

File No: 8-04/2026-FC (E-29592)
Government of India
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
(Forest Conservation Division)

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

Dated:21-04-2026

To
The Addl. Chief Secretary (Forests),
Government of Odisha,
Bhubaneswar

Sub: Proposal for seeking prior approval of Central Government under Section 2 (1) ii) of Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980 for diversion of 22.551 ha of Forest land for mining and its ancillary activities of Rengalbeda (NE) iron ore mine under Barbil Tahasil, Barbil Range of Keonjhar Forest Division in Keonjhar District within Mining Lease Block area of 24 203 ha by M/s Odisha Mining Corporation Limited (Proposal No.FP/OR/MIN/142246/2021)-reg.

Madam/Sir,

I am directed to refer to the Government of Odisha's letter No FE-DIV-FLD-0069-2025-4598/FE&CC, dated 24.02.2026 on the above subject seeking prior approval of the Central Government in accordance with Section 2 (i) (ii) of the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980 and to say that after examination of the proposal the following has been observed:

- i. The State Government shall provide the justification for opening a new mine within the forest area, as required under Para 7.8 of the Consolidated Guidelines dated 29.12.2023. The requisite justification, along with details as per the said provision, needs to be submitted by the State Government.
- ii. The area of forest land proposed for diversion by the State Government is 22.551 ha; however, the total area indicated on the PARIVESH portal is 24.203 ha. Accordingly, the State Government shall take necessary steps to rectify the discrepancy.
- iii. The Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), Keonjhar Division, has reported that the forest land applied for diversion is a dwelling habitat for elephants, sloth bear, barking deer, etc. The project area is located at a distance of 4.17 km from the Karo-Karamapada Elephant Corridor. Accordingly, the State Government shall furnish the comments of the PCCF (Wildlife) and the Chief Wildlife Warden, Odisha.
- iv. The State Government has stated that no violation has been committed on the forest land proposed for diversion. However, the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), Keonjhar Division, in the site inspection report, has indicated

encroachment by 10 households within the mining lease area. Further, a Katcha road is also visible as per DSS in the land proposed for diversion. Accordingly, the State Government shall furnish its comments on the matter along with a detailed action taken report for removal of the encroachment.

- v. The State Government has submitted that the cost–benefit ratio of the proposal is 1:713.11, which appears to be exceptionally high. Accordingly, the State Government shall ensure that the cost–benefit analysis is in accordance with the provisions laid down under the Van (Sanrakshan evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980.
- vi. The State Government has not furnished details regarding the fulfilment of requirements related to electricity and water. Accordingly, the State Government shall provide these details, along with information on any additional forest land required, if any, for meeting such requirements.
- vii. The State Government has not furnished the component-wise KML files of the land proposed for diversion. Accordingly, the State Government shall provide the component-wise KML files and ensure that the component-wise land use plan is commensurate with the land use plan as approved in the mining plan.
- viii. As per the DSS analysis, a kachha road is visible in the proposed CA site. Accordingly, the State Government shall ensure that the area proposed for Compensatory Afforestation (CA) is free from all encumbrances.
- ix. The State Government, vide its letter dated 24.02.2026, informed that the Letter of Intent (LoI) for the instant proposal has been expired on 24.02.2024. It has further been stated that the LoI was extended for a period of two years by the Department of Steel and Mines, Government of Odisha. Accordingly, the State Government shall furnish details regarding the current validity of the LoI along with a copy of the valid LoI.
- x. The State Government has submitted the mining plan for an area of 24.203 ha, whereas the subject proposal pertains to 22.551 ha. Accordingly, the State Government shall furnish its comments in this regard and carry out necessary corrections in the mining plan.
- xi. As per Part-II of the online application form, the land proposed for diversion is vulnerable to soil erosion, particularly due to the sloping terrain. Accordingly, the State Government shall furnish its comments in this regard and shall submit soil and moisture conservation plan.
- xii. The Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), Keonjhar Forest Division, has reported in the site inspection report that 16–17 households have been residing in Nuagaon village within the lease area for the past 30 years or more. Accordingly, the State Government shall furnish its comments on the rehabilitation of the project-affected families.
- xiii. As per para B-1 of Part-I of the online application form, details of earlier proposals seeking prior approval of the Central Government for diversion of forest land (FP/OR/OTHERS/33/2019, FP/OR/MRL/31/2019, FP/OR/OTHERS/32/2019, and FP/OR/OTHERS/2/2020) have been submitted by the State Government, for which in-principle approval has been accorded by the Regional Office of the Ministry. Accordingly, the State Government shall clarify whether these proposals are related to the instant proposal and furnish details in this regard.
- xiv. As per the State Government's letter dated 24.02.2026, no forest land has

been proposed for dumping in the instant proposal. However, as per the Site Inspection Report (SIR) of the DFO, an area of 0.589 ha is proposed for OB dumping, 0.009 ha for infrastructure, 0.489 ha for mineral processing and stacking, and 0.131 ha for a 132 kV underground cable. Accordingly, the State Government shall furnish the correct component-wise breakup of the land proposed for diversion and to ensure that no non-site-specific activities are carried out on the forest land proposed for diversion.

- xv. The State Government has submitted that a large *Ficus religiosa* tree, approximately 200 years old, is present on the land proposed for diversion and requires preservation. Accordingly, the State Government shall furnish its comments in this regard.
- xvi. As per the recommendations of the RCCF, as mentioned in para 16 of Part-II of the online application form, the proposal is for diversion of 22.551 ha of forest land (21.00 ha for **fresh diversion** and 1.551 ha for **re-diversion** along with change in land use). However, the instant proposal pertains to diversion of 22.551 ha (including 1.652 ha of NHAI), which is inconsistent with the above. Accordingly, the State Government shall furnish its comments in this regard.
- xvii. The State Government has submitted that NH-520 passes through the mining lease area and has been excluded from the diversion proposal. It has further been stated that the transmission line of M/s Rungta Mines, passing through the left corner of the mining lease, has already received Stage-II clearance for rerouting outside the lease area. Accordingly, the State Government shall furnish its comments in this regard.

2. In view of above, the State Government is requested to furnish information, as indicated above, for further consideration of the proposal in the Ministry.

Yours faithfully,

Sd/-

(Deepika Chaudhary)

Deputy Inspector General of Forests

Copy to:

1. PCCF (HoFF), Department of Forests, Government of Odisha, Bhubaneswar.
2. Dy. DGF (Central), Regional Office of the MoEF&CC at Bhubaneswar.
3. Nodal Officer (FCA), Department of Forests, Government of Odisha, Bhubaneswar.
4. User Agency
5. Monitoring Cell, FC Division, MoEF&CC, New Delhi for uploading on PARIVESH portal.