer, Alangayam Union, Vaniyambadi Taluk, Vellore District – Forwarded to GOI - Regarding.

Ref: 1. From the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, letter No.TS3/7022/2020, dated 11.11.2020.
2. Government letter No.15941/FR.10/2020-2, dated 11.02.2021 and 16.02.2021..
3. From the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, letter No.TS3/7022/ 2020, dated 12.02.2021 and 19.02.2021.

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In the reference first cited, the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests has stated that the Block Development Officer, Alangayam Union, Vaniyambadi Taluk, Vellore District has submitted online application under section 2 of Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 in the prescribed format of Form – A Part I for the diversion of 3.439 ha of forest land in Nechnamalai Reserved Forest of Tirupathur Forest Division for formation of road from Muniranvattam to Necknamalai to a length of 5.525 km in Tirupathur District.

2. In the Part-II of Form-A, the District Forest Officer, Thirupathur Division has furnished the following particulars:-

- i) The legal status of the proposed site of diversion of 3.439 ha of forest land requested for the project is Reserved Forests and as per site inspection report, name of the forest land is “Necknamalai Reserved land” and extent of area proposed for diversion is 3.439 ha.
- ii) Density of the forest area is 0.1 and Eco class of forest area is four.
- iii) As per species wise and girth class wise enumeration table segment furnished by the District Forest Officer, 130 number of trees were enumerated in the proposed road alignment path. As per the revised site inspection report of

DFO uploaded under EDS reply section, it has been reported that 89 numbers are planted trees and balance 41 numbers are spontaneous trees.

- iv) On vulnerability of the forest land proposed for diversion, he has reported that the area is hilly in nature with gentle slope of 15-20%. Hence moderately vulnerable for erosion.
- v) The forest area proposed for diversion is not forms part of National Park, Wildlife Sanctuary, Biosphere Reserve, Tiger Reserve, Elephant corridor, Wildlife migration corridor etc., and not located within 1 km boundary of NP/WLs etc., for the forest land proposed for diversion and not located within the eco-sensitive zone of the protected area notified under Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. Also reported that Wild boar, hares, civet cats and few species of reptiles are present in and around the forest land proposed for diversion. There is no rare/ endangered/unique species of flora and fauna found in the area.
- vi) There is no protected archaeological/ heritage site/ defense establishment or any other important monument is located in the area.
- vii) Requirement of forest land as proposed by the User Agency is unavoidable and bare minimum for the project and no work in violation of the Act or guidelines has been carried out.
- viii) For the diversion of 3.439 ha of forest land, the user agency has identified 7.00 ha of non-forest area as compensatory land in SF.No.416/1-31.38 ha. block area in Vinnamangalam village of Ambur taluk in the Tirupathur District (erstwhile Vellore District)
 - a) The District Forest Officer has reported that the compensatory land is selected for taking up compensatory afforestation in 2 patches. 1000 seedlings per ha has been proposed in this area. It is also certified that the area is suitable for raising compensatory afforestation plantation.
 - b) District Forest Officer, Villupuram Division has proposed compensatory afforestation scheme with maintenance of plantation over a period of 10 years with escalation of wage rate for an financial out lay of Rs.64,66,161/- (Rs.9,23,737/- per ha for raising and 10 year maintenance).

3. The District Forest Officer, Tirupathur Division has inspected the site on 17.08.2020 and he has reported as follows:-

- i. Village Neckanamalai is located at the plateau surface on the top of the Neckanamalai hillock which forms part of the Jawadhi series of Eastern Ghats. The village is lying at an average altitude of 700-800 Mts above MSL with a coordinate N12.691206, E 78.67102. About 650 people are residing on this hillock with an extent of 150 acres of agricultural land. The village is under the administrative jurisdiction of Alangayam Block, Vaniyambadi Taluk in Tirupattur District in Tamil Nadu. This village is located at the top of the hillock surrounded on all sides by Reserve Forests.
- ii. A small foot path with a length of 2.564 kms and a width of 2 mts was allowed as right of way by Forest Settlement Officer under Sec 16 of Tamil Nadu Forest Act and this foot path is serving as the only connectivity between the plain and the hill. Hence, proper communication, transportation with the places on the plain was found difficult by the people. The educational

institutions, hospital and any other emergency services in plain were not easily accessible to this remote village. The villagers could not get enough employment opportunities in this remote hillock which adversely affected their socio economic conditions. Therefore, the road connectivity is inevitable for these villagers for their comprehensive development.

