

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

Indira Paryavaran Bhawan,
Aliganj, Jor Bag Road,
New Delhi - 110003
Dated:18-07-2025

To

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

Sub: Proposal for seeking prior approval of the Central Government under Section-2 (1) (ii) of Van (Sarankshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980, for diversion of 57.73 ha of forest land (44.64 ha forest land + 13.09 ha of looks like forest) for coal mining at Bharatpur Open Cast Expansion Project at Bharatpur Area of Mahanadi Coal Field Limited (MCL) under Angul Forest Division (Proposal No. FP/OR/MIN/153736/2022)-reg.

Madam/Sir,

In continuation of Ministry's letter of even number dated 05.05.2025 on the above subject wherein Ministry has sought information on certain points from the State Government. Now, the Regional Office, Bhubaneswar in their Site Inspection Report (**copy enclosed**) has raised certain issues.

In view of above, I am directed to request the State Government to offer their comments on the issues raised in the Site Inspection Report along with the information as sought vide Ministry's letter dated 05.05.2025, for further consideration of the proposal.

Yours faithfully,

Digitally signed by
Suneet Bhardwaj
Date: 18-07-2025
10:18:08

Sd/-
(Suneet Bhardwaj)
Assistant 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.



No.5-ORA700/2025-BHU / 429

26th June, 2025

To

The Addl. Director General of Forests (FC),
Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change,
Indira Paryavaran Bhawan,
Jor Bagh Road, Aliganj,
New Delhi - 110 003.

Sub: Proposal for seeking prior approval of the Central Government under Section 2 (1)(ii) of the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980 for diversion of 57.73 ha of forest land (44.64 ha of forest land + 13.09 ha of looks like forest) for coal mining at Bharatpur Open Cast Expansion Project at Bharatpur Area of Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL) under Angul Forest Division (Proposal No.FP/OR/MIN/153736/2022) - regarding.

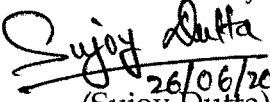
Ref: Ministry's letter No.8-87/2012-FC (Vol) dated 05.05.2025.

Sir,

With reference to the subject cited above, I am directed to inform that the site inspection of the above project was carried out by the Dy. Inspector General of Forests (C) of this office and the site inspection report along with recommendation of the DDGF (C) is enclosed herewith for kind information and necessary action. Further, it is to inform that implementation status of conditions stipulated in the earlier approvals granted for 134.415 ha and 71.64 ha of forest land could not be ascertained by the monitoring officer due to non-availability of information/documents with the concerned Forest Division. This office vide letter dated 25.06.2025 (copy enclosed) has requested the State Govt. to furnish the detailed point wise compliance of the stipulated conditions of earlier approvals granted to the project. After receipt of the compliance from the State Govt., this office will provide the same to Ministry accordingly.

Encl: As state above.

Yours faithfully,


26/06/2025
(Sujoy Dutta)

Assistant Commissioner (Forestry)

RECOMMENDATION OF THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL OF FORESTS
(CENTRAL) FOR PROPOSAL NO. FP/OR/MIN/153736/2022

The proposal concerns the diversion of 57.73 ha of forest land—comprising 44.64 ha of forest land and 13.09 ha categorised as “forest-like”—for coal mining at the Bharatpur Opencast Expansion Project, located in the Bharatpur Area of Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL), under the jurisdiction of the Angul Forest Division.

Dr Padma Mahanti, Deputy Inspector General of Forests (Central), inspected the site on 04.06.2025.

Based on the inspection report and other related details, the proposal is recommended, subject to the following conditions:

1. Contrary to the DIGF's observations, the Compensatory Afforestation (CA) site, selected as per the MoEF&CC letter dated 17.12.2024, appears to be in order and may be accepted. Further, although the CA site has dense vegetation, it is suitable for planting only 500 seedlings per hectare. To meet the target of 1,000 seedlings per hectare, as per MoEF&CC guidelines dated 17.02.2025, the State Government shall prepare an additional CA scheme to cover the shortfall, as per the applicable rules, at the cost of the User Agency (UA).
2. Tree felling shall be done in phases. The 13.09 ha of dense sal forest in the proposed area should preferably be felled in the final phase.
3. Considering the presence of wildlife near the project site, a site-specific Wildlife Management Plan, approved by the Chief Wildlife Warden, shall be implemented by the State Government at the cost of the UA.
4. As the CA is not being carried out near the proposed diversion area, the UA and the State Forest Department (SFD) may explore integrating Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECM), as per MoEF&CC Guidelines, 2022, into the mine reclamation plan. This shall be done at the cost of the UA, with expert consultation, if required.
5. The UA shall submit a plan for concurrent and progressive reclamation, including a restoration schedule and timeline for surrendering forest land, as required under Standard Condition 2(1). The State Government shall also review other mines (closed and operational) run by the UA to ensure

compliance with forest land surrender timelines. Where feasible, the DIGF's recommendation under point no. 21(7) may be followed to reduce the impact of fly ash during biological reclamation of closed mines, subject to technical feasibility.

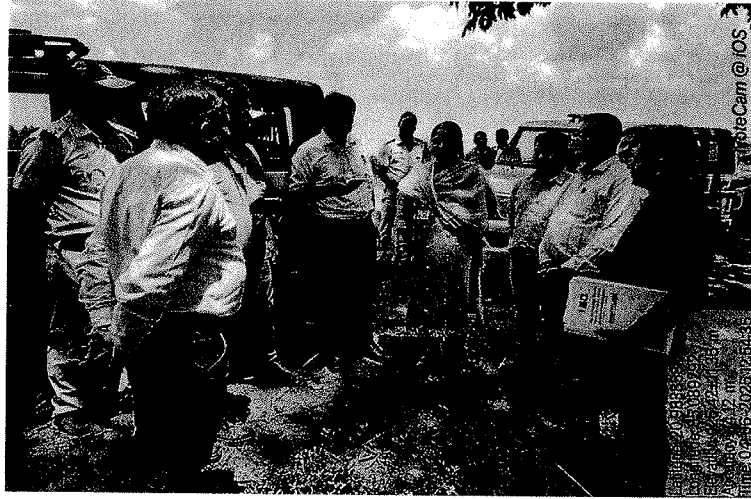
6. The DIGF's report mentions instances of illegal mining at the proposed site; however, these are not attributed to the User Agency. The State Government may be advised to conduct a detailed enquiry, take necessary action under relevant rules, and inform the Regional Office of the outcome.


