

Letter No.2869/FR.10/2023-8, dated:09.10.2024

From
Dr. P. Senthilkumar, I.A.S.,
Principal Secretary to Government.

To
✓ The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (HoFF),
Chennai – 32. (w.e.)

Sir,

Sub: Forests – Proposal (FP/TN/RAIL/152033/2022) for diversion of forest land of 28.6132 ha. for restoration of Rail connectivity between Rameswaram and Dhanushkodi in Rameswaram Reserved Forest in Ramanathapuram District in favour of Deputy Chief Engineer, Construction IV, Arasaradi, Madurai (Railways) – Proposal rejected – Regarding.

- Ref:
1. Online application uploaded by the User Agency – Deputy Chief Engineer, Construction IV, Arasaradi, Madurai (Railways) (FP/TN/Rail/152033/2022) on 22.03.2022 and revised proposal on 05.08.2022.
 2. From the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests Letter No.TS4/8098/2022 dated 07.09.2022.
 3. Part-II uploaded by the District Forest Officer, Ramanathapuram on 27.01.2023.
 4. Part-III uploaded by the Conservator of Forest & Field Director, Srivilliputhur Megamalai Tiger Reserve, Madurai on 15.02.2023.
 5. Your Letter No.TS4/8098/2022, dated 28.03.2023, 15.11.2023 and 10.06.2024
 6. Government letter No.2869/FR.10/2023-2, dated 03.08.2023, 15.02.2024, 17.04.2024 and 10.07.2024.
 7. Minutes of the meeting under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary to Government held on 02.08.2024.

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I am directed to invite your attention to the references cited. The Deputy Chief Engineer, Construction IV, Arasaradi, Madurai (Railways) has uploaded a proposal (FP/TN/RAIL/ 152033/2022) in PARIVESH portal for diversion of 28.6132 ha. of forest land for restoration of Rail connectivity between Rameswaram and Dhanushkodi in Rameswaram Reserved Forest in Ramanathapuram District for a period of 20 years under section 2(1) of Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980.

2. The District Forest Officer, Ramanathapuram Division and the Conservator of Forests & Field Director, Srivilliputhur Megamalai Tiger Reserve, Madurai and Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Forest Conservation Act), have recommended the above proposal.

3. In the reference 5th cited, the proposal was recommended and sent to Government with a request to forward the same to Government of India for obtaining the approval from the competent authority for the project proposal, subject to certain conditions.

4. Considering the importance of the issue, a meeting was held under the Chairmanship of Chief Secretary to Government with Principal Secretary to Government, Environment, Climate Change and Forests Department on 02.08.2024 at 5.00 P.M.

5. During the above said meeting, it has been decided that, considering the ecological impact on flora, fauna and marine eco-system, the proposed sanctuary for Greater Flamingo and nesting sites of Olive Ridley turtle and the fact that it is a railway line to nowhere, wherein there are no human settlements or habitations, it is not advisable to disturb the fragile eco-system. It will also be of no help to any cargo movements as there are neither habitations nor any cargo jetties. Therefore, it was concluded that it will be ecologically disastrous to go ahead with the project and hence the request for diversion of forest land may not be agreed to.

6. It is informed that a Memorandum has been presented to the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu on 08.04.2023 in respect of dropping the project for formation of New Broad Gauge Line between Rameshwaram and Dhanuskodi which is reproduced as below:-

"On 17th August 2022, Administrative Sanction has been accorded for initiating the process of land acquisition and land transfer for the formation of New Railway Line between Rameshwaram and Dhanuskodi in Ramanathapuram District, based on the request of the Southern Railways.

However, the process of 3(2) notification for land acquisition temporarily stopped on account of national highway alignment interfering with alignment of Rameshwaram – Dhanuskodi proposed New Railway Line.

Southern Railway has reiterated their request for land alienation of Government land of 43.82 hectares and forest land of about 28.61 hectares early so as to commence the work as soon as possible.

Considering the fragile eco-system existing along this eco sensitive zone, the Government of Tamil Nadu is of the opinion that this stretch is not suitable for forming a New Railway Line. **Therefore, this project may be revisited or analysed critically based on the inputs from the experts on environmental issues or may be dropped due to the unsustainable nature of this project**".

