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पर्यावरण वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय
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GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS &
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File No. FC- Misc/04/2023/IROCH/RPR / 16

Date:-18/04/2024

To

The Inspector General of Forests
FC Division,
Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change
Indira Paryavaran Bhawan,
Jorbagh Road, Aliganj, New Delhi-110003.

Sub: Proposal for seeking prior approval of the Central Government under Section 2 (1) (ii) of the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980 in favour of M/s South Eastern Coalfields Limited (SECL) for diversion of 174.925 ha (Originally proposed area 206.638 ha) of forest land for Deepika Expansion Open Cast Mining Project in Korba District, in the State of Chhattisgarh (Online Proposal No. FP/CG/MIN/1452/2006)-reg.

Ref: MoEF&CC, FC-Division, New Delhi, letter No. 8-80/2006-FC dated 08/01/2024

Sir,

On the above subject and reference it is submitted that the proposed area for diversion of 174.925 ha (Originally proposed area 206.638 ha) of forest land under Deepka Opencast coal mining project in Korba Division, was inspected on 15.04.2024 and 16.04.2024. Detailed report of the diverted area and CA sites along with relevant photographs are enclosed for perusal. The salient features observed in the proposal and the sites are:

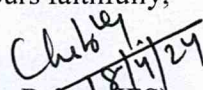
- i. **CA:** The CA land has been stipulated as 413.276 ha degraded land. Currently only 30 ha land is available. The User Agency is supposed to provide NFL. The Agency had agreed to provide NFL from its plantation area in tenancy land. So far it has not identified the land. There is a huge time gap between initial violation and implementation of the CA scheme, which has inflicted huge ecological loss.
- ii. **Safety zone:** The PP has not constructed the safety zone properly. Safety zone was found at places in breaks along the boundary. The safety zone is currently present in part of Eastern portion demarcating the Gevra OCP, part of north and part of western boundary. There is no safety zone in the advancing front. The boundary is about 15 km, whereas the safety zone is hardly 3-4 km. This is against the mining safety norms besides the FC condition.

- iii. **Top soil management:** During the site inspection, it was observed that top soil management by the agency is quite poor. There is no proper dumping of top soil and it is getting mixed with sub-soil. This leads to poor growth of plants. Topsoil on the overburdened site was found very thin and is vulnerable to erosion.
- iv. **Soil conservation:** During the inspection it was observed that overburdened site is getting eroded and top soil is getting washed. Deep gullies and ravines formations were found, which are expanding every year. The slopes are getting steeper due to erosion, which need to be stabilized urgently by combination of mechanical means and plantation. It was also observed that there is a need to enhance the technical knowledge related to forestry in SECL as well as to fulfil the shortage of forestry technical experts. So that according to the demand of the area, special attention can be given to the planning and planting of local forestry tree species, so that the quality of afforestation in the planted area is complete.
- v. **Wildlife management plan:** In pursuant to the Stage-I condition, the PP has got Wildlife Conservation Plan prepared by Tropical Forest Research Institute, Jabalpur. As informed by the PP, they have provided fund for the purpose; however, there is no information on implementation of the plan.
- vi. **Species composition:** Monoculture is to be avoided. Earlier plantations had many pure patches of *Cassia Siamea*. However, current plantations are improved ones, with mixed with number of local species like Sal, Pongamia, Bauhinia, Ficus, Gmelina etc. It was observed that there is a need to enhance technical knowledge related to forestry within SECL and to address the shortage of forestry technical experts. This would enable SECL for quality plantation. During the site inspection, it was observed that SECL has planted Sal seedlings in the non-coal barring area in the years 2022-23.

As stated above, the UA has to complete safety zone and provide CA land. The UA has to surrender the land not being used for mining or any other purpose. Additional penalty may be imposed for continued mining prior to Stage-II approval.

Submitted for information and necessary action.

(Encl: inspection report)

Yours faithfully,

(Chaturbhuja Behera, IFS)
Inspector General of Forests.

Site Inspection Report of the Proposal for seeking prior approval of the Central Government under Section 2 (1) (ii) of the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980 in favour of M/s South Eastern Coalfields Limited (SECL) for diversion of 174.925 ha (Originally proposed area 206.638 ha) of forest land for Deepika Expansion Open Cast Mining Project in Korba District, in the State of Chhattisgarh (Online Proposal No. FP/CG/MIN/1452/2006).

