

Government of India
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
(Forest Conservation Division)

Indira Paryavaran Bhawan,
Jor Bag Road, Aliganj,
New Delhi – 110003

Dated: ~~23rd~~ December, 2022

26th

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Subject: Diversion of 63.540 ha forest land for development of Green Filed Airport at village Vihirgaon and Murti, Taluka Rajura of District Chandrapur in the State of Maharashtra (Online No. FP/MH/Others/42471/2019) – regarding.

Madam/Sir,

This is in reference to the Government of Maharashtra letter No. FLD-2022/C.R-272/F-10 dated 18.10.2022 wherein a fresh proposal to obtain prior approval of the Central Government, in terms of the Section-2 (ii) of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 for diversion of 63.540 ha forest land for development of Green Filed Airport at village Vihirgaon and Murti, Taluka Rajura of District Chandrapur in the State of Maharashtra was forwarded to the Ministry.

The proposed area is part of a Tiger corridor. A report regarding construction of Airport has been prepared by Wildlife Institute of India wherein the first recommendation is that *"given the wildlife value of the area and its importance of connecting corridors, the present site may or shall not be considered for the construction of the proposed Greenfield airport"*. Further, mitigation measures have been suggested in case there is no alternative and decision is taken to continue with the construction of the Airport.

In this regard, the proposal for diversion of 63.540 ha forest land was considered by the Forest Advisory Committee in its meeting held on 09.12.2022 (**Copy of MoM enclosed**).

After thorough deliberations and discussions, keeping in view the location of the proposed area within a Tiger Corridor, the recommendation of the Wildlife Institute of India and the non-site specific nature of the project, the FAC **deferred** the proposal and decided that:

- i. The State Government shall examine the financial viability of the project and submit a detailed analysis/report in this regard.
- ii. The construction of a Greenfield airport is a non-site specific activity and the proposed site is surrounded by Non-forest land. The State Government shall therefore explore other options of using non-forest land instead of using Forest land for the project. The State shall also explore the possibility of expanding the already existing Chandrapur (Morwa) Airport. In this regard the State Govt. shall provide a detailed presentation along with DGCA and MADC before the FAC.

- iii. Keeping in view the ecological importance of the area, the Ministry shall seek detailed comments from WII, Dehradun and NTCA on the instant proposal for the construction of Greenfield airport.

Accordingly, it is requested to furnish the detailed comments on the instant proposal for the construction of Greenfield airport, as per recommendation of FAC, and submit the information to the Ministry for further necessary action.

Yours sincerely,

(Suneet Bhardwaj)

Signed by Suneet Bhardwaj

Assistant Inspector General of Forests

Date: 26-12-2022 14:47:37

To,

<p>1. The Member Secretary, National Tiger Conservation Authority, B-1 Wing, 7th Floor, Pt. Deendayal Antyodaya Bhawan, CGO Complex, New Delhi-110003.</p>	<p>2. The Director, Wildlife Institute of India Post Box # 18, Chandrabani, Dehradun, Uttarakhand - 248001.</p>
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Copy to:

1. The Principal Secretary (Forests), Government of Maharashtra, Mumbai;
2. The PCCF (HoFF), Department of Forest, Government of Maharashtra, Nagpur;
3. The Regional Officer, Integrated Regional Office, MoEF&CC, Nagpur;
4. The Nodal Officer (FCA), Department of Forest and Environment, Government of Maharashtra, Nagpur;
5. User Agency;
6. Monitoring Cell, FC Division, MoEF & CC, New Delhi for uploading on PARIVESH portal.

and the Nodal Officer (FCA), Government of Madhya Pradesh agreed to reduce the area for ancillary activities from 15 ha to 10 ha.

3. **Decision of the FAC:** After detailed discussion with the Nodal Officer (FCA), Madhya Pradesh and Dy. DGF (Central), IRO, Bhopal, the FAC recommended for according Stage-I approval to divert 50.00 ha out of 55.00 ha as proposed for relocation of Village Dhunwani from the Ratapani Wildlife Sanctuary, District Raisen of Madhya Pradesh with relevant General and Standard conditions.

Agenda No. 10

F. No. 8-29/2022-FC

Subject: Diversion of 63.540 ha forest land for development of Green Filed Airport at village Vihirgaon and Murti, Taluka Rajura of District Chandrapur in the State of Maharashtra (Online No. FP/MH/Others/42471/2019) - regarding.