(Dr. S. Senthil Kumar)

Dy. Director General of Forests (Central)

SITE INSPECTION REPORT IN RESPECT OF PROPOSAL FOR SEEKING PRIOR APPROVAL OF THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT UNDER SECTION-2 (1) (II) OF VAN (SANRAKSHAN EVAM SAMVARDHAN) ADHINIYAM, 1980, FOR DIVERSION OF 57.73 HA OF FOREST LAND (44.64 HA FOREST LAND + 13.09 HA OF LOOKS LIKE FOREST) FOR COAL MINING AT BHARATPUR OPEN CAST EXPANSION PROJECT AT BHARATPUR AREA OF MAHANADI COAL FIELD LIMITED (MCL) UNDER ANGUL FOREST DIVISION (PROPOSAL NO. FP/OR/MIN/153736/2022)

The site inspection of the above project was carried out by the undersigned on 04.06.2025. The DFO, Angul Forest Division and officials of the user agency were present during the site inspection. The photograph of site visit is furnished below:



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

The legal status of the forest land is furnished below:

Sl. No.	Status of forest land proposed for diversion	Area (in ha)
1.	Revenue Forest land	1.25
2.	DLC	43.39
3.	Looks like forest land	13.09
	Total	57.73

As per the DSS Analysis, 45.026 ha of forest land of the ML area is High Conservation Zone and is reported to be a dwelling habitat of sloth bear.

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

The item wise break up of forest land is furnished below:

Sl. No.	Purpose	Forest land (in ha)	Look like Forest Non Forest Govt. land	Total forest land (in ha)
1.	Quarry excavation	44.28	13.09	57.37
2.	Safety Zone	0.36	0	0.36
3.	Infrastructure and coal corridor road	0	0	0
	Total mining lease of expansion	44.64	13.09	57.73

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

No.

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

The cost of this project is 192829 lakhs.

5. **Wildlife:**

Wildlife such as Wild Boar, Barking Deer, Indian Hare, Elephant, Langur, Jackal, etc. are found in the area where this proposed site is located. Birds like Peafowl, Indian Roller, Cattle Egret, Common Kingfisher, Drongo, etc. are found in the proposed area for diversion which is situated in the Talcher Range of Angul Forest Division.

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

During the site inspection, no wildlife was visible in the proposed area for diversion as the area is already disturbed and broken-up with mining and other allied activities and surrounded by other mines like Balaram OCP.

6. **Vegetation:**

The type of forest land proposed for diversion falls under Eco Value Class-I (Tropical Moist Deciduous Forest) and canopy density is 0.35. No rare and endangered species found in the proposed area for diversion. However, tree species like Shorea robusta (Sal), Anacardium occidentale (Kaju), Lannea coromandelica (Mai), Azadirachta indica (Neem), Mangifera indica (Mango), Tectona grandis (Teak), etc. are present in the proposed area for diversion.

Total number of trees to be felled.

The total trees enumerated over the revenue forest land is 12297 numbers, out of which total numbers of trees over Sal forest and looks like forest at Teleipasi and Khajuria is 11954 numbers and total number of trees enumerated over scattered revenue forest land involved in this project is 343 numbers. In government non-forest land 5270 number are found as per sample enumeration. The proposed site has very good vegetation of Sal trees which are enumerated to be felled.

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.

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

The total area of the proposed expansion mine is 1556.94 ha out of which the total forest land is 222.41 ha. An area of 177.77 ha has already been diverted for Bharatpur OCP. The proposed expansion is for additional area of 629.52 ha which involves of 44.64 ha of forest land which is to be diverted. The Bharatpur opencast project of Mahanadi Coalfields Limited situated in Talcher Coalfields is operating with capacity of 20 MTPA in mine lease area of 927.42 ha. The user agency is proposing for expansion in its mine lease area from 927.42 ha to 1556.94 ha which also involves Revenue Forest land of 44.64 ha and 13.09 ha of looks like dense Sal for the expansion of the mine.

The proposed area does not form part of any National Park/Wildlife Sanctuary/Biosphere reserve/Tiger reserve/elephant corridor etc. Also, the applied area is not forming part of any eco-sensitive zone of any protected area. No. archaeological monument/ heritage site/ defense establishment, etc. are located in the applied area.

8. Compensatory afforestation:

The DFO, Dhenkanal Forest Division has identified Degraded Forest land over 115.981 ha, out of which 43.519 ha in Sunajhari RF under Bhuban Range and 72.462 ha in Ramei RF under Sadangi Range both in Dhenkanal Forest Division, which is double the extent of forest area proposed for diversion.

The DFO, Dhenkanal has prepared the CA scheme for planting @ 500 seedlings per ha in ANR plantation mode over 115.981 ha.

Patch:1 (Degraded Forest CA Land, Dhenkanal 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)		
				OF	Non-Forest	Scrub	MDF	VD F	Water
1	Ramei RF	-	72.462	57	15	-	1	-	-
Total			72.462	72			1		

As per the GIS-DSS analysis, the net suitable area for plantation in proposed Compensatory afforestation patch is 72 ha.

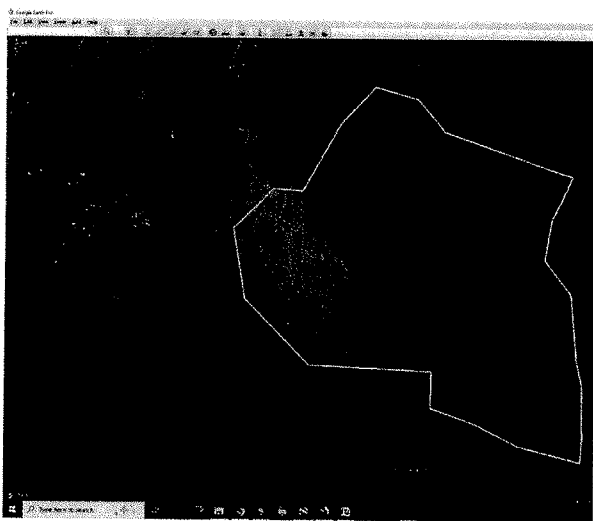


Fig: 7 Google Earth image of CA land (Date: 6.1.2022)