7. As per Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Rules, 2023, the sub rule 17 of Rule 9 refers the following:-

"Where the State Government or Union territory Administration, as the case may be, decides not to dereserve, divert for non-forest purposes or assign on lease the forest land as indicated in the proposal, the same shall be intimated to the user agency by the Nodal Officer".

8. Based on the decision taken during the meeting held on 02.08.2024 under the Chairmanship of Chief Secretary to Government, and based on the rejection of project proposal by Transport Department, the Government have carefully examined the proposal in detail and decided to reject the proposal for diversion of 28.6132 ha. of forest land for restoration of Rail connectivity between Rameswaram and Dhanushkodi in Rameswaram Reserved Forest in Ramanathapuram District.

9. In this connection, I am therefore directed to request you to take necessary action on the above subject proposal as per Rule 9 (17) of Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Rules, 2023.

Yours faithfully,

A. Malathy 9/10/24

for Principal Secretary to Government

S/
9/10/24

**Environment, Climate Change
and Forests (FR.10) Dept.**

MINUTES OF THE MEETING UNDER THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF CHIEF SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT HELD ON 2.8.2024 REGARDING PROPOSED DIVERSION OF FOREST LAND OF 28.6132 HA. FOR RESTORATION FOR RAILWAY CONNECTIVITY BETWEEN RAMESHWARAM AND DHANUSHKODI AT RAMESHWARAM RESERVE FOREST IN RAMANATHAPURAM DISTRICT.

The list of participants is given in the Annexure.

A presentation was made to the Chief Secretary to Government, regarding the proposal by the Deputy Chief Engineer, Southern Railways for diversion of forest land. During the presentation, it was informed that the entire extent of forest land which is sought by the Southern Railways for providing rail connectivity between Rameshwaram and Dhanushkodi is ecologically fragile, which has seen significant adverse impact, after the new highways was laid in the area.

It was informed that the forest area have twelve different tree species numbering 1338, and animals such as Star tortoise, Sand Boa, Black Naped Hare, Indian Black Turtle, Indian Mongoose are reported and the lagoon area frequented by Greater Flamingo and State Government has proposed to establish a sanctuary for the same. The proposed site has mudflats supporting coastal eco-system.

It was also informed that the marine area is rich in coral reefs, sea cucumber, dolphins, and the coastal area has Olive Ridley Turtles nesting sites.

The Chief Secretary to Government sought the details of the habitation and population in the project area. It was informed that the

entire stretch in the Kothandaramar lagoon is uninhabited by human beings and Dhanushkodi is a ghost town without any human settlements and diversion of reserve forest will have deleterious effect to the proposed Greater Flamingo sanctuary and nesting Olive Ridley Turtles apart from immense ecological damage to the fragile eco-system.

After the detailed deliberations, considering the ecological impact on flora, fauna and marine eco-system, the proposed sanctuary for Greater Flamingo and nesting site for Olive Ridley turtle and the fact that it is a railway line to nowhere, wherein there are no human settlements or habitations it is not advisable to disturb the fragile eco-system. It will also be of no help to any cargo movements as there are neither habitations nor any cargo jetties.

In view of the above, it was decided that it will be ecologically disastrous to go ahead with the project and hence the request for diversion of forest land may not be agreed to.

Considering all the above, Government of India may also besuitably informed, to abandon the project of formation of railway line to Dhanushkodi.

SHIV DAS MEENA
CHIEF SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT

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A. Malathy 12/8/24
Section Officer

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12/8/24

**Environment, Climate Change
and Forests (FR.10) Dept.**

Annexure

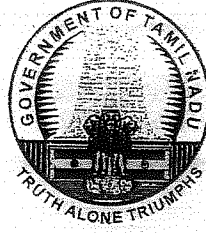
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