- iii. The area in which the project is proposed is a Reserved Forest area named as Necknamalai Reserved Forest which was notified vide Government orders 37441(1)80-4 Forest and Fisheries Department, dated 26.08.1980 with an extent of 741.90 hec.
- iv. The project envisages formation of road starting from Muniranvattam, a village located beneath the hillock runs upward to the plateau on the hillock where Nekknamalai village is situated. The proposed length of the road is 5525 meters (0/0 to 5/525) and width of 6 mtrs. Hence, the total area of Forest required for the above project is 3.439 hec.
- v. The Necknamalai Reserve Forest which is situated on the hillock is just 2 kms away from National Highway No 48. The soil is highly eroded in the outer slopes exposing huge boulders and sheet rocks. The soil is highly impoverished with not much of moisture retaining capacity, small stones and pebbles are spread over the area in reserved forest leaving not much of space for green cover. The tropical thorn and scrub forest type is found on the hillock with canopy density < 10%. The upper portion of the hillock is covered with Cymbo pogon grass only. The Wildlife present in and around the forest land proposed for diversion as below:

Mammals: Sambar deer, Wild boars, Hares, Jungle cats, Civet cats

Reptiles: Indian rock python, Russell's viper, Saw scaled Viper, Rat snake, Bronze snake, Sand boa, Red sand boa, Vine snake, Startled cobra, Monitor lizard

Birds: Asian koel, Brahminy myna, Hill myna, Bull-bull, Spotted dove, Greater racket tailed drongo, Peacock, Peafowls.

Considering the nature of the forest type and density, this forest type comes under Eco-Class IV consisting of Tropical Thorn Forests and Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest and eco value as open forest category.

- vi. An extent of 7.00 Hec of land has been identified as compensatory land for afforestation purpose in Vinnamangalam village of Ambur Taluk in Tirupattur District which was already transferred by the Revenue department vide G.O(D).No. 351 Revenue Department, dated 09.08.2002 with condition that the excess area of 31.38 ha has to be adjusted for future forest diversion proposal for CA area. Identified CA land is already notified u/s 4 of Tamil Nadu Forest Act 1882 vide G.O.Ms.No.79, E&F (FR-14) Dept. dated 23.06.17.

The details of CA land are furnished below:-

Total extent of land transferred from Revenue Department in Vinnamangalam village	51.83 ha
Actual area required for CA in Vellakkal Kanar Project	20.45 ha
Excess area of land which is already diverted to Forest Department	31.38 ha
Area now identified as CA by the District Collector	7.00 ha

- vii. The proposed area is not close to any National Park or wildlife sanctuary. Further this proposed project involves 130 Nos of trees to be removed (enumerated) after getting prior approval from the Green tribunal. In this Number of Planted trees are 89, Number of Spontaneous trees are 41.
- viii. The Necknamalai road is most important and long time expectations to the Necknamalai villagers and public. Hence the case may be approved with usual conditions.

4. In the specific recommendation, the District Forest Officer, Tirupathur has stated that a detailed field inspection was conducted on 17.08.2020 at the proposed site and it was noticed that Forest Type is tropical thorn and scrub forest type is found on the hillock with canopy density < 10%. This project work will have only minimum impact on the wild life in particular and biodiversity in general. The proposed area is not close to any National Park or wildlife sanctuary. There is no Violation of Provision of Forest (Conservation) Act 1980 is found in the proposed area and there is no encroachment in the proposed area. Further, this proposed project involves 130 Nos of trees to be enumerated after getting prior approval from the Green tribunal. The formation of new road is inevitable which would facilitate in easy access of hospital, market place of their crops, reducing school dropout improving the standard of living of the local people. Hence, it is recommended on public interest.