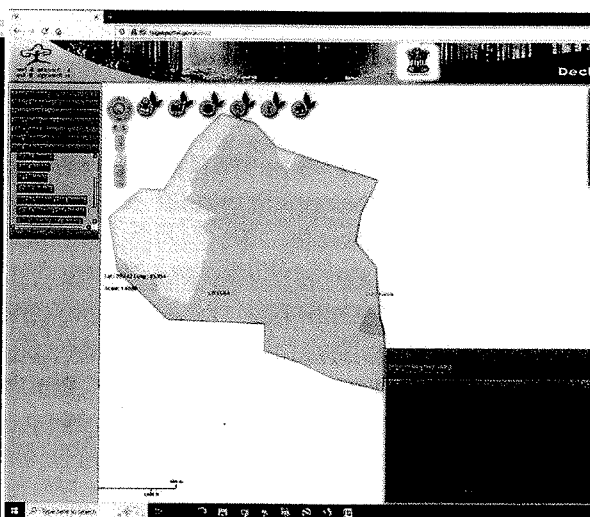


Fig: 8 FCM of proposed CA land

Patch:2 (Degraded Forest CA Land, Dhenkanal 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)		
				OF	Non-Forest	Scrub	MDF	VD F	Water
1	Sunajhari RF	-	43.519	27	17	-	0	-	-
Total			43.519	44			0		

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

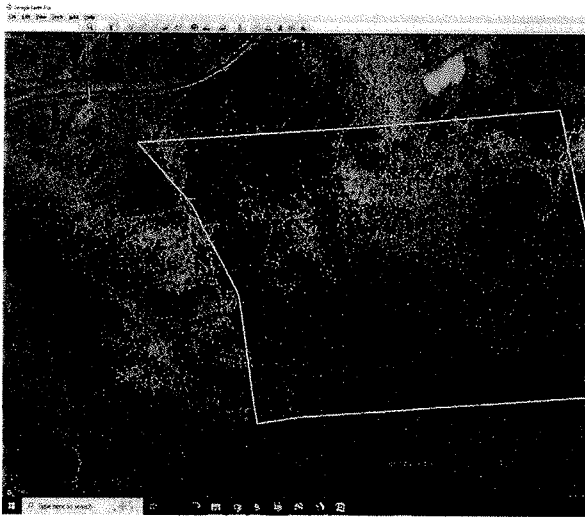


Fig: 9 Google Earth image of CA land (Date: 1.2.2022)

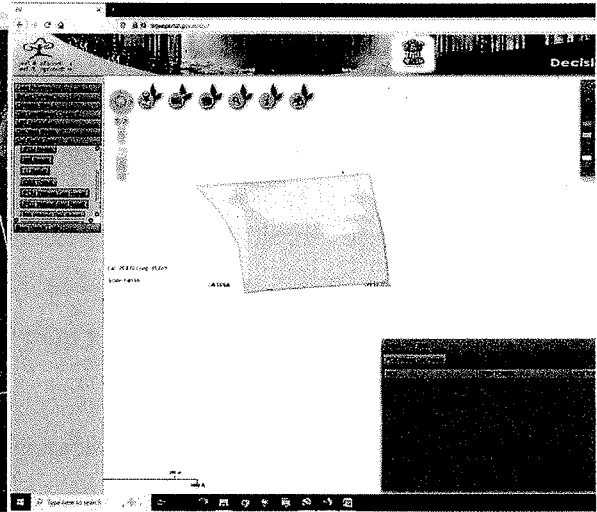


Fig: 10 FCM of proposed CA land

The choice of species which are to be planted over CA are *Emblica officinalis* (Amla), *Terminalia tomentosa* (Asana), *Dalbergia latifolia* (Pahadi Sissoo), *Terminalia arjua* (Arjuna), *Ficus benghalensis* (Bara), *Ficus religiosa* (Pipal), *Terminalia belerica* (Bahada), *Tamarindus indica* (Tentuli), *Pongamia pinnata* (Karanja), *Scheichera oleosa* (Kusum), etc. The CA land was inspected during the site inspection. The CA site is a reserved forest area with high density vegetation.

The model of CA does not comply the provisions of the guidelines of the MoEF&CC dated 17.02.2025 which states that “1000 saplings per hectare are needed to be planted in the identified DFL. In case 1000 saplings can not 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.”(copy enclosed). Since, the CA sites were identified in RF to accommodate only 500 plants per ha in NAR mode over 115.981 ha, the entire CA scheme needs to be re-worked in terms of compensation for ‘tree for tree’.

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.”

In the instant proposal, **land for land has not been compensated** as the CA has been proposed on double Degraded RF (**notified forest land**).

Subsequent to the consolidated guidelines, Ministry's letter dated 17.12.2024, **Subject:** Streamlining of the approval process with regards to compensatory afforestation as envisaged in the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Rules, 2023 as amended on 20.09.2024, which states that *"point No. (iv) "As per the provisions of the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Amendment Rules 2024, projects of Central Government entities/CPSU and captive coal blocks of the State PSUs are eligible for raising CA over degraded forest land which will be double in extent of the forest land being diverted. Accordingly, the State Government/UP shall not insist for providing non-forest land as CA unless in cases wherein the Central Government Agencies/CPSUs or State Government PSUs with captive coal blocks are forthcoming to provide non-forest land available with them as CA or the State Government/UT Administration is will to provide non-forest land on such terms and condition which is agreed by the Central Government Agencies/CPSUs or State Government PSUs in case of captive coal blocks" and point No. (v) :With regards to the applicability of the provisions of the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Amendment Rules 2024,in respect of proposals of the Central Agencies/PSUs and captive coal blocks of the State PSUs which were granted 'In-principle' approval stipulating CA over non-forest land, the following clarification is given in this regard:*

- a) *Proposal, which were submitted by the States/UTs before notification of Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Amendment Rules 2024, along with the proposal for raising CA over degraded forest land (DFL) and were granted 'in-principle' approval stipulating CA over non-forest land (NFL), shall be allowed to submit compliance of 'in-principle' approval along with CA proposal over DFL in lieu of NFL. The Central Government will consider and grant final approval in such cases stipulating CA over DFL.*
- b) *Proposal, which were submitted by the States/UTs along with CA proposal over non-forest land and were granted 'in-principle' approval stipulating CA over non-forest land (NFL), can also be allowed to submit compliance of 'in-principle' approval along with CA proposal over DFL provided the non-forest land proposed for CA is not transferred and mutated in favour of State Forest Department. In such cases, the Central Government or its Regional Office, based on the request of the State/UT Government or user agency, shall amend the condition of in-principle approval to raise CA over DFL on a case to case basis and subsequently the User Agency shall submit the compliance of in-principle for the obtaining the 'final' approval."*

Going by this order of Ministry too, there is no specific relaxation or exemption for **not compensating 'land for land' in CA in case of captive coal blocks. This order relaxes the provision of considering CA over double degraded forest land in lieu of non-forest land.**

Double degraded forest land identified for CA in the State of Odisha for creation of Land Bank has been to the extent of **5308 Ha (Revenue Forest) already identified by the State Government** as mentioned by the Nodal Officer in a meeting dated 15.01.2025 (Copy of MoM enclosed). Further as per the PCCF, Odisha letter dated 26.04.2025 (copy enclosed) Recorded Forest (other than notified area) is 32,93,57,200 ha.

