

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

Indira Paryavaran Bhawan,
Jorbagh Road, Aliganj,
New Delhi - 110003.

Dated: The July 6th, 2022

To
The Principal Secretary (Forests),
Government of Chhattisgarh,
Mahanadi Bhavan,
Nava Raipur (CG).

Sub: Proposal for non-forestry use of 240.867 ha, comprising of 185.017 ha Revenue Forest Land and 55.850 ha identified as forest land in terms of dictionary meaning under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 for Chhal Opencast Coal Mining Project in favour of M/s South Eastern Coalfields Limited (SECL) in Raigarh District of Chhattisgarh - reg.

Sir,

I am directed to refer to the Government of Chhattisgarh's letter no. F 5-18/2018/10-2 dated 08.04.2021 on the above subject for seeking prior approval of the Central Government under Section 2 of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 and letter no. F-5-18/2018/10-2 dated 24.02.2022 forwarding additional information as sought by the Ministry's letter dated 11.06.2021 and to say that the proposal has been examined by the Forest Advisory Committee constituted by the Central Government under Section - 3 of the aforesaid Act.

After careful examination of the proposal of the State Government and on the basis of the recommendations of the Forest Advisory Committee, and approval of the same by the competent authority of the MoEF&CC, New Delhi, the Central Government hereby accords "***in-principle***" approval for non-forestry use of 240.867 ha, comprising of 185.017 ha of Revenue Forest Land and 55.850 ha of Dictionary meaning forest land under Section-2 of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 for Chhal Opencast Coal Mining Project in favour of M/s South Eastern Coalfields Limited (SECL) in Raigarh District of Chhattisgarh subject to fulfilment of the following conditions:

A. Conditions which need to be complied prior to handing over of forest land by the State Forest Department and compliance is to be submitted prior to Stage-II approval:

- i. **Compensatory Afforestation:** The cost of compensatory afforestation at the prevailing wage rates as per compensatory afforestation scheme and the cost of survey, demarcation and erection of permanent pillars, if required on the CA land, shall be deposited in advance with the Forest Department by the user agency. The CA will be maintained for 10 years. The scheme may include appropriate provision for anticipated cost increase for works scheduled for subsequent years;
- ii. The KML files of diverted area, the CA areas, the proposed SMC treatment area and the WLMP area shall be uploaded on the e-Green

- watch portal with all requisite details prior to Stage II approval;
- iii. Land identified for raising compensatory afforestation shall be notified as PF under the Indian Forest Act, 1927 or local Forest Act before grant of Stage-II approval, if applicable;
 - iv. *A Soil and Moisture Conservation (SMC) work plan to mitigate the impact of the proposed mining activity on the local river shall be prepared by the user agency in consultation with the State Forest Department and the same shall be submitted along with Stage-I compliance. Cost of implementation of the provisions of the said Plan will be deposited into the CAMPA and the same shall be intimated to the Ministry before Stage-II approval.*
 - v. *Elephant/Wildlife Management Plans should be prepared keeping in view the locality factors, occurrence of wildlife, management interventions required for areas. State Government may also get the Plan verified by the Project Elephant Division of the Ministry. Cost of implementation of the Plan so finalized shall be deposited into State CAMPA and detail of the same along with approved Plan shall be submitted to the Ministry before Stage-II approval.*
 - vi. *Proposal involves displacement from non-forest land. A copy of approved R&R plan, prepared in consonance with the R&R policy of the State, shall be submitted along with the compliance of Stage-I approval.*
 - vii. *The user agency shall prepare and submit a consolidated Reclamation Plan of the areas mined out completely which are not required for future mining and areas to be reclaimed in future in consonance with the Progressive Mine Closure Plan and detail of the same shall be submitted along with compliance of Stage-I approval.*
 - viii. The User Agency shall transfer online, the Net Present Value (NPV) of the forest land being diverted under this proposal, as per the guidelines issued by this Ministry vide its letters No. 5-3/2011-FC (Vol.) dated 06.01.2022 read with letter dated 22.03.2022. The requisite funds shall be transferred through online portal into National Authority (CAMPA) account of the State Concerned; new NPV guidelines;
 - ix. Compensatory levies to be realized from the User Agency under the project shall be transferred/ deposited, through e-challan, in to the account of CAMPA pertaining to the State concerned through e-portal (<https://parivesh.nic.in/>);
 - x. Following activities, as per approved plan / schemes, shall be undertaken in the lease area by the User Agency under the supervision of the State Forest Department. Approved scheme/plan shall be submitted to the Ministry along with compliance of Stage-I approval:
 - a. Mitigative measures to minimize soil erosion and choking of stream shall be implemented within a period of three year with effect from the issue of Stage-II clearance in accordance with the approved Plan in consultation with the State Forest Department.
 - b. Planting of adequate drought hardy plant species and sowing of seeds, in the appropriate area within the mining lease to arrest soil erosion in accordance with the approved scheme;

