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No.5-ORA 687/2016-BHU

28.05.2025

सेवा में,

अपर वन माहनिदेशक
पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय,
इंदिरा पर्यावरण भवन,
जोरबाग रोड, अलीगंज,
नई दिल्ली - 110003

विषय : Site inspection report in respect of proposal for diversion of 227.62 ha of forest land within mining lease area over 323.92 ha of Basundhara (West) Extension Open Cast Coal Block of Mahalaxmi area of M/s Mahanadi Coal field Limited in Sundargarh Forest Division of Sundargarh district under section-2 of Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980.

संदर्भ: Ministry's letter datd 14.01.2025.

महाशय,

उपरोक्त विषय के संबंध में मुझे सूचित करने का निर्देश हुआ है कि यह परियोजना का दिनांक 25.03.2025 और 26.03.2025 को आधोहस्ताक्षरी द्वारा स्थल निरीक्षण किया गया । इस परियोजना से संबंधी स्थल निरीक्षण रिपोर्ट की एक प्रति आवश्यक कार्रवाई हेतु संलग्न कर भेज जा रहा है ।

संलग्न : उपरोक्त

भवदीय,
पद्मा माहान्ती
(डॉ पदमा माहान्ती)
उप वन महानिरीक्षक (केन्द्रीय)

Recommendations of DDGF (Central) for the proposed project site of Basundhara (West)

Extension (FP/OR/MIN/QR/521279/2025)

Based on the findings of the site inspection, the recommendations of the State Government, and the site-specific nature of the project, the proposal is recommended for consideration, subject to the following conditions and the standard conditions applicable to such projects:

1. The State Government shall ensure that the compensatory afforestation (CA) land is free from encroachments, and that CA is carried out in accordance with the MoEF&CC directive dated 17.02.2025. Any shortfall in the plantation target shall be met in degraded forest land (DFL) or protected forest (PF)/reserved forest (RF) areas at the cost of the User Agency (UA).
2. In view of the presence of wildlife in the vicinity of the project area, a site-specific Wildlife Management Plan, duly approved by the Chief Wildlife Warden, shall be implemented by the State Government at the cost of the UA.
3. As the compensatory afforestation is not being undertaken in the immediate vicinity of the proposed diversion area, the UA and the State Forest Department (SFD) may explore the possibility of incorporating elements of Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECM), as per the MoEF&CC Guidelines, 2022, to support biodiversity in the progressive mine reclamation plan, at the cost of the UA, in consultation with expert agencies, if required.
4. The UA shall submit the progressive reclamation plan, restoration schedule, and the schedule for surrender of forest land, as specified under Standard Condition 2(1) of the standard conditions applicable to such projects.
5. As the UA has previously operated the Basundhara West OCP and East OCP mines adjacent to the proposed area, and mining activities in these locations have concluded, the competent authority may consider imposing a condition requiring the UA to hand over the mined-out forest area reclaimed by them to the SFD for bringing it under core forestry management. Further, the UA shall prepare a schedule for the surrender of the mined-out and biologically reclaimed forest land, in accordance with the existing mining plan. The UA must also submit this schedule along with an undertaking that the said areas will be surrendered to the SFD as per the approved timeline.
6. The relocation and rehabilitation of affected persons shall be undertaken by the UA in accordance with the relevant rules in force.
7. An appropriate soil and moisture conservation plan may be implemented by the SFD at the cost of the UA.


(Dr. S. Senthil Kumar)
DDGF(Central)

**SITE INSPECTION REPORT IN RESPECT OF PROPOSAL FOR DIVERSION OF 227.62 HA OF FOREST LAND WITHIN MINING LEASE AREA OVER 323.92 HA OF BASUNDHARA (WEST) EXTENSION OPEN CAST COAL BLOCK OF MAHALAXMI AREA OF M/S MAHANADI COAL FIELD LIMITED IN SUNDARGARH FOREST DIVISION OF SUNDARGARH DISTRICT UNDER SECTION-2 OF VAN (SANRAKSHAN EVAM SAMVARDHAN) ADHINIYAM, 1980.
(FP/OR/MIN/QRY/521279/2025)**

The site inspection of the above project was carried out by the undersigned on 25.03.2025 and 26.03.2025. The DFO, Sundargarh Forest Division and the officials of the user agency were present during the site inspection. The photograph of the site visit is furnished below:



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

The legal status of forest land proposed for diversion is mentioned below:

Sl. No.	Name of the village/RF	Forest land (in ha)		
		RF	Revenue	Total
1.	Gopalpur	0	184.622	184.622
2.	Ratansara	0	36.936	36.936
3.	Jamkhani RF	6.062	0	6.062
	Total	6.062	221.558	227.620

2. Item-wise break-up details of the forest land proposed for diversion.

The item wise break-up of the forest land proposed for diversion is furnished below:

Pattern of utilization	Forest area (in ha)		
	Revenue	RF	Total
Mining excavation	200.522	5.492	206.014
Safety zone	4.598	0.571	5.169
Infrastructure	16.439	0	16.439
Total	221.559	6.063	227.622

The applied forest land for diversion is 227.62 ha. But in the item wise break up of forest land, the total land area is 227.622 ha. There is variation of 0.002 ha. The similar error is also found in approved mining plan in case of safety zone. It may be due to the conversion factor of converting the applied RoR area from acre to hectare.