Hence, the justification for proposing CA in Notified Forest like RF in the instant CA scheme, which does not compensate either 'land for land' or 'tree for tree' needs to be obtained from the State Govt. In ideal situation and in view of conservation measures, the State Govt. should have proposed for CA in double degraded Revenue forest land.

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

The CA land for compensatory afforestation is in 2 patches in the Reserve Forest, ocularly both appeared to be thickly vegetated except the periphery. So, the suitability of the sites to accommodate 1000 saplings per ha as per the Ministry guideline dated 17.02.2025 did not seem ocularly feasible. However, land suitability certificate has been submitted by the DFO, Dhenkanal Forest Division based on the proposed CA scheme of 500 saplings per ha and from the ocular estimation planting 500 saplings per ha in the proposed CA sites appears feasible.

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

The land for compensatory afforestation is Reserved Forest.

- (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:**

Two number of patches have been identified for CA, 43.519 ha in Sunajhari RF under Bhuban Range and 72.462 ha in Ramei RF under Sadangi Range both in Dhenkanal Forest Division. Two patches are not compact. Both are reserved forests and hence don't compensate land for land as mandated in para 2.1 of CA scheme of consolidated guidelines of Adhiniyam. Both the CA sites are not in Angul District not in Angul Forest Division. As per the provisions mentioned in Chapter 2, point 2.2 (xiii) of the consolidated guidelines which 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.

Since the CA site is not proposed in the closed vicinity of the forest land proposed for diversion, it does not comply with the aforesaid provision of the Adhiniyam.

- (e) **Map with details:**

Submitted.

- (f) **Total financial outlay:**

The financial outlay for CA scheme has been approved by APCCF (FD & NO, FC Act) for Rs.6,06,19,200.

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:**

As reported by the State Govt., no violation has been committed by the user agency under Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980. **Contrary to the report of the State Govt., it was observed on field that the following violations have been committed in the proposed site (Photographs and drone imagery is attached).**

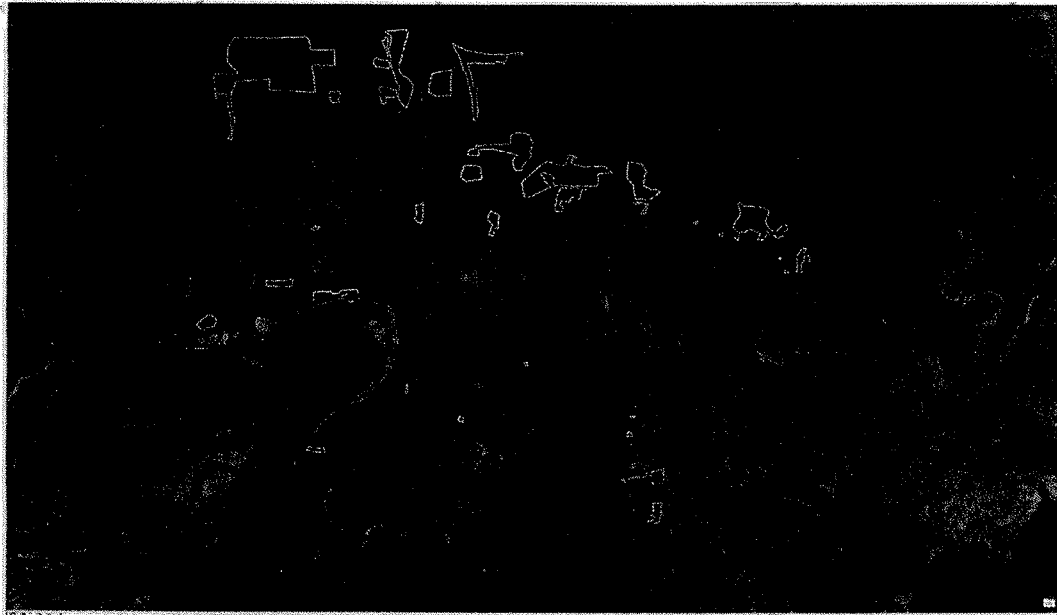
Observations:

- i. Mining Truck Parkings are present in Forest Patches as per Google Earth Satellite Imagery (20°58'7.67"N/ 85° 5'4.68"E, 20°58'2.97"N/ 85° 5'4.22"E, 20°58'3.69"N/ 85° 5'3.92"E, 20°58'8.35"N/ 85° 5'3.31"E).
- ii. **Dumping** activities are observed in forest patches as per Google Earth Satellite Imagery
Dumping 1 (Date: 18.2.2025), **Location:** (20°58'58.21"N/ 85° 5'38.30"E).
Dumping 2-5 (Date: 1.12.2021), **Location:** (20°58'7.20"N/ 85° 5'5.17"E, 20°58'8.52"N/ 85° 4'58.85"E, 20°58'9.02"N/ 85° 4'58.98"E, 20°58'9.03"N/ 85° 5'2.30"E).
Dumping 6 (Date: 28.11.2018), **Location:** (20°58'3.69"N/ 85° 5'3.92"E).
- iv. **Mining roads** are passing through forest patch under ML area (20°58'9.40"N/ 85° 5'1.76"E, 20°58'18.55"N/ 85° 5'28.10"E, 20°57'44.31"N/ 85° 6'17.71"E, 20°57'44.06"N/ 85° 6'22.84"E, 20°57'38.67"N/ 85° 6'23.64"E, 20°58'9.27"N/ 85° 5'4.12"E).
- v. A **River** is flowing from East to South-West side (20°58'32.78"N / 85° 6'38.11"E) under ML boundary.
- vi. **Construction or settlements** are observed in forest patches (20°58'10.07"N/ 85° 5'4.21"E, 20°58'10.20"N/ 85° 5'2.65"E).
- vii. **Settlements** are present in ML area, so relocation Management Plan is required.
- viii. **Metalled roads** are passing through forest patches (20°59'4.43"N/ 85° 5'21.67"E, 20°59'5.05"N/ 85° 5'50.37"E, 20°58'54.27"N/ 85° 5'50.60"E, 20°58'47.04"N/ 85° 5'51.30"E, 20°58'42.63"N/ 85° 5'51.20"E, 20°58'34.13"N/ 85° 5'54.89"E).

