

SITE INSPECTION REPORT

Proposal (No. FP/JH/TRANS/41236/2019) under Forest (Conservation) Act 1980 for diversion of 197.0115 ha. of forest land for Construction of 400 kV D/C North Karanpura to Gaya transmission line (Jharkhand Portion) in Latehar and Chatra district of Jharkhand.

A forest area of 197.0115 ha. (Under the online proposal no. FP/JH/TRANS/41236/2019) is applied as per FCA-1980 for diversion towards Construction of 400 kV D/C North Karanpura to Gaya transmission line (Jharkhand Portion) project by M/s North Karanpura Transco Limited. This transmission line for immediate evacuation of the electricity generated by North Karanpura Super Thermal Power Plant (3X660 MW) being commissioned at Tandwa, Chatra, Jharkhand. The North Karanpura-Gaya transmission line is conceived in three phases: - (i) From North Karanpura to Tandwa, (ii) from Tandwa to Bihar Border and (iii) From Bihar border to Gaya. First and third of these segments have already been installed for which forest approvals have been accorded already. Therefore, the extant proposal is complementary to the whole process of power evacuation from the super thermal power plant.

The alignment of the transmission line is going through the Chatra North, Chatra South forest division of Chatra district and Latehar forest division of Latehar district of Jharkhand (**Fig. 1**). The total 320.804 ha. land is involved in this project. Out of 320.804 ha., 197.0115 ha. is forest land (Including Gair Majarua Jungle-Jhari land) and balance area of the land i.e. 123.7925 ha. is non-forest. The entire proposed forest area of 197.0115 ha. is comprised of PF (149.19 ha.) and GMJJ (47.85 ha.). The total length of the proposed line in this proposal is 69.74km of which 42.83 km is through forest and 26.91km through non-forest land. The forest officials and the representatives of user agency apprised that since the region has high forest area proportion hence transmission line's route mostly passes through forest area which cannot be avoided pragmatically. The ROW of the entire route of this 440KV DC line has been kept 46m as prescribed by MoEFCC.

As per the FC rules, 2003 (as the proposed forest area is more than 100 ha.), the site inspection of the area proposed for diversion was done by the team of IRO Ranchi including Sh. Shashi Shankar, Assistant Inspector General of Forests and Dr. Surajit Panda, Sr. Technical Associate (GIS-DSS) on 20 February 2023. The following officials of state forest department and representatives from user agency were present during the inspection visit:

- Sh. Raushan Kumar Singh - DFO, Latehar
- Sh. Rahul Meena- DFO, Chatra North Division
- Sh. Saba Alam - DFO, Chatra South Division
- Sh. R N Shukla, General Manager - Environment division (U/A)
- Sh. Raghavendra Kumar, Deputy General Manager – Projects (U/A)
- Sh. Ranvir Singh, Manager corporate affairs (U/A)
- Sh. Chandra Shekhar Singh, Assistant manager -Project. (U/A)

- Forest Ranger of Latehar Forest Division
- Forest guard of Latehar, Chatra North and Chatra South Forest Division



Fig. 1: A synoptic view of the proposed area (Google Earth Imagery, dated: 08.01.2023)

During the field visit of propose for diversion land, the observations made are presented below:

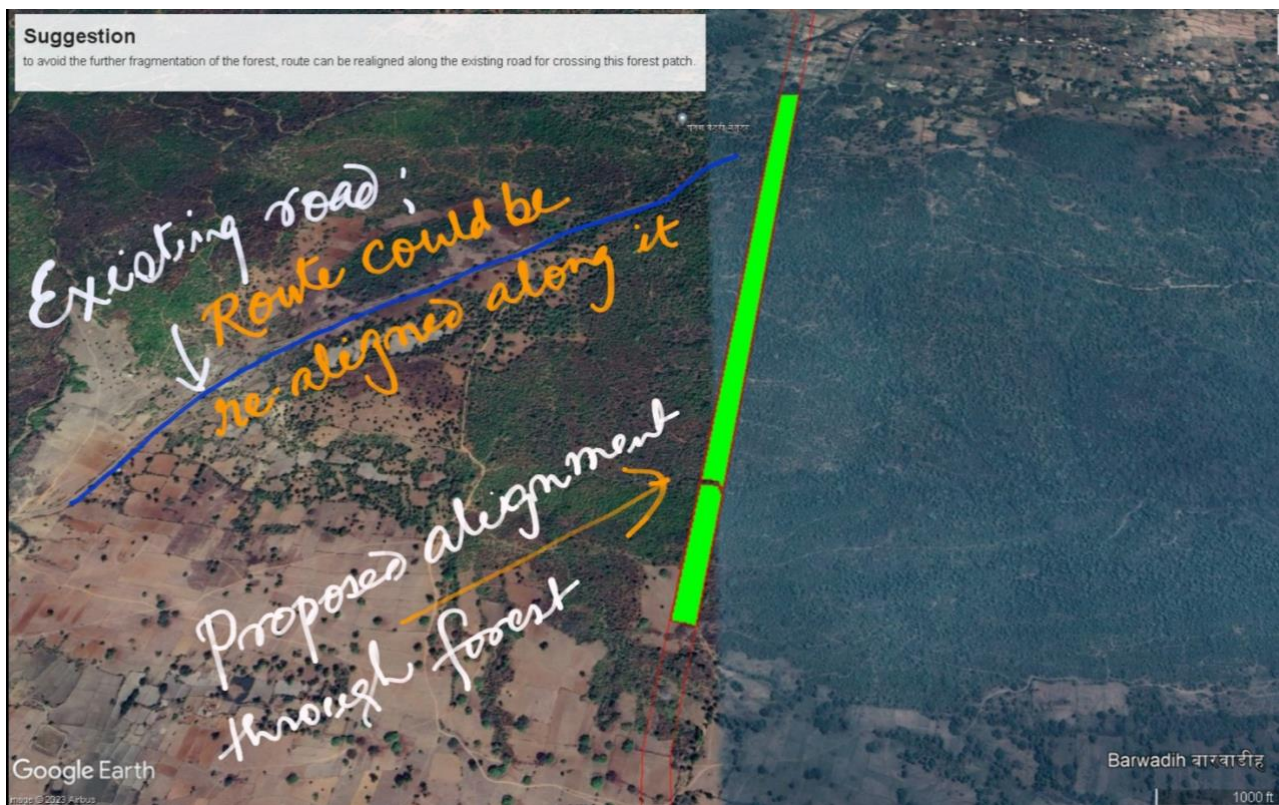
The inspecting team visited the area thoroughly with special emphasis on those forest areas through which proposed transmission line is aligned. Most of the forest area within the proposed alignment is a fairly dense natural forest with Sal (*Shorea Robusta*) as predominant species and mix forest. At places, *Butea monosperma* dominant patches are too seen. The field officers have reported average canopy density of 0.7 and no rare/endangered species of fauna are found in the area. As a whole 20879 trees are going to be affected of which 13591 trees are proposed for felling and rest trimming.