3. Whether proposal involves any construction of buildings (including residential) or not. If yes, details thereof:

As mentioned in point No.2 above.

4. **Total cost of the project at present rates:**

Total capital outlay of the project will be Rs.61387 lakhs.

5. **Wildlife:**

Wildlife reportedly present in and around the applied area are Fox (*Vulpes bengalensis*), wildboar (*Sus scrofa*), Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*), Jungle Cat (*Felis chaus affinis*), Jungle hen (*Gallus gallus*), etc.

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

The applied area does not involve any Eco-Sensitive Zone, National Park, Sanctuary, Biosphere Reserve, Tiger Reserve and Elephant Corridor. There are no archaeologically important monuments situated in the area. No rare and endangered species is available in the area applied for diversion. In the Chapter-VIII of Part-I of the Working Plan, it is mentioned at 8.3 (Present Status of Wildlife) that the elephants are found roaming in all 7 ranges of Sundargarh Forest Division. The elephants migrate from Jharkhand State and Chhattisgarh State through different routes and intermixing with elephants of Odisha is common. The best home ranges of elephant are Jamkhani RF, Garjanpahad RF, Dhanubans RF and Punjipahad RF in Gopalpur range. Further, in 8.1 of Part-I Chapter-VIII of the Working Plan depicting the general history of wildlife management it states "the water sources both annual and perennial decreased in the past due to diversion of streams near forest areas". Keeping in view, the presence of wildlife as per the Working Plan in the Gopalpur Range where the project site is situated a Site Specific Wildlife Conservation Plan needs to be prepared and executed.

6. **Vegetation:**

The canopy density of the forest land proposed for diversion varies from 0.5 to 0.6 in respect of the RF area and from 0.3 to 0.4 (Open forest) in respect of Revenue Forest area with Eco Value Class-II. The applied area sustains vegetation like Arjuna (*Terminalia arjuna*), Achu (*Morindatinctoria*), Agasti (*Sesbania grandiflora*), Acacia (*Acacia auriculiformis*), Asan (*Terminalia tomentosa*), Ankula (*Elongium lamarkaii*), Amla (*Emblica officinalis*), Amthi (*Antidesma ghaesembilla*), Badhel (*Annona reticulate*), Bahada (*Terminalia beleria*), Bandhana (*Ougeinia oojeinesis*), Bamboo (*Dracaena sanderiana*), etc.

Total number of trees to be felled.

In total, 57113 number of trees are standing both in forest and non-forest land. 49715 numbers of trees have been enumerated on Revenue Forest land and 2198 numbers of trees have been enumerated on Reserve Forest land. Similarly, 5200 numbers of trees have been enumerated over non-forest land.

Effect of removal of trees on the general ecosystem in the area:

Removal of trees has natural impact on environment and ecosystem and the wildlife of the area. In the instant proposal, 57113 trees will be felled during the course of mining. Hence, adhering to the Condition "Any other condition that the concerned Regional Office of this Ministry may stipulate with the approval of competent authority in the interest of conservation, protection and development of forests & wildlife", it is proposed that 10 times number of trees to be felled, from non-forest land are to be planted in the Sundargarh Forest Division.

7. **Background note on the proposal:**

The proposed Basundhara (West) Extension OCP has been formulated within Chaturdhara Block in the Gopalpur Sector of Ib-valley coalfield. The Chaturdhara block is in the North Western Central

part of Ib river coalfield of Odisha, known as Gopalpur sector. The coalfield is in the southern middle part of lower Gondwana basin of Sone-Mahanadi valley and occupies an area of about 1460 sq. km. with potential coal bearing area of around 1050 sq. km. Coal demand from Ib-valley coalfield has increased many fold due to its strategic location with Howrah-Mumbai railway main line passing through the coalfield. The coal of this coalfield is suitable for thermal power plants.

Many pit head power plants and other coal-based plants have come up due to easy availability of coal and water. The southern, western and central India power stations mostly depend on Ib valley coalfield for their growth. As Howrah-Mumbai rail line passes through this coalfield, coal can be evacuated from this coalfield to western India power houses via rail route. Coal to Tamil Nadu Electricity Board is also supplied via rail-cum-sea route through Visakhapatnam and Haldia ports. Coal can easily move from this coalfield to Eastern India and Northern India as well. Necessary infrastructures like rail and port facilities are being developed/augmented in the region.

