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Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change/ पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय
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No. 5-WBA104/2019-BHU **SPEED POST**

Date: 18.06.2019

To

Shri Sandeep Sharma
Asst. Inspector General of Forests (FC)
Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change,
Indira Paryavaran Bhawan,
Jor Bagh Road, Alliganj, New Delhi – 110 003.

Sub: Site inspection report in respect of diversion of 109.459 ha. of forest land for open cast mining project at Gourangdih ABC coal mine in favour of WB Mineral Development and Trading Corporation under Durgapur Forest Division, West Bengal– reg.

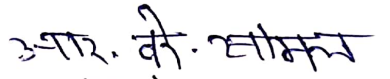
Ref.: Ministry's letter No.8-03/2019-FC dated 21st Feb., 2019

महोदय,

उपरोक्त विषय के सन्दर्भ में, मुझे आपको यह सूचित करने का निर्देश हुआ है की, उप-वन महानिरीक्षक (के), क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय द्वारा 28th to 30th May, 2019 के दौरान उपरोक्त परियोजना का निरीक्षण की गई है। निरीक्षण रिपोर्ट आप के अबलोकन एबमं आवश्यक कारबाई हेतु सलग्न है।

भवदीय,

संलग्नक: उपरोक्तानुसार


(आर के सामल)
उप-वन महानिरीक्षक (के)

Site inspection report in respect of diversion of 109.459 ha. of forest land for open cast mining project at Gourangdih ABC coal mine in favour of WB Mineral Development and Trading Corporation under Durgapur Forest Division, West Bengal.

The site inspection of the above diversion proposal was conducted by me during 28th to 30th May, 2019. During site inspection Shri Milan Kanti Mandal, DFO, Durgapur Forest Division, Shri Panchanan Rakshit, RO Asansol (Territorial) , Shri Sumanta Das, Forester, Gourangdih Beat, Mr. Ajit Prasad Chattarjee, DGM (Geology), WBMDTC, Shri Arindam Shome, Sr. Manager (Geology), WBMDTC were present. During the site inspection of the CA area Shri Hari Krishnan, DFO, Birbhum Forest Division, Shri Nirmal Kumar Baita, RO, Rajnagar Range and Shri Subir Ruidas, Forester, Aligarh Beat and Shri Bijon Kumar Nath, ADFO, Birbhum Forest Division were present besides the above officials of WBMDTC.

1. Legal status of the forest land proposed for diversion

109.459 ha. protected forest

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

Sl. No.	Component	Forest land (ha.)
1.	Quarry area	91.434
2.	External dump	18.025
3.	Infrastructure	0
4.	Rehabilitation colony	0
5.	Workers colony	0
6.	Road	0
7.	Others including safety zone	0
	Total	109.459

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:**

Rs.60,000/- lakhs (Rs.600 crores)

5. **Wildlife:**

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

No. However, wildlife such as Indian Jackal, Bengal Fox, Porcupine, Rock Python, Spectacled Cobra, Russel Viper, Sloth Bear and Wild Boar, etc. are found in the area.

6. **Vegetation:**

It is a fragile ecosystem. Part of the area contains natural forest and another part contains plantations. Soil is alluvial and prone to erosion. Plantations mostly contain Acacia species. The Acacia species has got naturalized with very good natural regeneration. The natural forest species includes Sal (*Shorea robusta*), Mohul (*Madhuca longifolia*), Bahera (*Terminalia bellirica*), Haritaki (*Terminalia chebula*) and Neem (*Azadirachta indica*), Tal (*Borassus flabellifer*), Date palm (*Foinix sp.*). On degraded lateritic soils *Ailanthus exelsa* is seen with good growth. The area suffers from unscrupulous activities of illegal coal mining and Morrum extraction and thus certain blank patches within the area. The density in the plantation would be about 0.5 and that of natural forest is 0.4 and Eco-class III.

(a) **Total number of trees to be felled.**

Total 5,158 number of trees to be felled. This enumeration does not take into account the most of the Acacia trees, saplings and regeneration as the girth at DBH is less than 30 cm. The Plantations in A block have been created over a period of 10-15 years of time.

Effect of removal of trees on the general ecosystem in the area:

Due to the loss of Acacia trees, saplings and regeneration valuable soil cover will be lost and the wildlife habitat will be destroyed.