5. The Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Vellore Circle in his recommendation report, has reported the following:-

- Agreed with the information given on Part-II by the District Forest Officer, Tirupathur Division.
- Agreed with the site inspection report of District Forest Officer, Tirupathur.
- Recommended the proposal with following observation.
 - i) Any developmental work taken up in the forests will cause disturbance to the natural habitat and ecosystem. But need to accommodate such works by incorporating maximum possible mitigating measures to minimize the damage to the eco system.
 - ii) This road will cause permanent disturbance to the movement of wild animals and fragmentation of forests.
 - iii) Movement of vehicles and machines will cause forest fires, more so during summer months.
 - iv) Man animal conflicts will increase as the movement of people will increase after the road formation.
 - v) Watershed value may deteriorate affecting natural vegetations in the area. The above mentioned few major disturbances are foreseen among many other things.
 - vi) In order to mitigate the above, the user agency may be asked to allot funds of about Rs.20.00 lakhs every year or for first five years to prevent / minimize the forest fires, man animal conflicts, providing in situ drinking water to animals to prevent them to go in search of water and to facilitate natural vegetation. Since the Government is considering to provide communication to the local villagers, the proposal has been recommended for consideration with above conditions inter alia considering all other prescribed conditions that are in force.

6. Further the Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests has stated that this forest diversion proposal has been furnished to construct road connectivity to the Necknamalai hill village surrounded by Reserved Forests all sides to the main land in the foot hill. The formation of new road is inevitable which would facilitate in easy access of hospital, market place of their crops, reducing school dropout and also improving the standard of living of the local people. The Necknamalai road is most important and longtime expectations to the Necknamalai villagers and public. Diversion of forest land for the welfare purpose of formation of roads by Rural Development Department / State Highways Department / National Highways Authority of India, no such condition has been imposed so far.

7. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests has stated that considering the long standing demand of road connectivity to the hill village, special condition of allotting Rs.20.00 lakhs every year or for first five years to prevent / minimize the forest fires, man animal conflicts, providing in situ drinking water to animals to prevent them to go in search of water and to facilitate natural vegetation proposed by the Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests has not been imposed.

8. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (HoD) has recommended the proposal of diversion of 3.439 ha of forest area in Necknamalai Reserved Forests in Tirupathur Forest Division for formation of road from Muniranvattam to Necknamalai to a length of 5.525 km through Necknamalai RF in Tirupathur District in favour of the Block Development Officer, Alangayam Block, Tirupathur District under section 2 of Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 for a period of 25 years subject to the following conditions and requested to forward the same to Government of India to obtain their approval:-

- a) The legal status of the diverted forest land remains unchanged.
- b) The demarcation of the proposed forest land shall be carried out by the User Agency by erecting 4 feet high cement concrete pillars duly numbered at an interval of 20 meters at their cost.
- c) The User Agency has to pay the cost of Raising Compensatory Afforestation / Maintenance of plantation, protection of plantation etc., as fixed by the Forest Department and willingness to deposit additional amounts if any suggested as amended owing to the change in planting technique, enhancement in the FSR etc., demanded subsequently.
- d) The User Agency has to pay the amount of Net Present Value which will be fixed as per the guidelines of Hon'ble Supreme Court of India.
- e) The User Agency has to bear the additional amount of Net Present Value which will be fixed as per the guidelines of Hon'ble Supreme Court of India as fixed by Forest Department in future.
- f) The user agency has to obtain permission from the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India for felling of 41 numbers of spontaneous trees in the proposed road alignment path.
- g) The User Agency has to pay the cost towards lease rent as fixed by the Forest Department at the time of sanction along with any escalation for the forest land to be diverted of the above project in future for the entire project period.
- h) The total forest area utilized for the project shall not exceeds 3.439 ha.
- i) Period of lease can be twenty five (25) years. The User Agency has to apply renewal proposal before one year of expiry of lease with the State Forest Department.