The District Headquarters Sundargarh, on the State Highway-10 (Sambalpur to Rourkela), is at a distance of about 46 km from the coal blocks. The Sundargarh (Odisha)-Raigarh (Chhattisgarh) all weather road passes through the blocks. The Blocks are also connected by black topped road with two important towns of Odisha namely Rourkela is at a distance of 145 km and Jharsuguda is at a distance of 75 km. The blocks come under Hemgir Tahsil and Belinga police station in the Sundargarh district of Odisha. The blocks are around 6 km Southwest of Basundhara West Colliery and are connected by part metallic road. The blocks are connected by road to the capital city of Bhubaneswar through State Highway-10 and National Highway-42, with a distance of around 450 km. The blocks are well connected with MCL headquarters at Sambalpur which is situated at a distance of about 100 km. The total length of track line from Jharsuguda to Sardega Railway siding is 53.1 km and the distance of Barpali yard from Sardega railway siding is 8.72 km. The nearest port at Bay of Bengal is Paradip which is situated at a distance of about 600 km from the Block. The Jharsuguda airport is the nearest airport to the block situated approximately at a distance of 45 km.

The project covers two villages viz. Ratansara and Gopalpur (Telendih) in Sundargarh Forest Division of Sundargarh. It also includes one Reserved Forest viz. Jamkani RF. Basundhara (West) Extension Open Cast Coal mining project has a rated capacity 8.75 MTY. The user agency has applied for diversion of 227.62 ha of forest land under the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhinyam, 1980.

8. Compensatory afforestation:

The CA site is in Koraput district, 500 km from the proposed project site. The details of CA land are furnished below:

Sl. No.	Range	Site	Area identified (in ha)
1	Koraput	Chandalguda RF	47.678
2	Balda	Mendhahola (Bhimdole RF)	107.078
3	Semiliguda	Sunki PRF	45.160
4		Ralegada PRF (Patch-1)	100.229
5		Ralegada PRF (Patch-2)	94.979
6		Ralegada PRF (Patch-3)	21.090
7		Kavidimal RF	41.006
Total			457.22

The AR plantation will be taken up @1000 plants/ha and the ANR plantation will be taken up @500 plants/ha. The AR plantation @ 1000 plants per ha will be taken up in 324 ha. So total saplings to be planted are 3,24,000. Similarly, 500 saplings will be planted in 133 ha Degraded forest land. So total saplings to be planted are 66,500. So grand total 3,90,500 saplings will be planted as per the approved CA scheme. The guidelines of the MoEF&CC dated 17.02.2025 says "1000 saplings per hectare are needed to be planted in the identified DFL. In case 1000 saplings

cannot be accommodated per hectare in the DFL identified for CA, the balance seedlings will be planted in any RF/PF as per prescription of Working Plan. The State Government will intimate name/details of the RFs/PFs areas in which the balance seedlings are being planted. The user agency shall deposit the cost of plantation of the same". In the instant proposal, the balance 66,500 saplings need to be planted in any PF or RF and the proposal to be revised accordingly. As per this guideline, there is a deficit of 66,500 saplings which need to be planted in the identified DFL or in any additional CA site identified by the State Govt. Thus, the CA scheme needs to be revised accordingly.

Species chosen for plantation are Karanja (Pongamia Pinnata), Amla (Emblica Officinalis), Gambhari (Gmelina arborea), Salia Bamboo (Dendrocalamus strictus), Arjuna (Terminalia arjuna), Chakunda (Cassia siamea), Jafra (Bixa orellana), Mango (Mangifera indica), Jackfruit (Artocarpus heterophyllus), Jamun (Syzygium cumini), Tamarind (Tamarindus indica), Maha Neem (Melia azadirach), etc.

DSS analysis reveals the following:

Patch:1 (Degraded Forest CA Land, Koraput District)

Sr. No.	Compensatory Afforestation		Area as per kml file (In hectares)	Forest Cover Density Classes as per DSS (Area in hectares)					
				Suitable (Plantation)			Not Suitable (Plantation)		
	Name of CA	Range		OF	Non-Forest	Scrub	MD F	VD F	Water
1	Chandalguda- RF	-	54.479	32	4	12	7	-	-
Total			54.479	48			7		

As per the GIS-DSS analysis, the net suitable area for plantation in proposed Compensatory afforestation patch is 48 ha.

Patch:2 (Degraded Forest CA Land, Koraput District)

Sr. No.	Compensatory Afforestation		Area as per .kml file (In hectares)	Forest Cover Density Classes as per DSS (Area in hectares)					
				Suitable (Plantation)			Not Suitable (Plantation)		
	Name of CA	Range		OF	Non-Forest	Scrub	MD F	VD F	Water
1	Mendha Jola	-	111.518	50	34	23	4	0	-
Total			111.518	107			4		

As per the GIS-DSS analysis, the net suitable area for plantation in proposed Compensatory afforestation patch is 107 Ha.

Patch:3 (Degraded Forest CA Land, Koraput District)

Sr. No.	Compensatory Afforestation		Area as per .kml file (In hectares)	Forest Cover Density Classes as per DSS (Area in hectares)					
				Suitable (Plantation)			Not Suitable (Plantation)		
	Name of CA	Range		OF	Non-	Scr	MD	VD	Wat

					Forest	Sub	F	F	er
1	Sunki PRF	-	55.223	8	30	6	11	-	-
Total			55.223		44		11		

As per the GIS-DSS analysis, the net suitable area for plantation in proposed Compensatory afforestation patch is 44 ha.