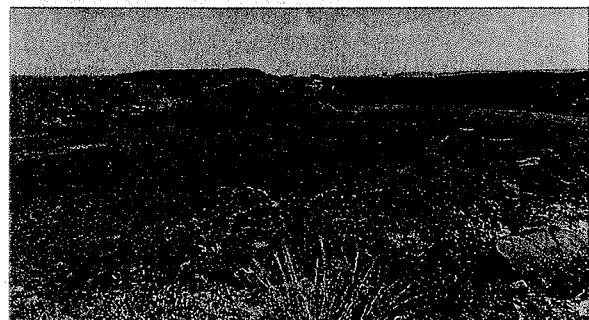
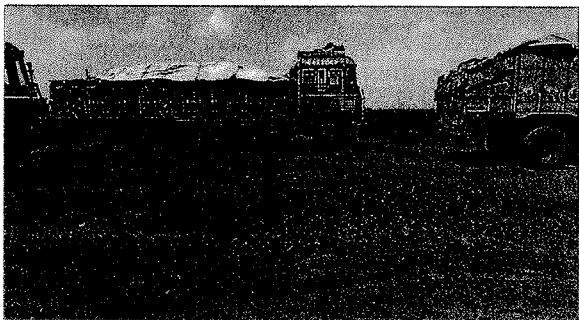
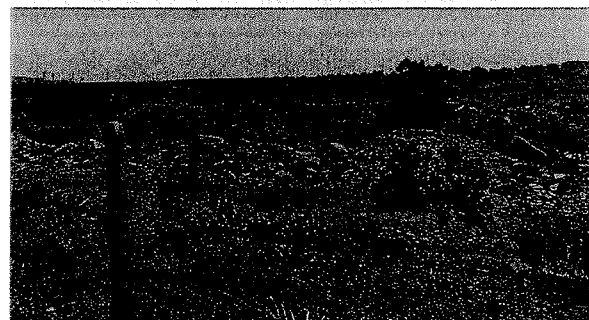
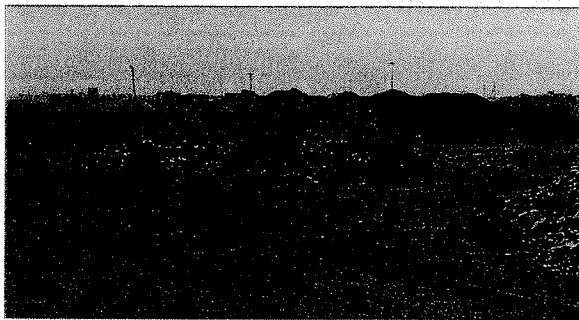
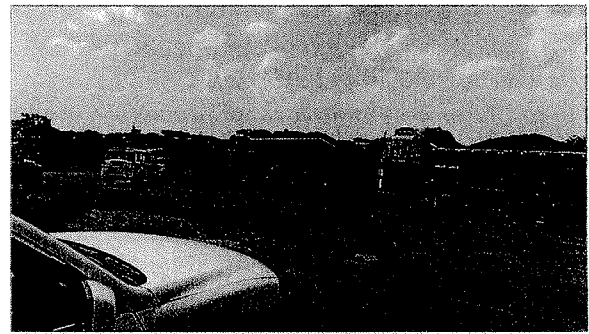
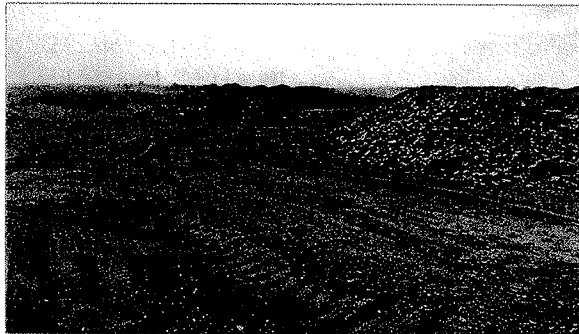
The aforesaid activities were also noticed during site inspection. The settlements observed in DSS were mostly un-inhabited and few were incomplete houses. The drone image analysis along with photographs is submitted herewith.

GIS analysis report as per Drone survey on dt. 05.06.2025 of Bhartpur OCP Expansion by Mahanadi Coalfields for Diversion of 57.73 ha forest land

SL No.	Component	Forest Area Used (Ha.)
1	Soil Dump	0.402
2	Coal Utilized area	0.369
3	Truck Parking	0.381
4	Mining Road	0.348
Total		1.500



N.B: FC Violation area indicates in Red Colour



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

The user agency has submitted that no family is displaced due to diversion of 57.73 ha of forest land.

11. Reclamation plan:

As reported by the Angul Forest Division, the Mining Plan along with Progressive Mine Closure Plan has been approved by the Deputy Assistant Coal Controller, Coal Controller Organization (Sub-ordinate Organization of Ministry of Coal), Government of India.

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 is 1:125.097.

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:

As reported by the DFO, Angul Forest Division, the project will generate permanent employment for 1486 persons and number of days generated by the temporary employment is 640240 days.

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:**

Satkosia-Similipal Tiger Corridor is about 12.23 km from the project.

20. **Other observations regarding coal mines being operated by the same user agency i.e. M/s MCL, a subsidiary of Coal India Limited in Angul District:**

As in case of NTPC and other projects, Ministry has sought information on prior approvals and compliances of projects by the same user agency, in this proposal too, the mines in the vicinity of the proposed project site were visited and information regarding other mines by the same user agency were collected during the site inspection to get an overview of the mining activities being carried out by the same user agency. More so when, Ministry has sought information on adjustment of ML area of the Bharatpur OCP with Jagannath OCP and other mines.

