

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

Indira Paryavaran Bhawan,
Jorbagh Road, Aliganj
New Delhi – 110003
Dated: As per E-sign

To

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

Sub: Proposal for seeking prior approval of the Central Government under Section 2 of the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980 for non-forestry use of 134.69 ha of forest land for Expansion of Kulda Open Cast Coal Mining Project of Basundhara Area of Mahanandi Coalfields Limited in Sundargarh District under Sundargarh Forest Division (Proposal No. FP/OR/MIN/50293/2020)

Madam/Sir,

I am directed to refer to the Government of Odisha's letter No FE-DIV-FLD-0033-2024-7679/FE&CC dated 25.04.2024 on the above subject seeking prior approval of the Central Government under Section 2 of the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980 and additional information submitted vide letter No. dated 20827/9F (MG)-49/2023 dated 18.10.2024, vide letter No. 25105/9F (MG)-49/2023 dated 11.12.2024 and letter No. No. 9703/9F (MG)-49/2023 dated 02.05.2025 and to say that the proposal has been examined by the Advisory Committee constituted by the Central Government under Section - 3 of the aforesaid Adhiniyam.

2. After careful examination of the proposal of the Government of Odisha and on the basis of the recommendations of the 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 under Section - 2 of the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980 for non-forestry use of 134.69 ha of forest land for Expansion of Kulda Open Cast Coal Mining Project of Basundhara Area of Mahanandi Coalfields Limited in Sundargarh District under Sundargarh Forest Division subject to the fulfilment of the following conditions:

1. Legal status of the diverted forest land shall remain unchanged;

2. Compensatory Afforestation:

- a. The User Agency shall transfer the cost of raising and maintaining the compensatory afforestation as per the approved CA Scheme at the current wage rate in consultation with State Forest Department in the

account of CAMPA of the concerned State through online portal;

- b. The cost of survey, demarcation and erection of permanent pillars, if required on the identified 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 afforestation of indigenous species with appropriate provision for anticipated cost increase for works scheduled for subsequent years;
- c. The compensatory afforestation over degraded forest land i.e. 280.9 ha, shall be raised by the State Forest Department at the project cost and the afforestation works shall start within two years from the date of grant of final approval;
- d. *The State shall ensure that the CA scheme is prepared to accommodate at least 1000 seedlings/ha over DFL identified for CA. 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 the working plan. The State Government will intimate the name/details of the RFs/PFs areas in which the balanced seedlings are to be planted. The user agency shall deposit the cost of plantation of the same.*

3. NPV:

- a. The User Agency shall transfer the funds towards the cost of Net Present Value (NPV) of the forest land being diverted under this proposal from the User Agency as per the orders of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India dated 28.03.2008, 24.04.2008 and 09.05.2008 in Writ Petition (Civil) No. 202/1995 and the guidelines issued by this Ministry vide its letter No. 5-3/2007-FC (pt.) dated 29.12.2023 through online portal of CAMPA account of the State Concerned;
 - b. 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;
4. *The State Govt. shall submit the compliance report in respect of Stage-I approval accorded to M/s MCL in Bashundhara washery by MoEF&CC vide letter no 8-176/1997 FC(Vol) dated 11.03.2019;*
 5. *The user agency shall prepare a schedule for surrender of the mined out and reclaimed Forest land in accordance with existing mine plan and submit the same along with an undertaking to surrender the mined out and reclaimed forest land as per such schedule to the ministry before grant of final approval under the Adhiniyam for diversion of said Forest land.*
 6. *A wildlife plan should be prepared for conservation and mitigation of impact on wildlife in consultation with CWLW and the same should be approved and monies deposited before final approval.*

7. 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/>);
8. 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 along with GPS Ids and all other requisite details prior to final approval;
9. 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;
 - a. Mitigative measures to minimize soil erosion and choking of stream shall be implemented within a period of three years 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
10. ***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;
11. No damage shall be caused to the top-soil and the user agency will follow the top soil management plan;

12. 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 final approval;
13. 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;
14. The cost of felling of trees shall be deposited by the User Agency with the State Forest Department;
15. Trees should be felled in phased manner as per the requirement in the approved Mining Plan with prior permission of concerned DFO;
16. 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.
17. A site-specific Wildlife Management Plan shall be prepared by the State Government in consultation with the PCCF (Wildlife) for the protection and conservation of wildlife of the area. A copy of approved Plan shall be submitted to the Ministry along with the compliance of Stage-I approval. Entire cost of implementation of the provisions of the Wildlife Management Plan shall be deposited into the account of CAMPA of the State;
18. The 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, in accordance with the Rule 11 (7) of the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Rules, 2023;The User Agency shall undertake mining in a phased manner after taking due care for reclamation of the mined over area.
19. 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 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 Addl. Principle Chief Conservator of Forests (Central) may direct that the mining activities shall remain suspended till such time, such reclamation activities area satisfactorily executed;

20. 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;
21. 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 time to time and the Rules framed there-under;
22. The User Agency shall obtain the Environment Clearance as per the provisions of the Environmental (Protection) Act, 1986, if required;
23. 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;
24. 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;
25. The layout plan of the 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 except the change in land use allowed on the forest land vide Ministry's guideline dated 26.12.2024;
26. 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;
27. No damage to the flora and fauna of the adjoining area shall be caused;
28. 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;
29. 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
30. 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.
31. Violation of any of these conditions will amount to violation of Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980 and action would be taken as prescribed in para 1.16 of Chapter 1 of the Consolidated Guidelines and Clarifications on Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 198 as issued by this Ministry's letter dated 29.12.2023;.

32. The compliance report shall be uploaded on **e-portal** (<https://parivesh.nic.in/>).

After receipt of compliance report on fulfilment of the conditions mentioned above, the proposal shall be considered for final approval under Section-2 (1) (ii) of Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980. Transfer of forest land shall not be affected till final approval is granted by the Central Government in this regard.

Yours faithfully,

Sd/
(Suneet Bhardwaj)
Asst. Inspector General of Forests

Copy to:

1. PCCF (HoFF), State Forest Department, Government of Odisha, Bhubaneswar
2. PCCF & Nodal Officer (FCA), O/o PCCF, State Forest Department, Government of Odisha, Bhubaneswar
3. DDGF (Central), Regional Office of MoEF&CC at Bhubaneswar.
4. User Agency.
5. Monitoring Cell, FC Division, MoEF&CC, New Delhi
6. Guard File.