Patch:4 (Degraded Forest CA Land, Koraput District)

Sr. No.	Compensatory Afforestation		Area as per .kml file (In hectares)	Forest Cover Density Classes as per DSS (Area in hectares)					
	Name of CA	Range		Suitable (Plantation)			Not Suitable (Plantation)		
				OF	Non-Forest	Scrub	MD F	VD F	Water
1	Kavidmal RF	-	43.006	30	11	-	2	-	-
Total			43.006		41		2		

As per the GIS-DSS analysis, the net suitable area for plantation in proposed Compensatory afforestation patch is 41 ha.

Patch:5 (Degraded Forest CA Land, Koraput District)

Sr. No.	Compensatory Afforestation		Area as per .kml file (In hectares)	Forest Cover Density Classes as per DSS (Area in hectares)					
	Name of CA	Range		Suitable (Plantation)			Not Suitable (Plantation)		
				OF	Non-Forest	Scrub	MD F	VD F	Water
1	Ralegada- PRF (Patch-I)	-	100.103	-	95	5	-	-	-
Total			100.103		100		-		

As per the GIS-DSS analysis, the net suitable area for plantation in proposed Compensatory afforestation patch is 100 ha.

Patch:6 (Degraded Forest CA Land, Koraput District)

Sr. No.	Compensatory Afforestation		Area as per .kml file (In hectares)	Forest Cover Density Classes as per DSS (Area in hectares)					
	Name of CA	Range		Suitable (Plantation)			Not Suitable (Plantation)		
				OF	Non-Forest	Scrub	MD F	VD F	Water
1	Raledoga PRF (Patch-II)	-	94.658	-	95	-	-	-	-
Total			94.658		95		-		

As per the GIS-DSS analysis, the net suitable area for plantation in proposed Compensatory afforestation patch is 95 ha.

Patch:7 (Degraded Forest CA Land, Koraput District)

Sr. No.	Compensatory Afforestation		Area as per .kml file (In hectares)	Forest Cover Density Classes as per DSS (Area in hectares)					
				Suitable (Plantation)			Not Suitable (Plantation)		
	Name of CA	Range		OF	Non-Forest	Scrub	MD F	VD F	Water
1	Rengalbeda PRF(Patch-III)	-	21.09	-	15	7	-	-	-
Total			21.09	22			-		

As per the GIS-DSS analysis, the net suitable area for plantation in proposed Compensatory afforestation patch is 22 ha.

Observations:

CA Patches observations under Koraput Forest Division.

- a. **CA Patch-1 (Chandalguda RF): Shifting cultivation** (18°52'51.08"N/ 82°49'6.07"E, 18°52'49.29"N/ 82°49'19.18"E) are observed under Koraput Forest Division.
- b. **CA Patch-2 (Mendha Jola): Shifting cultivation** (18°24'22.00"N/ 82°42'55.42"E, 18°24'24.10"N/ 82°43'0.55"E) are observed under Koraput Forest Division.
- c. **CA Patch-3 (Sunki PRF): Shifting cultivation** (18°31'13.55"N/ 83° 4'25.02"E), **wide unmetalled road** (18°31'13.44"N/ 83° 4'19.28"E) and a **Pond** (18°31'12.93"N/ 83° 4'20.73"E) are observed under Koraput Forest Division.
- d. **CA Patch-4 (Kavidmal RF):** Permanent construction of House (18°34'20.18"N/ 82°44'0.54"E) is observed in CA Patch.
- e. **CA Patch-5 {Ralegada PRF (Patch-I)}:** Unmetalled Road(18°31'7.91"N/ 83° 1'0.81"E), Agricultural encroachments (18°31'27.41"N/ 83° 1'57.37"E, 18°31'30.14"N/ 83° 1'59.65"E) and Shifting cultivations (18°31'5.73"N/ 83° 1'33.95"E, 18°31'15.80"N/ 83° 1'47.50"E) are observed in CA Patch.
- f. **CA Patch-6 {Ralegada PRF (Patch-II)}:** A hamlet or small village is present (18°31'49.67"N/ 83° 2'6.00"E), a **Unmetalled Road** (18°31'39.25"N/ 83° 2'11.57"E) and **Shifting cultivations** (18°31'48.36"N/ 83° 2'15.54"E, 18°31'56.08"N/ 83° 2'6.20"E) are observed in CA Patch.
- g. **CA Patch-7 { Rengalbeda PRF(Patch-III)}:** A wide **Unmetalled Road**(18°31'29.27"N/ 83° 0'40.86"E), **Shifting cultivations** (18°31'15.35"N/ 83° 0'28.47"E) are present inside the CA Patch.
- ii. The proposed CA area falls under **Very Dense Forest, Moderately Dense Forest, Open Forest, Scrub and Non Forest** category in FCM.