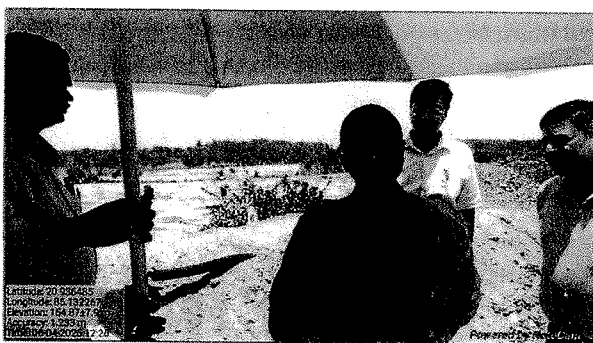
Name of Mine	Block	Operation type	Capacity (MMTPA)	Production (MMT) (2021-22)	Area (in ha)
Nandira	Talcher	UG	0.3	0.08	370
Jagannath	Talcher	OC	7.5	7	553.9
Bharatpur	Talcher	OC	20	9.2	927.4
Balaram	Talcher	OC	8	6.5	1,309
Ananta	Talcher	OC	15	13.6	1,419.8
Lingaraj	Talcher	OC	16	14.5	1,493.2
Kaniha	Kaniha	OC	14	10.1	718
Hingula	Talcher	OC	7.7	1,870	0.00
Bhubaneswari	Talcher	OC	28	28	638.9
Total			123.8	96.7	9,299.6

Apart from this, there are 4 closed mines, i.e. Balanda OCP closed before 2009, Chhendipada OCP closed after 2009, Handidhua UGP and Deulabera OCP abandoned and discontinued.

Balanda OCP: The Balanda OCP was visited during the site inspection. This mine has an area 1208 ha, out of which 760.040 ha is Revenue forest land with a capacity of 1 MTPA (as per PR sanctioned in November, 1959). The said forest land was broken up prior to 1980 and continued until 2005. The mine was closed on 19.07.2005 due to exhaustion of coal reserves. This attracted the FC Act, 1980. As per the CEC and the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India with the interim IA No. 2747/2748 of CEC and F&E Department, Odisha letter No. 9803 dated 28.05.2010 demand raised by the DFO, Angul vide letter No. 4559 dated 16.07.2010 for the cost of NPV of Rs 5,48,29,200 for the entire forest area. Further, as per letter No. 9857 dated 09.05.2013 of F&E Department, Odisha demand was raised to deposit the interest of NPV @ 9% per annum, which amounts to Rs. 170,09,97,923 as of 31.12.2023. However, no payment was informed to be made by the user agency. In this context, in 2013 M/s MCL filed a writ petition before the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India. The case has been heard and the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India transferred all matters relating to the exemption of the NPV payment to the MoEF&CC, New Delhi for consideration in accordance with the law. Since, no notice was received by the DFO, Angul from MoEF&CC regarding the suspension of the matter relating to the exemption of NPV payment, the DFO, Angul

vide letter 987/55/2025/DRP dated 30.01.2025 has directed to deposit an amount of Rs. 185,40,87,736 (up to 31.12.2024).

The total excavation area was 315 ha. The Final Mine Closure Plan was approved by MCL Board on 07.10.2023 with a cost of Rs. 998.78 Lakh for 5 years. The site visit revealed that the technical reclamation by backfilling with fly ash and top soil has been done and biological reclamation is in process. The plantation is being taken up by the OFDC. **It was suggested to the DFO, Angul that the biological reclamation and plantation plan shall be prepared in consultation with the DFO, Angul and since backfilling has been done with fly ash, trees with low translocation factor needs to be planted to prevent the toxicity of the fly ash from affecting the plantation. Ideally the same plants that were available in that site prior to the mining activity should be planted so as to result in eco-restoration. The restored forest area of 706.040 ha needs to be handed back to the State Forest Department for effective management as a green zone in the heavily mined out industrial district of Angul as per Standard Conditions point No. 2.1 (ii) of consolidated guidelines of Adhiniyam. The balance non-forest land of 501.96 ha needs to be designated as OECM (Other Effective based Conservation Measures) as per MoEF&CC guideline May, 2022. Mine surrender plan and an undertaking to surrender this closed mine needs to be submitted to the State Govt. The restored 1208 ha of mined out area being maintained as a green zone shall aid in restoring the ecosystem goods and services of the polluted and heavily mined out landscape of the Angul District.**



Chhendipada OCP: The Chhendipada OCP includes a total area of 85.30 ha, out of which 36.44 ha is forest land and 48.86 ha is non-forest land. Approval has been given for 24.30 ha of forest land. The mining of coal started in 2004-05 with a production capacity of 0.35 MTY and mining activities has been stopped on 23.12.2024 completing a life of 12 years after exhaustion of reserve. The Final Mine Closure Plan has been approved by MCL Board on 05.08.2021. As per the Ministry of Coal Notice dated 03.06.2025, the Coal Controller Organization has stated that MCL had submitted the Final Mine Closure Monitoring and Audit report of the Final Mine Closure claims conducted by CMPDI, Bhubaneswar. **It is evident that the Final Mine Closure has been done and the 24.30 ha of forest land needs to be surrendered back to the State Forest Department for effective management. The rest of the biologically reclaimed NFL which has been reclaimed also needs to be either given to the State Forest Department to be maintained as a green zone which shall aid in restoring the ecosystem goods and services of the polluted and heavily mined out landscape of the Angul District or be designated as OECM (Other Effective based Conservation Measures) as per MoEF&CC guideline May, 2022, so that the biological diversity of the area is restored and can be put to the sustainable livelihood options like eco-tourism that will support the local communities.**

Accordingly the mine surrender schedule of needs to be submitted to the State Forest Department as per the Standard Conditions point No. 2.1 (ii) of consolidated guidelines of Adhiniyam “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”.