Name of the inspecting Officer – Shri. Chaturbhujia Behera, IFS, Inspector General of Forests, Sub-Office, MoEF&CC, Raipur.

The site inspection of the above mentioned proposal was carried out on 13th-15th April, 2023 and 15th-16th April, 2024 in pursuance to directions received from the FC Division of the MoEF&CC, New Delhi vide its letter no. 8-80/2006-FC dated 08.02.2023 and 08/01/2024. Following officers/staff from the State Forest Department and the User Agency were present during the site inspection:

1. Shri. Kumar Nishanth IFS, Divisional Forest Officer, Katghora Forest Division.
2. Shri. Ashok Kumar Mannewar, Forest Range Officer, Katghora Range
3. Shri. Rakesh Kumar Srivas, RI-Forestry, Sub-Office, MoEF&CC, Raipur.
4. Shri. Santhosh Kumar Rathre, Dy. Forest Range Officer, Katghora Range.
5. Shri. Bilap Singh Paikre, Project Range Officer, Chhattisgarh Rajya Van Vikas Nigam Limited.
6. Shri. B R Yadav, Asst. Project Range Officer, Chhattisgarh Rajya Van Vikas Nigam Limited.

Officials from User Agency:

1. Shri. Partha Mukherjee, General Manager (Operation), Dipka Area
2. Shri. Prashanth Jadav (Retd. IFS), Senior Advisor, SECL Bilaspur
3. Smt. Keerthi K G, Nodal Officer(Env./Forest), Dipka Area
4. Shri. Sanoj Jose, Asst. Manager (Env./Forest), Dipka Area
5. Shri. R K Singh, Project Survey officer, Dipka Expansion Project.

1. Legal status of the forest land proposed for diversion.

The land proposed for diversion is **206.638 Ha is Revenue Forest land**. The representative of the User agency has informed that the Stage-I FC (240.478 Ha) – Stage-I FC was granted for 206.638Ha (Regularization case) vide F.No.8-80/2006-FC; 20.10.2006. An area of 9.383 Ha has been diverted out of **206.638 Ha** in favour of NTPC separately by MoEF&CC. Therefore, the area for diversion came down 197.255Ha i.e., (206.638Ha- to 9.383Ha).

The representative of user agency informed that there has been no mining activity in the 22.33 Ha Revenue Forest land of village Renki and there is no plan to undertake any mining activity in the said forest land in the immediate future, due to the presence of Lilagarh river between village Renki& existing mine and diversion of the river is required before approaching the acquired land of 22.33 Ha for mining. The representative of user agency further informed that the FRA has not been granted for 22.33 Ha revenue forest.





Fig. 1. 174.925ha (Originally 206.638 ha) of forest land for Deepka Expansion Open Cast Mining Project

2. Whether in forest area proposal involves any construction of buildings (including residential) or not. If yes, details thereof.

No. Infrastructure (Silo, conveyor belt and railway line) are to be constructed on Govt. and tenancy land.

3. Wildlife

Whether forest area proposed for diversion is important from wildlife point of view or not.

No, wildlife belonging to category of Schedule-I and Schedule-II of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 has been reported within a distance of 10KM from the boundary of the proposed area for diversion. It has been further informed by representative of User Agency that as per EC conditions, Wildlife Management Plan has been prepared and approved by PCCF, Wildlife. Payment of Rs.15.47 Crores was paid by User Agency to CAMPA fund on 01.03.2023.

4. Vegetation:-

- i. **Total number of trees to be felled.** Total no. 8352 trees proposed to be felled in the forest land 206.638 ha comprising of different species.
- ii. **Effect of removal of trees on the general ecosystem in the area.**

(28-8)-
 CWY

Felling of large number of trees in the area proposed for diversion has certainly adverse impact on the ecosystem. The representative of the User Agency have informed that in addition to the normal CA they have plan to undertake extensive plantation for the greening of surrounding area in consultation with the local villagers. Further, it has been mentioned by representatives of SECL that plantation of fruit bearing, medicinal, ornamental, species of religious importance, native species and exotic species are carried out over dumps, plain areas, avenue plantation by SECL through Chhattisgarh Rajya Van Vikas Nigam (CGRVVN). Till date SECL has planted 23.17 lakh plants inside leasehold area(Annexure-5). Plantation over safety zone was visited, it has been found that plantation was done by the user agency for 4.91 Km approximately. Gap plantation has also been carried out in few places.