(a) Whether land for compensatory afforestation is suitable from plantation and management point of view or not:

The land suitability certificate has been submitted by the DFO, Koraput Forest Division. The CA land taken up in twice the extent of DFL in Koraput Forest Division is as per the Amendment Rules,

2024. This proposed CA site is at a distance of 491 KM approximately from Sundargarh Forest Division, where the project site is located.

The provisions mentioned in Chapter 2, 2.1 states that "Compensatory afforestation (CA): is one of the most important requirement/conditions for prior approval of the Central Government for diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes and the purpose of compensatory afforestation (CA) is to compensate the loss of 'land by land' and loss of 'trees by trees'" and point 2.2 (xiii) states that "The authorities in the State should ensure that land proposed for raising CA in lieu of proposed diversion of forestland is of good quality which is able to generate and compensate the Ecosystem Goods and Services (EG&S) lost from non-forestry use and, as far as permissible, such lands should be selected in close proximity of the area being diverted or the existing forest areas to ease their management by the Forest Department and ensure their protection from likely encroachment in future, as under:-

(a) Potential areas which can generate and compensate the EG&S foregone from the non-forestry use of forest land to the maximum extent possible should be identified and offered for raising CA.

(b) Concerned Regional Office of the Ministry shall certify the suitability of land offered for CA in lieu of forest land proposed for diversion in terms of its vicinity to the area being proposed for diversion and/or contiguity with the existing forest area and will ensure that manageability of such CA land has been taken care of for future."

The aforesaid provisions of guidelines regarding the CA site are not adequately justified in the State Govt. letter dated 17.12.2024.

(b) Whether land for compensatory afforestation is free from encroachment/other encumbrances:

The DSS analysis shows that shifting cultivation, permanent structure, un-metaled road and hamlet in different patches of CA land which are RF & PRF. So, the CA land needs to be made free of any kind of encroachment or encumbrance and to be adequately fenced before taking of CA plantation in this area by the State Forest Department.

(c) Whether land for compensatory afforestation is important from Religious/Archaeological point of view:

Not reported.

(d) Land identified for raising compensatory afforestation is in how many patches, whether patches are compact or not:

The details of CA land are furnished below:

Sl. No.	Range	Site	Area identified (in ha)
1	Koraput	Chandalguda RF	47.678
2	Balda	Mendhahjola (Bhimdole RF)	107.078
3	Semiliguda	Sunki PRF	45.160
4		Ralegada PRF (Patch-1)	100.229
5		Ralegada PRF (Patch-2)	94.979
6		Ralegada PRF (Patch-3)	21.090
7		Kavidimal RF	41.006
Total			457.22

(e) Map with details:

Submitted.

(f) Total financial outlay:

The financial outlay of the CA scheme approved by APCCF (Nodal) comes to Rs.35,72,88,400.

9. 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:

Based on the Google Earth imagery and DSS analysis, different spots and locations were visited to verify whether there is any violation of provisions of FC Act in different patches of forest land involved in the proposed area under diversion. In some areas, previously mined coal areas were seen which was inspected. The DFO reported that there were 12 illegal coal mine sites over the revenue forest land patches reported by the DFO in his site inspection report, which is already uploaded in the Parivesh portal in Part-II. The matter of illegal mining and illegal brick kiln factories inside proposed site, was reported by the Range Officer, Gopalpur to the concerned Tahsildar for necessary action at his end vide RO Gopalpur's Memo No.258 dated 11.05.2024. As the said land was under the administrative control of the Revenue Department. Also visited the area showing habitation in Google Earth Imagery and it was found that it was Telendihi village, settled since long and not a new encroachment and is a part of the draft R&R plan as mentioned by the DFO, Sundargarh. At places fresh tyre marks of trucks operating in the proposed site were seen. Evident that illegal mining of coal was happening in the area in different patches, and hence action needs to be initiated against the erring officials who have been unable to stop the illegal mining. These violations cannot be attributed to the project proponent as intimated by the DFO and project proponent during site inspection. However, it is pertinent to note that, there was no reporting by the user agency regarding such incidents of illegal mining in the area proposed for diversion to either the DFO, Collector or any mining official. Since this land is Revenue Forest land, the custodian of which is the Revenue Department, action against the erring officials of the Revenue Department to be initiated by the Revenue Department for its inability to stop illegal mining in the revenue forest land of which the Revenue Department is the custodian.

10. Whether proposal involves rehabilitation of displaced persons. If yes, whether rehabilitation plan has been prepared by the State Government or not:

The project involves displacement 219 numbers of families of Gopalpur village which includes 119 numbers of ST, 60 numbers of SC and 40 numbers of other categories of people. Similarly, 117 numbers of families of village Ratansara will be displaced which include 70 numbers of ST, 35 numbers of SC and 12 numbers of other categories of people. Thus, the projects involves displacement of 336 number of families of both the aforesaid villages comprising of 189 numbers of ST, 95 numbers of SC and 52 numbers of other categories of families. Rehabilitation and Resettlement benefits are being provided to the affected families of village Gopalpur and Ratansara as per the provision of Odisha R&R Policy, 2006. The user agency has submitted an undertaking to submit approved R&R Plan before the final approval (copy enclosed).