Deulabera OCP: The Deulabera OCP includes a total area of 518.891 ha, out of which 78.216 ha is forest land and 440.675 ha is non-forest land. Approval has been given for 35.0 ha of forest land. Deulabera Colliery was opened in the year 1926 over a lease hold area of 954.11 ha. All the areas have been worked by Bord and Pillar method. As per direction of DGMS, the coal mining has been discontinued on 19.07.2006 as there was a communication from the Irrigation Department to release water in the right main canal. Simultaneously, men and machineries have been vacated from the mine and closed all the surface openings. At present, the mine workings are fully sub-merged with water. **Further, it could not be ascertained that the 35 ha of mined out forest area has been inundated by the Irrigation Department due to release of water in the right main canal. A detailed status report regarding the current status of 35 ha of forest land needs to be obtained and this forest land needs to be surrendered back to the State Forest Department for effective management as per Standard Conditions point No. 2.1 (ii) of consolidated guidelines of Adhiniyam.**

Handidhua UGP: The total ML area of Handidhua underground mine is 671.276 ha, out of which 18.155 ha is forest land, 246.181 ha is non-forest land, 403.7 ha (53.352 ha forest land + 353.348 ha non-forest land) of land has been transferred to Lingaraj OCP and 3.24 ha of non-forest land has been transferred to Deulabera OCP. This underground mine was commissioned in 1929 and it was closed as per letter dated 31.03.1999 of the Project Officer, Handidhua Colliery addressed to Director of Mines Safety. However, till now no steps have been taken to hand over the closed mine to the State Govt. The restoration status of the mine also could not be ascertained.

Bharatpur OCP: The Bharatpur OCP of which the instant proposal is an expansion was monitored during the site inspection along with CA site visit. Bharatpur OCP is a part of Bharatpur administrative area of MCL for which 595.69 ha of land has been acquired under Coal Bearing (A&D) Act, 1957 by Coal India Limited in one block in single phase vide Notification dated 05.10.1982. Out of which 134.415 ha of forest land was granted Final Approval on 07.02.2014 and 71.64 ha of forest land was granted final approval on 02.04.1997 and the recent proposed site is 57.53 ha of forest land.

It is reported by the State Govt. that Jagannath OCP is on the eastern side of Bharatpur OCP and Jagannath OCP was going to be exhausted. In order to add life to Jagannath OCP, a part of planned Bharatpur OCP was transferred to Jagannath OCP. In order to obtain EC for extended Jagannath OCP, the boundaries of Bharatpur OCP had to be adjusted as per new common boundary and obtain approval of revised mining plan. In this regard the State Govt. shall provide the details whether any forest land has been transferred to the Jagannath OCP. During the site inspection it was mentioned that 24.64 ha of forest land has been transferred to Jagannath OCP and 7.8 ha of forest land has been transferred to Ananta mines of MCL. The details of approval has been sought from the State Govt.

21. Recommendation based on inspection of project:

- 1) The violations in the proposed ML area should be calculated accurately by the State Govt. The DSS analysis of the drone imagery of the site, projects the total forest area under violation to be 1.5 ha. Penal CA & Penal NPV as applicable to be imposed for such informed violation. The State Govt. to carry out joint inspection of the area to ascertain the extent of violation in forest land and also ascertain the agencies involved in the violation. In the instant case of violation since, M/s MCL has proposed the area in which the violation has taken place, it is the duty of the user agency to prevent such violation. This violation has neither been reported by the user agency nor by the State Govt. The land involved in the violation being forest land, the user agency should be held responsible for allowing the violation to happen on the proposed site involving forest land and the officials of Revenue Department for not being able to stop the non-forestry use of forest land without prior approval and necessary action to be taken as per law.

- 2) CA scheme to be changed to double degraded Revenue forest land as per provisions of Standard Conditions point No. 2.1 of Chapter 2 of consolidated guidelines of Adhiniyam where it is categorically mentioned that *Compensatory Afforestation (CA) is to compensate the loss of 'land by land' and loss of 'trees by trees'* with the number of saplings to be planted as per the provisions of the guidelines of the MoEF&CC dated 17.02.2025.

Even though 17.12.2024 circular of the Ministry relaxes the coal blocks from taking up CA in NFL to double degraded forest land there has been no concession or relaxation vide this circular or vide any subsequent guidelines of the Ministry which explicitly allows the mining proposals of coal blocks not to compensate 'land for land'. Moreover, the General Conditions point No. (xxiv) of consolidated guidelines of Adhiniyam states that "*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*". Especially, where double degraded notified forest land identified for CA in the State of Odisha does not compensate land for land and creation of Land Bank has been to the extent of **5308 Ha (Revenue Forest)** already identified by the State Government as mentioned by the Nodal Officer in a meeting dated 15.01.2025 and as per the PCCF, Odisha letter dated 26.04.2025 the Recorded Forest (other than notified area) is 32,93,57,200 ha, as to why land for land should not be compensated by proposing the CA site in double degraded Revenue forest land. **This justification needs to be obtained from the State Govt.**

- 3) The 13.09 ha of pristine Sal forest (looks like forest as described by the user agency) within the mining lease area should be mined out at the end of the ML period for the proposed mining site so as to ensure continuation of eco-system goods and services to the area until the progressive reclamation is done in the already mined out areas by replanting the vegetation that was lost from the area so that the overall balance of the ecosystem could be maintained.
- 4) The progressive mine closure and eco-restoration to be undertaken with strict supervision and consultation with the State Forest Department and DFO, Angul as per Para 2.1 of Standard conditions of consolidated guidelines of Adhiniyam which states that "*The User Agency shall undertake mining in a phased manner after taking due care for reclamation of the mined over 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) Adhiniyam, 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*".
- 5) Handing over of forest land of closed mines like Balanda OCP (760.040 ha), Chhendipada OCP (36.44 ha), Deulabera OCP (78.216 ha) and Handidhua UGP (18.155 ha) to the State Forest Department as per Para 2.1 (iii) of Standard conditions of consolidated guidelines of Adhiniyam which states that "*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*". Since all these closed mines are situated in the closed vicinity of the proposed project site, are being operated by the same user agency and it is mandatory as per the provisions of the Adhiniyam to handover the forest land after reclamation and restoration of the mining lease area to the State Forest Department so as to restore the ecosystem goods and services of the area.
- 6) Handing over of non-forest land of closed mines Balanda OCP (447.96 ha), Chhendipada OCP (48.86 ha), Deulabera OCP (440.675 ha) and Handidhua UGP (246.181 ha) after restoration and reclamation to the State Government to be maintained as a green zone which shall aid in restoring the ecosystem goods and services of the polluted and heavily mined out landscape of

the Angul District or be designated as OECM (Other Effective based Conservation Measures) as per MoEF&CC guideline May, 2022, so that the lost biological diversity of the area is restored and can be put to the sustainable livelihood options like eco-tourism that will support the local communities in a sustainable manner. Land restoration is at the core of the UNCCD/G20 Global Land Initiative's mission, as actions that protect and revitalise land resources such as soil, water and biodiversity are critical to achieving Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) by 2030 and constitute a proactive way to build resilience.