Felling of such large number of trees if taken at a single point of time will cause severe damage to the environment of the area. Therefore, as far as possible the trees should be cut as and when required in phased manner.

(b) Important species:

Sal (*Shorea robusta*), Mohul (*Madhuca longifolia*), Bahera (*Terminalia bellirica*), Haritaki (*Terminalia chebula*) and Neem (*Azadirachta indica*).

Number of trees of girth below 60 cm.

2,992 number of trees (As enumerated by DFO).

Number of trees of girth above 60 cm.

2,166 number of trees. (As enumerated by DFO).

7. Background note on the proposal:

Ministry of Coal, Government of India, vide letter No.103/6/2016/NA dated September 29, 2016 allocated Gourangdih ABC Coal Mine in favour of West Bengal Mineral Development & Trading Corporation Ltd. Earlier the mine was allotted by Ministry of Coal vide letter No.13016/79/2008-CA-I dated 10th July, 2009 to joint venture of M/s Himachal EMTA Power Ltd., and M/s JSW Steel Ltd. The allocation of coal block was cancelled vide Hon'ble Supreme Court's order in 2014.

Coal is naturally occurring organic sedimentary deposit which is site specific due to its

geological origin and as such no alternatives can be found. Ministry of Coal, Government of India has allocated this coal mine with specific location. To extract the coal occurring within the forest land of Gourangdih ABC coal mine, utilization of the forest land has become imperative. Further mining of coal in this lease area shall bring in large employment opportunities to the local population and enhance the socio-economic status of the area.

The Gourangdih Block-ABC sector covering an area of 5.5 sq. km lies in the north central part of the Raniganj coalfield, Burdwan District, West Bengal. It falls between latitudes $23^{\circ} 48' 30''$ N and $23^{\circ} 49' 45''$ N and longitudes $86^{\circ} 57' 45''$ E and $87^{\circ} 00' 15''$.

The area is well connected by rail and road. Gourangdih was the terminal railway station of Andal Gourangdih section of the Eastern Railway and is located about 38 km from Andal, on Howrah-Delhi line of the Eastern Railway. The railway line has since been truncated, and now terminates at Baraboni Railway station. A part of Asansol-Domahani road passes through the southern part of the block. Asansol town is located about 20 km from the project.

The Gourangdih 'ABC' coal block has been demarcated in the mining plan based on geographic locate and surface constraint. Gourangdih -A is the west side of the property starting from Khorabad in the north end of Shibdhaora and up to Gourangdih village in the east, west block boundary in the west and north block boundary in the north.

Gourangdih-C is the eastern property of the block leaving out the major part of Panuria village. A small part of Panuria village in its east side has been considered in the area of Gourangdih-C.

The remaining thickly populated and heavily built up areas like Gourangdih and Panuria villages in the middle of the property is named as Gourangdih-B, which has been for the present, kept out of the purview of any mining activity in mining plan. Mining plan for Gourangdih -B sub-block may be taken up at a later date when the residents of that area agree to shift to other place.

On the eastern most side Gourangdih-C shares boundary with Gourangdih-D block of allocated to Eastern Coalfields Ltd.

8. Compensatory afforestation:

110.36 ha of non-forest land identified for compensatory afforestation in Birbhum Forest Division (Mouza-Dhaka, Khata No.288, area 188.12 acre and Mouza-Aligarh, Khata No.746, area 87.78 acre).

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

Yes.

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

Yes.

- (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:**

30 patches in two villages Namely Aligarh (14 patches) and Dhaka (16 patches). The patches are not compact. However, the patches are situated very adjacent to each other, Ministry may consider the proposed non-forest land for compensatory afforestation. The size of patches varies from 1.5 acre to 31.87 acre. Many of the patches are very small in

size, surrounded by private lands, Gochar lands and public thoroughfare and protection of the plantations will be very difficult unless strong fencing and continuous watch and ward is given.

(e) Map with details:

Enclosed in the diversion proposal.

(f) Total financial outlay:

Rs.5,60,65,941/- as per the CA scheme prepared by DFO, Birbhum.

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:

No.

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

600 families from the non-forest land will be displaced. The user agency is preparing rehabilitation plan for these families in a site nearby.

11. Reclamation plan:

Enclosed in the proposal in the mining plan.

Details and financial allocation:

Rs.20.38 crores.

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:

Cost benefit ratio as per Ministry's guideline not provided.