11. Reclamation plan:

A detailed scheme to reclaim and stabilize the mined out undulating areas and the saturated dumps adopting different measures are proposed in the mining closure plan with financial outlay should have been submitted by the user agency. The post closure scenario is as follows:

Sl. No.	Land use during	Land use (in ha)				Total (in
		Plantation	Water	Public use	Undisturbed/Dip	

	mining		body		side slope	ha)
1	External dump					
2	Top soil dump					
3	Excavation	168.35	130.64	-	1.24	300.23
4.	Built up area	16.58	-	-	-	16.58
5.	Green belt	7.11	-	-	-	7.11
	Mine lease area	192.04	130.64	-	1.24	323.92

The Mine Closure Plan lacks the following:

- i. Mined out backfilled area
- ii. Biological reclamation area
- iii. There is no reclamation plan attached to Mining plan. Since reclamation is the process that leads to eco-restoration as mandated in the condition No.2.1 of standard condition of the consolidated guidelines of 2023. On perusal of the Mine Closure Plan, it is evident that the Mine Closure Plan lacks any concrete plan for eco-restoration.
- iv. As mandated in the standard conditions 2 (1) (ii) “the user agency shall prepare a schedule for surrender of the mined out and reclaimed forest land in accordance with existing mining plan and submit the same along with an undertaking to surrender the mined out and reclaimed forest land as per such schedule to the MoEF&CC before grant of “Final” approval under the Adhinyam for diversion of the said forest land”. The Mine surrender schedule was not found attached to the Mine Closure Plans.

The Mine Closure Plans need to be drafted with input from Forest Department and vetted by the Regional Office, since there is involvement of forest land in this project and the project proponent might not have the technical expertise on eco-restoration of the forest land in question. Further, eco-restoration needs to be progressive and over a period of time. So, if there is no involvement of Forest Department from the planning and execution stage, even though mine reclamation is the mandate of the user agency, ecological restoration of the area in true sense may not be the end result.

Details and financial allocation:

12. Details on catchment and command area under the project:

Not applicable.

Catchment area treatment plan to prevent siltation of reservoir:

Not applicable.

13. Cost benefit ratio:

The Cost Benefit ratio comes to 1:5.223.

14. Recommendations of the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests/State Government:

Recommended.

15. Recommendations of the Deputy Director General of Forests (Central) along with detailed reasons:

Enclosed.

16. The Deputy Inspector General of Forests (Central) shall give detailed comments on whether there is any alternative routes/alignment for locating the project on the non-forest land:

The project is site specific.

17. Utility of the project:

The mine has employment potential of 854 persons directly and indirectly including the existing man-power of Basundhara West OCP, which is an operative mine.

Numbers of Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribes to be benefited by the project:

Not reported.

18.

(a) Whether land being diverted has any socio-cultural/ religious value:

Not reported.

(b) Whether any sacred grove or very old growth trees/forests exist in the areas proposed for diversion:

Not reported.

(c) Whether the land under diversion forms part of any unique eco-system:

Not reported.

19. Situation with respect to any Protected Area:

The project site in Gopalpur Range is at a distance of 62 km from Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary which is home to the Gaur, Elephant, Leopard and meso-predators.

20. Other information related to closed mines in the vicinity of the proposed project site:

Keeping in view, the Ministry's earlier directions to review the compliance of approval conditions of the earlier forest diversion proposals by the same user agency, during site inspection of the proposed site, Basundhara West open cast mines was inspected and documents of Basundhara (East) OCP were perused.

It was observed that the instant proposal of Basundhara (West) Extension is also located in the Gopalpur sector of MCL vested in 29.10.1990 for a total area of 4941.05 ha, of which the Basundhara (West) Expansion OCP and Basundhara (East) OCP are a part. These two mines have been worked out and now closed.

On perusal of documents i.e. mine closure plans, Stage-II compliance reports of both Basundhara (West) and Basundhara (East) OCP (both closed), the following were observed.

1. Basundhara West and Basundhara West Expansion total (437 ha), the breakup of which is submitted below:

Basundhara West OCP		Basundhara west expansion
Forest land	149.50 ha	Nil
Non forest land	251.60 ha	36 ha
Total	401.10 ha	36 ha
Grand total	437.10 ha	

This project was executed by the same user agency i.e. MCL of which this proposed project is an extension and is in close vicinity. The mine was closed on 5th February, 2025 as mentioned during the site inspection. But no final closure letter has been submitted to the Forest Department as mentioned by the DFO.

The break-up of the total mine area of (437.10 ha) as per mine closure plan is as follows:

(All figures in ha)

Details	During mining	Basundhara West Mine		Basundhara West Extension and Siarmal mines
		Technical Reclamation	Biological Reclamation	Technical/Biological Reclamation
1. Excavation	214.30	0	0	0
a) Backfilling	102.27	18.30	18.30	83.97
b) Void and water body	112.03	0	0	112.03
2. Ext. Dump	11.42	11.42	5.37	6.05
3. Infrastructure	192.78	192.78	74.12	118.66
4. Undisturbed	18.60	18.60	18.60	0
Total	437.10	241.1	116.39	320.71
Note : Backfilling of void of Basundhara West Opencast mine by overburden from Basundhara west expansion opencast mine and Siarmal mine is approved in the respective mine				

From the aforesaid table, it appears that biological reclamation is being proposed in 18.30 ha of the total mined out area.