- 7) It was observed that the backfilling of the closed mines has been done with fly ash. Constructing a liner system at the bottom and sides of the pit and covering it with impermeable material before bringing a fertile soil layer and planting trees will prevent the leaching of potentially toxic contaminants into soil and groundwater. This shall be ensured by the user agency and monitored by the State Forest Department as toxicity from the leachants may be carried to the vegetative parts of the plantations intended to be carried out in these closed mines, especially plants with high translocation factor.
- 8) Since, there are already 4 closed mines in Angul Forest Division and the forest land of Jagannath Mines is also said to be exhausted in next 3-4 years, a detailed inspection of all the closed mines and to be closed mines along with their eco-restoration status needs to be undertaken before giving any fresh approvals.
- 9) Since, this area witnesses movement of elephants and there is presence of other wildlife as well, Site Specific Wildlife Conservation Plan (SSWLCP) needs to be prepared and implemented at the project cost. Also, a detailed review of all the SSWLCP of the working and non-working mines in Angul Forest Division by MCL needs to be undertaken to ascertain the implementation status and avoid over lapping.
- 10) The Regional Wildlife Management Plan to be prepared as per State Govt. norms and with proportionate contribution of all the mine lease holders in Angul Forest Division, where the mine site is situated.

With these aforesaid conditions the proposal is **recommended**.

Padma Mahanti
19/6/25
(Dr. Padma Mahanti)
Dy. Inspector General of Forests (Central)



भारत सरकार / Government of India
पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय / Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change
क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, भुवनेश्वर / Regional Office, Bhubaneswar
ए०३, चंद्रसेखरपुर / A/3, Chandrasekharpur
भुवनेश्वर - ७५१ ०२३ / Bhubaneswar - 751 023



Telephone: 0674 - 2301213, 2301248, 2302452, 2302453. E-mail: roez.bsr-mef@nic.in

No.5-ORA700/2025-BHU //409

25th June, 2025

To

The Addl. Chief Secretary,
Forest, Environment & CC Department,
Government of Odisha,
Bhubaneswar-751 001.

**Sub: Diversion of 71.64 ha of forest land for Bharatpur Opencast Project
in favour of SECL, Talcher - reg.**

Ref: Ministry's letter No.8-348/89-FC dated 17.03.1997/02.04.1997

Sir,

With subject and reference cited above, I am directed to inform that the above project was monitored by the Dy. Inspector General of Forests (Central) of this office on 04.06.2025. During monitoring it was observed that implementation status of the stipulated conditions of Stage-II approval could not be ascertained by the monitoring officer due to non-availability of information/document with concerned Forest Division.

It is therefore requested to kindly furnish the detailed point wise compliance of all the stipulated conditions of the final approval accorded by the Ministry vide letter dated 17.03.1997/02.04.1997 to this office at the earliest.

Yours faithfully,

Signature of Sujoy Dutta
25/05/2025
(Sujoy Dutta)

Assistant Commissioner (Forestry)

Copy to:

1. The Addl. PCCF & Nodal Officer (VSSA), Forest Department, Govt. of Odisha, Aranya Bhawan, Chandrasekharpur, Bhubaneswar - 751 023 for kind information and necessary action.
2. The Divisional Forest Officer, Angul Forest Division, Angul, Odisha for kind information and necessary action.
3. The Project Officer, Bharatpur OCP, At/PO: N.S. Nagar, Angul-759148, Odisha for information and necessary action

Signature of Sujoy Dutta
25/05/2025

Assistant Commissioner (Forestry)

प्राप्त / Despatcher

दिनांक / Dated. 25/6/25

Signature of Khembaram

O/c



भारत सरकार / Government of India
पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय / Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change
क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, भुवनेश्वर / Regional Office, Bhubaneswar
ए.३, चंद्रसेखरपुर / A/3, Chandrasekharpur
भुवनेश्वर - ७५१ ०२३ / Bhubaneswar - 751 023



Telephone: 0674 - 2301213, 2301248, 2302452, 2302453. E-mail: roez.bsr-mef@nic.in

No.5-ORA700/2025-BHU /405

25th June, 2025

To

The Addl. Chief Secretary,
Forest, Environment & CC Department,
Government of Odisha,
Bhubaneswar-751 001.

Sub: Diversion of 134.41 ha of forest land including 0.18 ha to be maintained as Safety Zone in addition to the already diverted 71.64 ha of forest land for Bharatpur Open Cast Coal Mining expansion project of M/s Mahanadi Coalfields Limited in Angul District -reg.

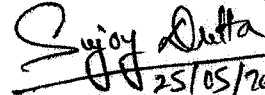
Ref: Ministry's letter No.8-87/2012-FC dated 7th February, 2014.

Sir,

With subject and reference cited above, I am directed to inform that the above project was monitored by the Dy. Inspector General of Forests (Central) of this office on 04.06.2025. During monitoring, it was observed that implementation status of the stipulated conditions of Stage-II approval could not be ascertained by the Monitoring Officer due to lack of availability of any documents/ information with the concerned Forest Division.

It is therefore requested to kindly furnish the detailed point wise compliance of all the stipulated conditions of final approval accorded by the Ministry vide letter dated 07.02.2014 to this office at the earliest.

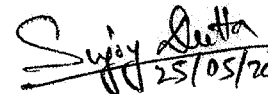
Yours faithfully,


25/05/2025
(Sujoy Dutta)

Assistant Commissioner (Forestry)

Copy to:

1. The Addl. PCCF & Nodal Officer (VSSA), Forest Department, Govt. of Odisha, Aranya Bhawan, Chandrasekharpur, Bhubaneswar - 751 023 for kind information and necessary action.
2. The Divisional Forest Officer, Angul Forest Division, Angul, Odisha for kind information and necessary action.
3. The Project Officer, Bharatpur OCP, At/PO: N.S. Nagar, Angul-759148, Odisha for information and necessary action


25/05/2025

Assistant Commissioner (Forestry)

o/c

प्रेषित / Despatcher

दिनांक / Dated. 25/6/25

