

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

Indira Paryavaran Bhawan,
Jor Bag Road, Aliganj,
New Delhi – 110003
Dated: February, 2024

To,

The Principal Secretary (Forests),
Government of Madhya Pradesh,
Bhopal.

Subject: Diversion of 53.142 ha forest land in compartment No PF-261, Waidhan Range of Singrauli Forest Division for Khadia Expansion Open Cast Coal Mine Project by M/s Northern Coalfields Ltd. (NCL) under Singrauli District of Madhya Pradesh State (Online No FP/MP/MIN/149270/2021) – regarding.

Madam/Sir,

I am directed to refer to the APCCF (LM)-cum-Nodal Officer (FCA), Government of Madhya Pradesh's letter no. F-1/844/2023/10-11/695 dated 31.01.2024 on the above cited subject forwarding a fresh proposal on the above subject seeking prior approval of the Central Government under Section-2 (1) (ii) of the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980. After examining the proposal, the following shortcomings have been observed:

- i. The State Govt. has mentioned that the proposal is for Khadia Expansion Open Cast Coal Mine Project and as per records available on Parivesh portal it has been found that the Ministry vide letter No 8-85/2005-FC dated 14.09.2010 has approved diversion of 180 ha forest land for Khadia Project of Northern Coalfields Limited (NCL) in Sidhi District. Therefore the compliance of conditions stipulated in said approval needs submission.
- ii. Present status of Compensatory Afforestation (CA) which was then approved in case of 180 ha diverted forest land needs submission along with the KML files.
- iii. Status of reclamation measures undertaken by the user agency in their lease area in case of earlier approvals as per the Progressive Mine Closure Plans and gaps if any, shall be intimated by the State.
- iv. Cost Benefit analysis indicating the CB ratio of 1:121.306 has been submitted which appears to be exorbitantly high. The same needs to be revisited and estimated using appropriate techno-economic tools for estimation of all parameters and their discounting to arrive at same values of cost and future benefits as per prescribed format.
- v. The State Govt. reported that the proposed forest land for diversion is located

within 1 Km from the Wildlife Sanctuary/ National park/ Biosphere Reserve/ Tiger Reserve/ Elephant corridor. However, specific details have not been submitted. Therefore, the comments of the CWLW in this regard and status of wildlife clearance needs submission.

- vi. The State Govt. shall clarify whether the present proposal requires Wildlife Management plan or otherwise.
- vii. Details of coal evacuation plan and involvement/requirement of additional forest land, if any, shall be intimated.
- viii. Satellite imagery shows that safety zone in the Khadia and the adjoining mine has not been maintained. The State Govt. shall submit the justification along with the status of safety zone maintained in the mined out area.
- ix. Given the density of 0.5 of the 53.142 ha forest land, number of project affected trees reported as 27342 appears to be have been estimated on lower side as the proposed area is having Very Dense Forest (VDF) & Moderately Dense Forest (MDF) based on DSS analysis. Therefore, same needs to be reconfirmed by the State.
- x. It has been reported that the mining operation have been started and date back to year 1981-82 in the Khadia Project and further, as per Part-I of the application, total forest existing within the Mining lease is found to be 901.906 ha. In this regard, copies of approval obtained by the user agency in different time span under the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980 needs submission.
- xi. As per the Mining plan, it has been reported that numerous seasonal nalas flowing through this area and meet the master drain the Rihand dam (Govind Ballabh Pant Sagar) which is located south of this area. Tippa Jharia nala drains the Khadia (Expansion) OCP area in north and Ballia nalla drains this OCP in south and meet the Gobind Ballabh Pant Sagar. Therefore, comments of the water resource department on the proposed measures and impact of the project on the hydrological regime are required to be submitted.
- xii. As per the present land use given in the Mining plan, forest area within the lease is reported as 57.906 ha whereas the 53.142 ha forest land has been sought through instant proposal. This variation needs clarification.
- xiii. The State Government has proposed degraded forest land (DFL) for CA in the instant proposal. However, as per Para (1) of the Rule-13 of the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Rules, 2023 incorporated in Consolidated Guidelines and Clarifications issued under Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 2023 issued by the Ministry on dated 29.12.2023 says that "an user agency shall provide land which is neither notified as forest under the Indian Forest Act, 1927 (16 of 1927) or any other law nor managed as forest by the Forest Department and it shall also bear the cost of raising compensatory afforestation over such land". Therefore the User agency shall provide the details of non-forest land for raising compensatory afforestation along with KML file and required documents.
- xiv. The user agency shall upload the KML file of the proposed diversion area as per the component wise break-up given in online form.
- xv. The user agency has uploaded the KML file of Mining lease boundary and its total area is found to be 1697.906 ha and a part of the Mining lease area is also located in the Uttar Pradesh State. Further in the said Mining lease KML file, the user agency has excluded some portion falling in the forest land and

reason for such deletion is not available in the proposal. This needs clarification.

- xvi. Out of 1697.906 ha area of the Mining lease, total forest land reported in the lease is 901.906 ha. Out of this 901.906 ha forest land majority part is located in the Uttar Pradesh State. This needs justification. Therefore, the user agency/state shall provide the complete/correct KML file of forest land in the lease.
- xvii. As per DSS analysis the total forest land within the State of Madhya Pradesh is found to be 242.574 ha. Further out of this 242.574 ha forest land, the user agency has taken approval under the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhinyam, 1980 for an area of 180 ha and submitted the instant diversion proposal for an area of 53.142 ha. Hence, the status of balance 9.432 ha forest land needs submission.
- xviii. The user agency is submitting the proposal for diversion of forest land in piecemeal. The reasons for the same needs submission.
- xix. The area proposed for diversion is having high biological richness as per DSS analysis. The justification for proposing such biodiversity rich area for mining shall be submitted. Also the State Govt. shall submit the status of unbroken area available in the vicinity of the proposed diversion and within the mining lease area.

Accordingly, it is requested to furnish the above mentioned information to this Ministry for further consideration of the proposal.

Yours sincerely,

Sd/-

(Suneet Bhardwaj)

Assistant Inspector General of Forests

Copy to:

1. The PCCF (HoFF), Department of Forest, Government of Madhya Pradesh, Bhopal;
2. The Dy. DGF (Central), Regional Office, MoEF&CC, Bhopal;
3. The Nodal Officer (FCA), Department of Forest, Government of Madhya Pradesh, Bhopal;
4. User Agency;
5. Monitoring Cell, FC Division, MoEF&CC, New Delhi for uploading on PARIVESH portal.