5. Background note on the proposal.

The Dipka OCM is an existing mega opencast project in the thick seam zone of SECL command area. Presently, DipkaOCM is having Environment Clearance for coal production of 37.50MTY. Dipka OC has acquired 1999.293Ha of land, in which 12 villages are involved namely, Sirki, Beltikiri, Chainpur, Jhingatur, Suwabhondi, Malgaon, Dipka, Jhabar, Renki, Ratija, Amgaon and Hardi Bazaar. As per approved PR shovel-dumper mining system has been adopted to excavate OB by departmental HEMM, while extraction of coal is being done by Surface Miner on outsourced basis. The hired surface miners cut would produce coal of (-) 100 mm size by windrowing method. The (-) 100mm coal would be transported by Inpit belt conveyors. Considering the quantum of coal produced from the mine Silos are constructed for rapid loading & dispatch.

6. Compensatory afforestation: -Whether land for compensatory afforestation is suitable from plantation and management point of view or not.

The Divisional Forests Officers, Mahasamund vide its letter dated 04/08/2023 informed to the DFO, Katghora that following 105.00 ha CA land is available as under:

Sl. No.	Range	Compartment no.	Identified CA land (In Ha.)	Available CA land (In Ha.)
1.	Pithora	252	25.00	10.00
2.		253	10.00	10.00
3.		250	10.00	10.00
4.		210	100.00	75.00
Total				105.00

On the verification of record, it is observed that 75.00 ha. (100.00 ha) area in compartment no. 210 in Pithora range, has been proposed as identified CA land for "Kachardih Tank" Irrigation Project. Hence, **only 30 ha CA land is available as on date against mandatory 413.276 ha CA land. This has been informed to SECL officials and the State for corrective measure in the matter.**

7. Whether proposal involves violation of Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 or not. If yes, a detailed report on violation including action taken against the concerned officials.

Handwritten signature

Yes. This is a case of FC violation. During the inspection it was observed in the record as on 10/11/2009 the land broken in violation of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 was 50.872 ha.

8. Whether proposal involves rehabilitation of displaced persons. If yes, whether rehabilitation plan has been prepared by the State Government or not. Details be furnished specifically if rehabilitation plan would affect any other forest area by trans-locating outstees in and around the said forest.

No, the Proposal does not involve the rehabilitation of displaced persons has been reported by the User Agency. The representative from the User Agency has clarified that no rehabilitation is required in the area of 206.638 of Revenue Forest land.

10. Reclamation Plan:

The representatives of the User Agency have informed that reclamation of the mined-out area will be undertaken as per the approved Progressive Mine closure Plan. A copy of the same, along with the approved Mine Plan, has been submitted along with the proposal. As per detail made available by the User Agency, so far, the User Agency has reclaimed 331.92 ha biologically while an area of 427.26 ha has been reclaimed technically. Details of area excavated so far, and area reclaimed, as per detail made available by the User Agency, is given as under:

Status of technical and biological reclamation of Dipka OC as on 15.04.2023:

Unit /OCP	Dipka
EMP Capacity (MTY)	37.50 MTY
Total quarriable area of the project as per approved EMP	1002.053 Ha
Void to be left at the closure of the project as per EMP	222.053 Ha
Total Area excavated	745.73 Ha
Prorate Area not required to be backfilled	165.252 Ha
Total Area Technically Reclaimed /Back Filled	223 Ha
Balance Area to be technically reclaimed/back Filled	357.478 Ha
Area already Biologically Reclaimed	127.66 Ha
Balance Area to be Biologically reclaimed	452.818 Ha
Total Area of External OB dump	206.00 Ha
Area of ext. Dump technically reclaimed	204.26 Ha
Balance area of ext. OB dump to be technically reclaimed	1.74 Ha
Area already Biologically Reclaimed	331.92 Ha
Balance Area to be Biologically reclaimed	359.218 Ha

Details and financial allocation. A recurring cost of Rs. 309.43 Lakhs/annum has been allocated for plantation works in the EMP for 37.50MTPA.

11. Details on catchment and command area under the project.

The representative of user agency has informed that the Catchment Area Treatment Plan has been prepared by State Forest Department based on the study report of C-CoST Raipur for Surface Water Conservation of Dipka Expansion Project. DFO Katghora has raised a demand vide letter dated: 08.02.2023, for 2.53 Crores to be paid to CAMPA account.