On perusal of the final mine closure plan of the Basundhara East OCP, it was learned to be closed in October, 2023. As per discussions with the DFO, Sundargarh Division during site inspection, the final mine closure plan was submitted, but this has not been vetted by either the Forest Department or the Revenue Department as mentioned by the DFO, Sundargarh Forest Division during site inspection.

The total area of Basundhara East OCP is 135 ha, which involves 21.58 ha Forest land and 113.84 ha non forest land.

This mine was informed to be in the process of restoration though the Divisional Forest Officer, Sundargarh informed that the Forest Department had no role in the eco-restoration planning or execution.

The table showing breakup of different components of the final mine closure plan is as follows:

Particulars	Area (in ha)	Post mine closure details	Area (in ha)	Details of Biological Reclamation (in ha)	Remarks
Excavation Area	35.0	Backfilled	8.68	8.68	

		Area			
		Dip side quarry sloe & haul road	13.63		
		Water body	12.69		Water body is preserved as (Amrit Sarovar)
External Dump	11.0			11.0	
Infrastructure Area	17.23				Major part of this area is being used for adjacent mine Basundhara (West) OC.
Service Magazine	0.84				
Approach Road	0.68				
Blasting Danger zone & other undisturbed Area	70.67				

From the above table, it appears that only 8.68 ha of total area will be biologically reclaimed.

On perusal of the Stage-II conditions of Basundhara West OCP (437.10 ha) and Basundhara East OCP (135 ha) in close vicinity of the proposed project site of Basundhara West extension mines and by the same user agency, MCL, it is evident that the following conditions have not been complied with:

- Phased reclamation of mine out area has not been submitted for both Basundhara West OCP and Basundhara East OCP.
- Mine Closure Plan lacks concrete plan of eco-restoration for both Basundhara West OCP and Basundhara East OCP.
- No reclamation plan attached to the Mining Plan for both Basundhara West OCP and Basundhara East OCP
- No schedule for surrender of mined out and reclaimed forest area and no undertaking to surrender the mined out and reclaimed forest area was found in the documents submitted by the user agency.

In such a scenario, it is pertinent to accord further sanction to the Basundhara (West) extension project (323.92 ha) only after receipt of concrete reclamation and execution plan duly vetted by the State Forest Department as the land in question involves forest land, and unless the Stage II conditions stipulated in the earlier approvals of the Basundhara West and Basundhara East are complied with.

21. Recommendation:

- Standard conditions of the consolidated Guidelines and Clarifications issued under Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhinyam, 1980 and Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhinyam, 2023 state that:
 - The user agency shall undertake mining in a phased manner after taking due care for reclamation of the mined out area. The concurrent Reclamation Plan as per the approved Mining Plan shall be executed by the user agency from the very first year, and an annual report on implementation thereof shall be submitted to the Nodal Officer, Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhinyam, 1980 in the concerned State Government and the concerned Regional Office of the Ministry. If it is found from the annual report that the activities indicated in the concurrent reclamation plan are not being executed by the user agency, the Nodal Officer or the Chief Conservator of Forests (Central) may direct that the mining activities shall remain suspended till such time, such reclamation activities are satisfactorily executed.*

- b. *The user agency shall prepare a schedule for surrender of the mined out and reclaimed forest land in accordance with existing mining plan and submit the same along with an undertaking to surrender the mined out and reclaimed forest land as per such schedule to the MoEF&CC before grant of 'Final' approval under the Adhiniyam for diversion of the said forest land.*
- c. *The rehabilitated forest area after closure of mining operations shall be handed over to the State Forest Department for sustainable forest management in the future.*

Based on the aforesaid provisions, recommendations for earlier diversion proposals [Basundhara (East) OCP & Basundhara (West) OCP (**of which the proposed extension is a part**)] are detailed below:

1. It is evident from the DFO's letter (copy enclosed) that no report of concurrent reclamation has been submitted more than 10 years. Mining activities of both Basundhara West OCP and East OCP are over. Hence, it becomes imperative at this stage to reclaim the entire mined out area, of both Basundhara East and West OCP, so as to result in eco-restoration of the mined out area i.e. restoring back to its original ecological state. This can only be possible with the active involvement of the State Forest Department who needs to ensure the ecological restoration of the mined out area and adhere to the standard conditions 2.1(ii, iii) of the Consolidated guidelines,
2. Despite the fact that in Basundhara West OCP involves 149.50 ha of forest land and Basundhara East OCP involves 21.58 ha of forest land, and the instant proposal of Basundhara West Extension involves 227.62 ha of forest land, the mining plans of all three projects lack the schedule detailing the surrender of mined out areas and reclaimed forest land and no undertaking to surrender the mined out areas and reclaimed forest land could be found in record, which should have been submitted to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change before grant of final approval as mandated under the standard conditions mentioned in the consolidated guidelines in Adhiniyam. It is pertinent to note that both Basundhara East OCP and West OCP have already been granted final approval and both are worked and exhausted. At this stage, the surrender modalities of the forest land of 149.50 ha for Basundhara West OCP and 21.58 ha of forest land of Basundhara East OCP after reclamation and further management by the State Forest Department needs to be worked out and executed before according further approvals to the Basundhara (West) extension project.
3. Further, the MCL being a Central PSU, the CA sites have been located in the degraded forest lands (RF/PF) and land for land has not been compensated. As, Sundargarh district is a heavily mined out area, the eco-system services need to be restored once the mines are exhausted and closed. The non-forest land involved in the Basundhara (West) OCP of 287.6 ha and Basundhara East OCP of 113.84 ha may be designated as OECMs (OTHER EFFECTIVE AREA CONSERVATION MEASURES) as per the criteria and guidelines published in May, 2022 developed by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), to identify OECMs in India of which restored mined out areas, developed into biodiversity parks are one of the 14 designated criteria.

Further, by declaring the non-forest mined out restored areas as OECM, India would contribute and comply to the Indias' National biodiversity targets of the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) which states that "By 2030, ensure that at least 30 percent globally of land areas and of sea areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and its contributions to people, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative, and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes".

Recommendations for the proposed project site of Basundhara (West) Extension:

1. Strict action needs to be initiated against erring officials of Revenue Department, being the custodian of the revenue forest land, for not being able to stop illegal mining in Revenue Forest land despite information by the DFO and RO on illegal mining (copy enclosed as Annexure-I).
2. **The exact area of on-going illegal mining needs to be calculated and penal NPV and penal CA as applicable, needs to be imposed on the State Government's Revenue Authority. Immediate steps need to be taken to stop illegal mining in the area.**
3. The Site Specific Wildlife Conservation Plan considering the importance of the area from wildlife point of view as mentioned in the Working Plan document and Soil & Moisture Conservation Plan as mandated in 1.22 (i) of the consolidated guidelines of the Adhiniyam which states that *"2% of total project cost towards the cost of implementation of the Wildlife Management Plan and/or 0.5% of the project cost towards the cost of implementation of Soil and Moisture Conservation Plan, as the case may be, shall be charged from the user agency and deposited into the account of CAMPA and the same may be intimated to the MoEF&CC for the purpose of obtaining approval under the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980"* shall be prepared.
4. The Regional Wildlife Management Plan as per the approved norms of the State Govt. shall be prepared by the State Govt. at the cost of user agencies operating in that area with proportionate contributions from all the user agencies as being done in Bonai Forest Division in Sundargarh district & Keonjhar Forest Division and as per Ministry's conditions detailed in approvals of various mining projects. 5 mines of MCL are operating in the Sundargarh Forest Division along with 4 other mines of other user agencies. The Regional Wildlife Management Plan shall follow landscape level approach with special emphasis to mitigate adverse impact on wildlife present in the landscape with efficient mitigation measures.
5. The CA site should be made encroachment free, adequately fenced before taking up plantation by the State Forest Department. The justification from the State Govt. regarding the CA site selection may be furnished in accordance with the provisions mentioned in Chapter 2 point 2.1 and 2.2 (xiii) of consolidated guidelines of Adhiniyam.
6. Baseline survey of all ecological and hydrological factors needs to be carried out on the proposed site before carrying out the mining operation which will aid in planning the restoration strategy for the area both for progressive and final mine closure.
7. The standard conditions 2 (1) (ii) & (iii) pertaining to reclamation and restoration schedule and surrender of forest land for future management by State Forest Department should also hold good for the instant project proposal of Basundhara West extension of total 323.92 ha of which 223.92 ha is forest land. The 96.30 ha of non-forest land could be designated as "OECM" as per MoEF&CC guidelines, 2022 which would ensure the restoration of eco-system services in the mined out area once the minerals are mined out and mine is exhausted and closed.

With these aforesaid conditions, the proposal is recommended.

Padma Mahanti
.. 28/5/25
(Dr. PADMA MAHANTI)
DIGF (CENTRAL)

Encl: Annexures.

Enclosures:

1. Addendum to Mining Plan and Mine Closure Plan (Basundhara West Extension)
2. Basundhara (West) Extension-R & R Plan
3. Basundhara (East) OCP Final Mine Closure Plan
4. Details of land involved in Basundhara West
5. DFO, Sundargarh letter dated 14.05.2025 regarding submission of Final Mine Closure Plan
6. Illegal Mining Report.
7. List of mining in Sundargarh
8. Mine Closure Plan of Basundhara West Extension
9. Stage-II compliance of 21.58 ha Basundhara (East) OCP
10. Stage-II compliance of 149.50 ha Basundhara (West) OCP
11. Status of mine of MCL in Sundargarh Forest Division
12. Wildlife in Sundargarh Forest Division
13. Wildlife-Working Plan