9. On the clarification, the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests has furnished the following details:-

- i. The population of 650 peoples are present residents. The road will facilitate for the movement of more number of people for present and future growth.
- ii. Due to road laying, the economic activity will improve and agriculture activity, marketing will increase and will result in overall economic development of village.
- iii. Necknamalai village located beneath the hillock runs upward to the plateau on the hillock. So far, the villagers commute at present by utilizing the right of way allowed by walk and two wheeler. No public transportation is available due to non existence of pacca road.
- iv. As per the details furnished in the Part-II of Form-A, Wild boar, hares, civet cat and few species of reptiles are available in and around the forests land proposed for diversion and the area does not form part of National Park, Wildlife sanctuary, biosphere reserve, tiger reserve, elephant corridor, wildlife mitigation corridor etc., Further, the area has not been located in the Eco-sensitive zone of the protected areas. There is no rare/endangered / unique species of flora and fauna found in the area.
- v. Then Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Vellore Circle has recommended for allotment of funds of Rs.20 lakhs per annum by the user agency to prevent/minimize forest fires, man animal conflicts, providing in-situ drinking water to animals to prevent them going in search of water and to facilitate natural vegetation. For the diversion of forest land for the welfare purpose of formation of roads by Rural Development Department / State Highways Department / National Highways Authority of India, no such condition has been imposed so far. Wildlife habitat restoration works will be done from the Net Present Value funds of diverted forest land to be collected from the user agency and field officers will be suitably instructed to carryout periodical habitat maintenance.
- vi. Regular and temporary employment to be generated in the scheme has been furnished by the user agency considering the estimated cost of the project and man days to be generated in the road formation work. By providing regular road connectivity, the hill villagers may get regular employment in the plains as well as improved agricultural activity in their village.
- vii. Considering the long standing demand of hill villagers for their road connectivity to the plains, this proposal has been processed based on the details furnished by the user agency being an Government Department. i.e., Rural Development Department.
- viii. Forest clearance proposal already furnished in proposal No. FP/TN/Road/11252/2015 had been withdrawn by the user agency citing the reason that new proposal will be furnished in the revised alignment to provide rolling gradient and the Government of India has also revoked the Stage-I clearance accorded for the project proposal.

10. The Government after careful examination, have therefore decided to accept the proposal of the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests for diversion of 3.439 ha of forest area in Necknamalai Reserved Forests in Tirupathur Forest Division for formation of

road from Muniranvattam to Necknamalai to a length of 5.525 km through Necknamalai RF in Tirupathur District in favour of the Block Development Officer, Alangayam Union, Vaniyambadi Taluk, Vellore District for a period of 25 years subject to the conditions mentioned in para 8 above under section 2 of Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 and forward the same to the Government of India for concurrence.

11. I am, therefore, to request you to kindly obtain the approval of the competent authority and communicate the same to this Government, early.

Yours faithfully,

S. Mohamed Yusuf
for Additional Chief Secretary to Government
26/2/2021

Copy to:-

The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (HoD),
Chennai-15.

The Block Development Officer,
Alangayam Block,
Vaniyambadi Taluk,
Vellore District-635701.

SF/SC.

PART – V

(To be filled in by the Secretary in charge of Forest Department or by any other authorized officer of the State Government not below the rank of an Under Secretary)

Proposal for diversion of of 3.439 ha of forest area in Necknamalai Reserved Forests in Tirupathur Forest Division for formation of road from Muniranvattam to Necknamalai to a length of 5.525 km through Necknamalai RF in Tirupathur District in favour of the Block the Development Officer, Alangayam Union, Vaniyambadi Taluk, Vellore District for a period of twenty five years under Section 2 of Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.

18. Recommendation of the State Government

-Recommended-

(Adverse comments made by any officer or authority in Part-B or Part – C or Part – D above should be specifically commented upon)

N. N. G. P. M.
26/02/2021

Signature
Name & Designation
(Official Seal)

Date : 26.02.2021

Place : Chennai-9.

Deputy Secretary to Government
Environment and Forests Department
Secretariat, Chennai - 9.