- c. Construction of check dams, retention /toe walls to arrest sliding down of the excavated material along the contour in accordance with the approved scheme;
 - d. Stabilize the overburden dumps by appropriate grading/benching, in accordance with the approved scheme, so as to ensure that angles of repose at any given place is less than 28°; and
 - e. No damage shall be caused to the top-soil and the user agency will follow the top soil management plan.
- xi. User agency either himself or through the State Forest Department shall undertake gap planting and soil & moisture conservation activities to restock and rejuvenate the degraded open forests (having crown density less than 0.40), if any, located in the area within 100 meter from outer perimeter of the mining lease. The plan for plantation and SMC activities will be prepared and submitted to MoEF &CC before Stage-II Clearance;
- xii. The User Agency shall prepare a list of existing village tanks and other water bodies with GPS co-ordinates located within five km from the mine lease boundary. This list is to be duly verified by the concerned Divisional Forest Officer. The User Agency shall regularly undertake desilting of these village tanks and other water bodies so as to mitigate the impact of siltation of such tanks/water bodies. A detailed approved plan for desilting of identified ponds and water bodies to be prepared in consultation with forest department and shall be submitted to MoEF & CC before Stage-II approval;
- xiii. **Safety Zone Management:** Following activities, at project cost, shall be undertaken by the user agency for the management of safety zone as per relevant guidelines issued by the Ministry's guidelines:
- a. User agency shall ensure demarcation of safety zone (7.5 meter strip all along the inner boundary of the mining lease area), and its fencing, protection and regeneration by erecting adequate number of 6 feet high RCC boundary pillars inscribed with DGPS coordinates with barbed wire fencing and deploying adequate number of watchers under the supervision of the State Forest Department;
 - b. Boundary of the safety zone of the mining lease, adjacent to habitation/roads, should be properly fenced by the user agency;
 - c. Safety zone shall be maintained as green belt around mining lease and to ensure dense canopy in the area, regeneration shall be taken up in this area by the user agency at project cost under the supervision of the State Forest Department;
 - d. The State Government and the user agency shall ensure that safety zone is maintained as per the prescribed norms;
 - e. The cost of felling of trees shall be deposited by the User Agency with the State Forest Department;
- xiv. State Government shall complete settlement of rights, in term of the Scheduled Tribes and Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, if any, on the forest land to be diverted and submit the documentary evidence as prescribed by this Ministry's letter No. 11-9/1998-FC (Pt.) dated 03.08.2009 read with 05.07.2013, in support thereof; and

xv. The complete compliance report of the conditions stipulated in this approval shall be uploaded on **e-portal** (<https://parivesh.nic.in/>).