Proposed area for diversion does not form a part of National Park, Wildlife Sanctuary, or Biosphere/Tiger Reserve etc. However, movement of Elephants has been frequently reported in this area. The propose alignment going through the Ecologically Sensitive Zones zone of the Lawalong WLS.

The area is dominated by rolling topography and covered by Chhotanagpur Gneiss & Granophyre. The soil of that area is mostly acidic, reddish yellow, light textured and permeable with medium water holding capacity making it more vulnerable to erosion.

The alignment of the proposed transmission line was examined keeping the concept of bare minimum forest requirement for the proposal. At few places, there already exist roads that pass the forest patch (Location: Rakhed, Baksi and Kuthan). If the transmission line's route can be made along these existing roads, then fresh breaking of forests in the vicinity could have been saved (as depicted in

the following imagery). When the same was asked from user agency, they apprised that that could have resulted in involvement of increased forest area for the project.



They also told that realigning the portion may not be able too save substantial number of trees as the forest along the road too is equally dense.

Drone photo, taken at the time of site inspection (courtesy: DFO Latehar), along the shown road vindicated the claim of user agency.



Similar situation is apparently present near Kasiatu village and Besra – Barwadih village to protect the fairly dense forest 9.23 ha. and 6.77 ha. respectively.

Upon further inspection of GMJJ land, which are although not as forested as forest land but subject to provisions of FCA, it was found that user agency has installed the towers GMJJ land which are apparent violation of the Forest (Conservation) Act 1980(as shown in the photo below). It is also observed that no installed electric poles were seen on PF and Notified Forest land. When enquired to forest department officials that why user agency was not prohibited to take on works on GMJJ the way they were in forest land before FC approval, the SFD officials present there informed that state forest department has no jurisdiction whatsoever on these GMJJ land and they do not have the records available of this type of land. Hence they can neither assess the violation nor can take any cognizance of it. User agency added that they only took up the work on GMJJ after getting the requisites like, obtaining NOC, paying compensation to the khatedaars etc done. They also added that forest land here significantly differs from GMJJ land in appearance as the later is completely devoid of vegetation almost, hence the field people could not perceive that the work was being done on forest (GMJJ) land. It was decided to take the matter in REC for discussion.



The site inspection of the CA area:

The Compensatory Afforestation (CA) against the above proposals is proposed around 394.48 ha. on Degraded Forest Land (DFL) in Latehar, Chatra North and Chatra South Forest division Division. The CA land is comprised in 7 discrete patches located in various forest blocks of different Mauzas (Villages).

During the visit of those CA area it seems that the proposed CA lands are more or less suitable for plantation but small waterbodies (Around 1.5 ha.) has been observed in Gopalpur CA land.

District	Chatra						Latehar
CA land	Gopalpur	Baghmandwa	Arudana	Dahuri	Prabatta	Tetariya	Latdag
Area in hectare	59.95	63.97	40.00	101.94	48.01	49.97	30.64

Observations and suggestion related to environmental protection and management

Considering the specificity of this project to complete the North Karanpura-Gaya transmission circuit, the proposal may be considered for taking up in the forthcoming REC's meeting. Few specific suggestion made on the basis of site inspection are:

- The area is prone to soil erosion in many portions. Therefore, the spatial care and proper management may be needed to protect the soil erosion during the erection of pylons/towers. A Soil Conservation plan must be in place during the implementation phase of the project.
- The area is also prone to fire (forest fire) during summer season. On the other hand, high voltage electricity may flow through the transmission line. Therefore, the spatial care may be necessary, at the time of tree trimming and Pruning. A fire-fighting system should be develop with the financial help of user agency at Latehar Forest Division.
- The area has rich biodiversity and frequent elephant movement is reported; hence a specific wildlife conservation plan should be conceived.



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