14. Recommendations of the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests/State Government:

Yes. Recommended.

15. Recommendations of Addl. Director General (Central) along with detailed reasons:

Annexed separately.

16. DIG of Forests shall give detailed comments on whether there are any alternative routes/alignment for locating the project on the non-forest land:

It is site specific and it cannot be shifted to any other forest or non forest land.

17. Utility of the project:

Coal is naturally occurring organic sedimentary deposit which is site specific due to its geological origin and as such no alternatives are found. To extract the coal occurring within the forest land of Gourangdih ABC coal mine, utilization of the forest land has become imperative. Further mining of coal in this lease area shall bring in large employment opportunities to the local population and enhance the socio-economic status

of the area.

Numbers of Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribes to be benefited by the project:

As per the project report 494 persons will get permanent employment and 2000 persons will get temporary employment for about 30 years (the life of the coal mine) to exhaust the estimated reserve 39.06 million ton in non forest land 29.31 million ton in forest land with an estimated annual production of 2.5 million ton.

18.

(a) **Whether land being diverted has any socio-cultural/ religious value:**

No.

(b) **Whether any sacred grove or very old growth trees/forests exist in the areas proposed for diversion:**

No.

(c) **Whether the land under diversion forms part of any unique eco-system:**

No.

19. **Situation with respect to any Protected Area:**

There is no protected area nearby.

20. **Any other information relating to the project:**


The project was earlier allocated to a joint venture namely M/s Himachal EMTA Power Ltd and M/s JSW Steel Ltd. during the year 2009. However, this coal block was re-

allocated by the order of Hon'ble Supreme Court to West Bengal Mineral Development & Trading Corporation Ltd in September 29, 2016 .

As clarified from the user agency the total lease area (Mining/quarrying area) is 213.27 ha., which includes 91.434 ha. of forest area for mining. The total project area including other ancillary activities on forest and non-forest land is 356.575 ha. which includes another 18.025 ha. forest area for dumping over burden. Therefore, this area of 18.025 ha. come outside the KML file of leasehold area (mining/quarrying area).

As mentioned earlier the CA areas are in very small patches and their protection will be difficult.

The project area contains an old abandoned mine namely Gourangdih Colliery, Khairabad (in sector-A of the proposed project area) of Eastern Coalfields Ltd. which has been left as a water reservoir with OB dump s as mining the mining activities has been stopped long back since 1978-79 as reported.


(R. K. Samal, IFS)
DIGF (Central)

The said mining proposal is for diversion of 109.459 ha. of forest land for open cast mining project at Gourangdih ABC coal mine in favour of WB Mineral Development and Trading Corporation under Durgapur Forest Division, West Bengal. Considering the facts submitted in DP, site inspection report by DIGF (Central) and other details, the major issues of this proposal, that may need to be brought to the notice for consideration by the FAC and the Ministry, are the following:-

1. Total mining lease area as given by the State Govt. is 213.27 ha. Out of which 109.459 ha. is forest land. This 213.27 ha is the mining lease area or quarrying area only. This contains 91.434 ha of forest land, which is meant for mining/quarrying. The total project area (356.575 ha) which includes other items of utility like external dump, infrastructure, rehabilitation colony, workers colony, roads, others including safety zone consists of 247.116 ha. of non-forest land and 109.459 ha. of forest land (91.434 ha. for quarrying, mining and 18.025 ha. for external dump). Accordingly, mining plan of the project has been approved for the total project area 356.575 ha, but the lease granted and executed for mining/quarrying purpose is 213.27 ha.
2. There are 30 patches of CA land and many are less than 5 ha. which are not generally acceptable as per MOEF guideline dated 22nd May, 2019. However, the patches are situated in a group in a locality which may render little easier to protect and manage the CA. Ministry may consider to accept the proposed non-forest land for compensatory afforestation.



3. The transportation of coal is reported to be done both by road and railways. Accordingly, the Gourangdihi-Asansol PWD road is existing nearby to connect Barabani railway siding, which is also around 20 KM away. The said existing roads are also used by CESC Ltd. for extraction of coal from their ICML coal mines from Sarosotoli. However, due pollution control measures may be implemented by the user agency along with plantation/augmentation of road side trees.

With the above observations this proposal is recommended for consideration of the Ministry under Section 2 (ii) of Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.

 18.6.19

(R. K. Dey)

ADG (Central)