B. Conditions which need to be complied on field after handing over of forest land to the user agency by the State Forest Department but the compliance in form of undertaking shall be submitted prior to Stage-II approval

- i. Legal status of the diverted forest land shall remain unchanged;
- ii. Compensatory afforestation over orange forest land, double in extent to the forest land being diverted, shall be raised by the State Forest Department at the project cost within three years from the date of grant of Stage - II approval;
- iii. The user agency shall keep minimum of 120 meters distance from the bank of Mand River as intact and no mining should be carried out in this area. Embankment should be constructed to ensue protection of river and its hydrology from the mining;
- iv. At the time of payment of the Net Present Value (NPV) at the present rate, the user agency shall furnish an undertaking to pay the additional amount of NPV, if so determined, as per the final decision of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India;
- v. Trees should be felled in phased manner as per the requirement in the approved Mining Plan with prior permission of concerned DFO;
- vi. The user agency shall explore the possibility of translocation of maximum number of trees identified to be felled and shall ensure that any tree felling shall be done only when it is unavoidable and that too under strict supervision of the State Forest Department.
- vii. The User Agency shall comply with the Hon'ble Supreme Court order on re-grassing, and re-grass the mining area and any other areas which may have been disturbed due to mining to restore them to a condition which is fit for growth of fodder, flora, fauna, etc. in a timely manner;
- viii. 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, Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, in the concerned State Government and the concerned Integrated 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 concern Head of the Integrated Regional Office may direct that the mining activities shall remain suspended till such time, such reclamation activities area satisfactorily executed.
- ix. Period of diversion of the said forest land under this approval shall be for a period co-terminus with the period of the mining lease proposed to be granted under the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, as amended and the Rules framed there-under;
- x. The User Agency shall obtain the Environment Clearance as per the

provisions of the Environmental (Protection) Act, 1986, if required;

- xi. No labour camp shall be established on the forest land and the User Agency shall provide fuels preferably alternate fuels to the labourers and the staff working at the site so as to avoid any damage and pressure on the nearby forest areas;
- xii. The boundary of the diverted forest land, mining lease and safety zone, as applicable, shall be demarcated on ground at the project cost, by erecting four feet high reinforced cement concrete pillars, each inscribed with its serial number, distance from pillar to pillar and GPS coordinates;
- xiii. The layout plan of the mining plan/ proposal shall not be changed without the prior approval of the Central Government and the forest land shall not be used for any purpose other than that specified in the proposal;
- xiv. The forest land proposed to be diverted shall under no circumstances be transferred to any other agency, department or person without prior approval of the Central Government;
- xv. No damage to the flora and fauna of the adjoining area shall be caused;
- xvi. 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; and
- xvii. The user agency shall comply all the provisions of the all Acts, Rules, Regulations, Guidelines, Hon'ble Court Order (s) and NGT Order (s) pertaining to this project, if any, for the time being in force, as applicable to the project.
- xviii. Violation of any of these conditions will amount to violation of Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 and action would be taken as prescribed in para 1.21 of Chapter 1 of the Handbook of comprehensive guidelines of Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 as issued by this Ministry's letter No. 5-2/2017-FC dated 28.03.2019.
- xix. The User Agency shall submit the annual self -compliance report in respect of the above stated conditions to the State Government, concerned Regional Office and to this Ministry by the end of March every year regularly;

After receipt of compliance report on fulfilment of the conditions mentioned above, the proposal shall be considered for final approval under Section-2 of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. Transfer of forest land shall not be affected till final approval is granted by the Central Government in this regard.

Yours faithfully,

(Sandeep Sharma)

Assistant Inspector General of Forests

Copy to:

1. Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (PCCF) Aranya Bhavan, Sector 19, North Block, New Raipur- 492002 Chhattisgarh.
2. Regional Officer, Integrated Regional Office, MoEF&CC, Naya Raipur
3. The Addl. PCCF & Nodal Officer (FCA), Jail Road, Aranya Bhavan, Raipur.
4. User Agency
5. Monitoring Cell, Forest Conservation Division, MoEF&CC
6. Guard file