1. The above stated agenda was considered by FAC in its meeting held on 09.12.2022. The details of the proposal may be seen at www.parivesh.nic.in.
2. During the meeting, all the factual details along with examination of the proposal in the DSS were presented before the FAC which after thorough deliberation and discussion observed that:
 - i. The State Government vide letter dated 18.10.2022 forwarded a fresh proposal to obtain prior approval of the Central Government, in terms of the Section-2 (ii) of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 on the above mentioned subject.
 - ii. The user agency initially applied for diversion of 75.24 ha forest land. However, the State Government has recommended only 63.540 ha forest land for diversion.
 - iii. The area proposed for diversion is 63.540 ha out of which 25.27 ha is Protected Forest land and 38.27 ha is Reserved Forest land and total number of trees to be marked for felling is 3,392.
 - iv. The proposed forest area is not part of any National park, Wildlife Sanctuary, biosphere reserve, tiger reserve, elephant corridor, etc. But the project area falls within grid No. 248 of (C.No 173,200 & 593) as per WII report on Tiger Corridors of Eastern Vidharbha Landscape.
 - v. The user agency has provided the copy of undertaking to adhere to and bear the cost of all the mitigation measures suggested by WII, Dehradun.
 - vi. The proposed airport site is at a distance of 8.35 km from the boundary of Kanhargaon wildlife Sanctuary and the proposal for final notification of ESZ for Kanhargaon wildlife Sanctuary is in Draft stage.
 - vii. The Nodal Officer (FCA), Government of Maharashtra physically attended the meeting and Dy. DGF (Central), IRO, Nagpur attended the meeting online.
 - viii. During the meeting the Nodal Officer (FCA), Government of Maharashtra informed that other than the proposed site, three (3) alternative sites have been explored by user agency but except the present proposed site at Village Murti other sites are not found suitable for airport in view of the obstacles like high tension lines, chimneys and hills etc.
 - ix. The proposed site is quite near (39 kms) to the already existing Chandrapur(Morwa) Airport and the Nagpur Airport. In this regard, the Nodal Officer (FCA), Government of Maharashtra informed that the scope of expansion in case of Chandrapur(Morwa) airport is limited and the distance between Nagpur Airport and the proposed Greenfield Airport is 180+ kms. Moreover, the proposed airport falls in the underdeveloped part of Vidarbha Region. The proposed Greenfield Airport will ease the pressure of air traffic on Nagpur Airport and will also provide an alternate option to the travellers.
 - x. Further the Nodal Officer (FCA), Government of Maharashtra informed that the various Industries are located in and around Chandrapur. This Airport will facilitate movement of

- manpower and resources. This Airport will also help boost up the tourist and passenger movement and directly help elevating the economic condition of this backward area.
- xi. The proposed area is part of a Tiger corridor. A report regarding construction of Airport has been prepared by Wildlife Institute of India wherein the first recommendation is that "*given the wildlife value of the area and its importance of connecting corridors, the present site may or shall not be considered for the construction of the proposed Greenfield airport*". Further, mitigation measures have been suggested in case there is no alternative and decision is taken to continue with the construction of the Airport.
 - xii. The CWLW had mentioned that "*in view of the benefits that seem to be accruing due to the project for local population in terms of the number of employment opportunities, the trade of between the protection of the corridor to be disrupted if the project comes through and the benefits proposed, weighs heavily in favour of protection of the corridor*". The revised comments recommending the project proposal were submitted later.
 - xiii. The construction of the Greenfield airport is not a site specific activity and moreover the construction of Airport will further lead to infrastructural development like roads, Hotels and other residential/commercial areas in and around the proposed site. This may have an adverse impact on Tiger movement in the project area which falls within the Tiger Corridors of Eastern Vidharbha Landscape.
3. **Decision of the FAC:** After thorough deliberations and discussions, keeping in view the location of the proposed area within a Tiger Corridor, the recommendation of the Wildlife Institute of India and the non-site specific nature of the project, the FAC **deferred** the proposal and decided that:
- i. The State Government shall examine the financial viability of the project and submit a detailed analysis/report in this regard.
 - ii. The construction of a Greenfield airport is a non-site specific activity and the proposed site is surrounded by Non-forest land. The State Government shall therefore explore other options of using non-forest land instead of using Forest land for the project. The State shall also explore the possibility of expanding the already existing Chandrapur (Morwa) Airport. In this regard the State Govt. shall provide a detailed presentation along with DGCA and MADC before the FAC.
 - iii. Keeping in view the ecological importance of the area, the Ministry shall seek detailed comments from WII, Dehradun and NTCA on the instant proposal for the construction of Greenfield airport.

Agenda No. 11

F. No. 8-20/2014-FC

Sub: Diversion of 1165.66 ha (including 91.331 ha underground area) of forest land for construction of Etalin Hydro Electric Project (EHEP) (3097 MW) in Dibang Valley District of Arunachal Pradesh by M/s Etalin Hydro Electric Power Company Limited, Arunachal Pradesh.

The proposal was deferred for discussion in the next FAC meeting.

Agenda No. 12

F. No. 8-33/2019-FC

Sub: Proposal for diversion of 83.12 ha (94.712 ha proposed originally) of forest land for drilling of Oil well at 27 new locations in Changlang District of Arunachal Pradesh by M/s