12. Any other information relating to the project.

- i. **Delay:** The PP has completed mining in the proposed mining area. It had received Stage-I approval in 2006, but has not complied with the conditions till date. Further,



- this is a wilful violation and has happened even after penalty by Supreme Court to SECL.
- ii. **CA:** The CA land has been stipulated as 413.276 ha degraded land. Currently only 30 ha land is available. The User Agency is supposed to provide NFL. The Agency had agreed to provide NFL from its plantation area in tenancy land. So far it has not identified the land. There is a huge time gap between initial violation and implementation of the CA scheme, which has inflicted huge ecological loss.
 - iii. **Safety zone:** The PP has not constructed the safety zone properly. Safety zone was found at places in breaks along the boundary. The safety zone is currently present in part of Eastern portion demarcating the Gevra OCP, part of north and part of western boundary. There is no safety zone in the advancing front. The boundary is about 15 km, whereas the safety zone is hardly 3-4 km. This is against the mining safety norms besides the FC condition.
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 - v. **Soil conservation:** During the inspection it was observed that overburdened site is getting eroded and top soil is getting washed. Deep gullies and ravines formations were found, which are expanding every year. The slopes are getting steeper due to erosion, which need to be stabilized urgently by combination of mechanical means and plantation. It was also observed that there is a need to enhance the technical knowledge related to forestry in SECL as well as to fulfil the shortage of forestry technical experts. So that according to the demand of the area, special attention can be given to the planning and planting of local forestry tree species, so that the quality of afforestation in the planted area is complete.
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 - vii. **Species composition:** Monoculture is to be avoided. Earlier plantations had many pure patches of *Cassia Siamea*. However, current plantations are improved ones, with mixed with number of local species like Sal, Pongamia, Bauhinia, Ficus, Gmelina etc..It was observed that there is a need to enhance technical knowledge related to forestry within SECL and to address the shortage of forestry technical experts. This would enable SECL for quality plantation. During the site inspection, it was observed that SECL has planted Sal seedlings in the non-coal barring area in the years 2022-23.

Recommendation of the IG (F), Sub-Office, Raipur:

As stated at Sl. No.10, the UA has to complete safety zone and provide CA land. The UA has to surrender the land not being used for mining or any other purpose. Additional penalty may be imposed for continued mining prior to Stage-II approval.

Chatur
18/4/24
Chaturbhuja Behera, IFS
Inspector General of Forest
Sub-Office, Raipur, Chhattisgarh

Photos



Mining Area of Dipka OC



Internal OB site of Dipka OC, Korba



Latitude: 22°19'2"N
Longitude: 82°30'47"E
Elevation: 338.7±31 m
Accuracy: 15.0 m
GPSTime: 16-04-2024 07:26
Note: Dipka OC

16/04/2024 07:29

External OB Dump site of Dipka OC, Korba



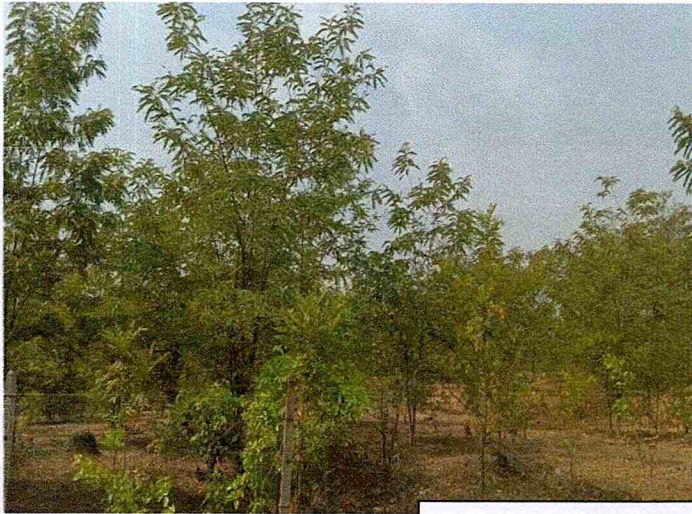
Latitude: 22°18'49"N
Longitude: 82°31'1"E
Elevation: 304.22±100 m
Accuracy: 6.7 m
GPSTime: 16-04-2024 08:23
Note: Dipka OC Renki Village near Lilager River

Powered by NoteCam

Renki Village side view, Lilager River, Dipka OC, Korba



Non- Coal bearing area of Revenue Forest Area 206.638 ha.



Safety Zone Plantation



External OB Dump site of Dipka OC, Korba