

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

**Indira Paryavaran Bhawan,
Jor Bag Road, Aliganj,
New Delhi – 110003
Dated: 04-12-2025**

To,
The Principal Secretary (Forests),
Government of Maharashtra,
Mumbai.

Subject: Proposal for seeking prior approval of the Central Government under section 2 (1) (ii) of the Van (Sanrakshan Eevam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980 for diversion of 12.07 ha forest land for Sakhari-Irawati (Pouni III) Opencast Mine Project in Reserve Forest Compartment No. R-603 in favour of M/s Western Coalfields Limited in Chandrapur District of Maharashtra State (Online No. FP/MH/MIN/8832/2014) – regarding.

Madam/Sir,

I am directed to refer to the Government of Maharashtra letter no. FLD-3616/CR-01/F-10 dated 10.06.2021 on the above mentioned subject, seeking prior approval of the Central Government under Section 2 (1) (ii) of the Van (Sanrakshan Eevam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980. The proposal was accorded 'In-Principle' (Stage-I) approval by the Central Government vide letter dated 20.03.2025. The Government of Maharashtra has reported/submitted the compliance report vide letters dated 28.07.2025 and 27.10.2025 to the conditions stipulated in the 'In-Principle' approval and requested for grant of final approval.

2. In this connection, I am directed to say that on the basis of the compliance report furnished by the Government of Maharashtra vide letters No. Desk-17/Nodal/I/ID-12417(14-15)2024-2025/1003 dated 28.07.2025 and 27.10.2025, Stage-II/Final approval of the Central Government is hereby granted under Section 2 (1) (ii) of the Van (Sanrakshan Eevam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980 for diversion of 12.07 ha forest land for Sakhari-Irawati (Pouni III) Opencast Mine Project in Reserve Forest Compartment No. R-603 in favor of M/s Western Coalfields Limited in Chandrapur District of Maharashtra State subject to fulfillment of the following conditions:

- i. Legal status of the diverted forest land shall remain unchanged;
- ii. The State shall take up the matter with FSI and ensure the correction of digital forest boundaries in case of the non-forest area, which is within forest boundary as per DSS Analysis in the instant project;
- iii. Safety zone with effective green belt around the entire mining lease area shall be maintained as per guidelines in the matter;
- iv. Mitigation measures as suggested by the NBWL/SBWL/Wildlife Management plan as applicable shall be implemented at the cost of the user agency;
- v. The state shall ensure that the minimum tree felling is done in a phased

manner;

- vi. Compensatory Afforestation over the identified degraded forest area of 25 ha in Compt. No. 452 of Ballarshah Range, Maharashtra State shall be raised at the project cost under the supervision of the State Forest Department and afforestation works shall start within two years from the date of final approval and maintained thereafter in accordance with the approved CA scheme in consultation with the State Forest Department;
- vii. The CA will be maintained for 10 years. The Scheme may include afforestation of indigenous species with appropriate provision for anticipated cost increase for work scheduled for subsequent years;
- viii. The User Agency shall pay the additional amount of NPV, if so determined, as per the final decision of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India;
- ix. The State Government shall upload the KML files of the area under diversion and the accepted area for raising compensatory afforestation in the e-Green watch portal of FSI, before handing over forest land to the user agency;
- x. The User Agency shall obtain the Environment Clearance as per the provisions of the Environmental (Protection) Act; 1986; if required;
- xi. The User Agency shall undertake mining in a phased manner after taking due care for reclamation of the mined out area. The User Agency shall implement the plan prepared for life of project as per mining plan, clearly linking the progress of mining and felling of the trees. Felling of trees shall be done, when it is absolutely necessary in phase-wise manner in the areas which become due for mining as per mining plan. 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 Eevam 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;
- xii. The user agency shall surrender the mined out and reclaimed forest land in accordance with the existing mining plan as per schedule to the MoEF&CC;
- xiii. 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;
- xiv. 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; and

d. The State Government and the user agency shall ensure that safety zone is maintained as per the prescribed norms.

xv. 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:

- 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 'Final' approval in accordance with the approved Plan/Scheme in consultation with the State Forest Department;
- 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 Plan/scheme;
- Construction of check dams, retention /toe walls to arrest sliding down of the excavated material along the contour in accordance with the approved Plan/Scheme;
- 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
- No damage shall be caused to the top-soil and the user agency will follow the top soil management plan.

xvi. The validity of approval granted under the Adhiniyam shall be for a period coterminous with the validity of the mining lease proposed to be granted under the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, as amended from time to time or Rules framed there under, or for such period as may be specified by the Central Government;

xvii. The User Agency either himself or through the State Forest Department shall undertake gap planting and soil and moisture conservation activities to restock and rejuvenate the degraded open forests (having crown density less than 0.40), if any, located within the periphery of 100 m from outer perimeter of the mining lease as per approved plan for plantation and SMC activities submitted along with compliance of 'in-principle' approval;

xviii. The User Agency shall regularly undertake desilting of village tanks and other water bodies, located within five km from the mine lease boundary, as per approved plan, to mitigate the impact of project on such tanks/water bodies;

xix. 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;

xx. Adequate care shall be taken to check any rolling of overburden/dumps beyond the designated area and to check soil erosion caused due to mining activities;

xxi. The User agency will undertake comprehensive soil conservation measures at the project cost in consultation with the State Forest Department;

xxii. The R&R Plan shall be implemented as per the R&R Policy of State Government in consonance with National R&R Policy, Government of India before the commencement of the project work and implementation. The said

R&R Plan will be monitored by the State Government/Regional Office of MoEF&CC along with indicators for monitoring and expected observable milestones;

- xxiii. The user agency shall explore the possibility of translocation of maximum number of trees identified to be felled;
- xxiv. The cost of felling of trees shall be deposited by the User Agency with the State Forest Department;
- xxv. 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;
- xxvi. 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;
- xxvii. 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;
- xxviii. 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;
- xxix. No damage to the flora and fauna of the adjoining area shall be caused;
- xxx. 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;
- xxxi. 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;
- xxxii. Any other condition that the Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change may stipulate from time to time in the interest of conservation, protection and development of forests & wildlife,
- xxxiii. Violation of any of these conditions will amount to violation of Van (Sanrakshan Eevam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980 and action would be taken as prescribed in para 1.16 of consolidated guidelines and clarifications issued under Van (Sanrakshan Eevam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980 as issued by this Ministry on dated 29.12.2023;
- xxxiv. The State Government after receiving the 'Final Approval' of the Central Government under subsection (1) of Section 2 of the Adhiniyam, and after fulfillment and compliance of the provisions of the all other acts and rules made thereunder, as applicable including ensuring of settlement of rights under the Scheduled Tribes or Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act. 2006 (2 of 2007), shall issue order for diversion.

Yours sincerely,
Sd/-
(Suneet Bhardwaj)
Assistant Inspector General of Forests

Copy to:-

1. The PCCF (HoFF), Department of Forest, Government of Maharashtra, Nagpur;
2. The Dy. DGF (Central), Regional Office, MoEF&CC, Nagpur;
3. The Nodal Officer, Department of Forest, Government of Maharashtra, Nagpur;
4. User Agency;
5. Monitoring Cell, FC Division, MoEF&CC, New Delhi for uploading on PARIVESH portal.