1. Thiru. Shiv Das Meena, IAS.,
Chief Secretary to Government of Tamil Nadu.
2. Thiru. Muruganantham, IAS.,
Secretary – I to Hon'ble Chief Minister.
3. Dr. P. Senthilkumar, I.A.S.,
Principal Secretary to Government.
Environment, Climate Change and Forests Department.
4. Dr. Sudhanshu Gupta, IFS.,
Principal Chief Conservator of Forests
(Head of Forest Force).
5. Thiru. Anurag Mishra, IFS.,
Special Secretary (Environment, Climate Change)
Environment, Climate Change and Forests Department.
6. Thiru. T. Ritto Cyriac, I.F.S.,
Special Secretary (Forest).
Environment, Climate Change and Forests Department.
7. Thiru. Yogesh Singh, IFS.,
Principal Chief Conservator of Forests
(Forest Conservation Act)
8. Chief Conservator of Forests,
Srivilliputhur Megamalai Tiger Reserve,
Madurai.
9. District Forest Officer,
Ramanathapuram Division.

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A. Malathy
Section Officer *12/8/24*

12/8/24



MEMORANDUM

PRESENTED TO

THIRU NARENDRA MODI
HON'BLE PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA

BY

THIRU M.K. STALIN
HON'BLE CHIEF MINISTER OF TAMILNADU

ON

08-04-2023

Memorandum presented to Thiru Narendra Modi,

Hon'ble Prime Minister of India

By Thiru M.K. Stalin,

Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu

on 08.04.2023.

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4.Transport

Dropping the Project of Formation of New Broad Gauge Line (Rameshwaram to Dhanuskodi)

On 17th August 2022, Administrative Sanction has been accorded for initiating the process of land acquisition and land transfer for the formation of New Railway Line between Rameshwaram and Dhanuskodi in Ramanathapuram District, based on the request of the Southern Railways.

However, the process of 3(2) notification for land acquisition temporarily stopped on account of national highway alignment interfering with alignment of Rameswaram - Dhanuskodi proposed New Railway Line.

Southern Railway has reiterated their request for land alienation of Government land of 43.82 hectares and forest land of about 28.61 hectares early so as to commence the work as soon as possible.

Considering the fragile eco-system existing along this eco sensitive zone, the Government of Tamil Nadu is of the opinion that this stretch is not suitable for forming a New Railway Line. **Therefore, this project may be revisited or analysed critically based on the inputs from the experts on environmental issues or may be dropped due to the unsustainable nature of this project.**

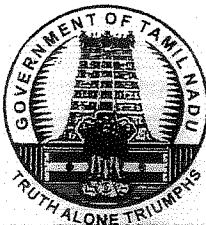
DROPPING THE PROJECT OF FORMATION OF NEW BROAD GAUGE LINE (RAMESHWARAM TO DHANUSKODI)

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Considering the fragile eco-system existing along this eco sensitive zone, the Government of Tamil Nadu is of the opinion that this stretch is not suitable for forming a New Railway Line. Therefore, this project **may be revisited or analysed critically based on the inputs from the experts on environmental issues or may be dropped due to the unsustainable nature of this project.**



TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT

D.O. Letter No.7058/I.2/2022, Dated 21.04.2023

Dear Thiru. Anil Kumar Lahoti,

Sub: Transport - Proposed New Line between
Rameswaram and Dhanushkodi - Request to drop
the project - Regarding.

This is in reference to the project for the formation of New Broad Gauge Railway Line between Rameswaram and Dhanushkodi.

2. On 17th August 2022, Administrative Sanction has been accorded by this department based on the request of the Southern Railways for initiating the process of land acquisition and land transfer for the formation of New Railway Line between Rameswaram and Dhanushkodi in Ramanathapuram District.

3. In this regard, the Southern Railway has requested to commence the work for land alienation of Government land of 43.82 hectares and forest land of about 28.61 hectares early as soon as possible.

4. While discussing the matter with experts on various issues including environment it has been brought out that this region is ecologically very sensitive. It was felt that, considering the fragile eco-system existing along this eco sensitive zone, the Government of Tamil Nadu is of the opinion that this stretch is not suitable for forming a New Railway Line. Therefore, it was felt that, it is not worth to pursue this project.

5. Regarding this issue, a Memorandum has been submitted to Hon'ble Prime Minister of India through Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu on 08.04.2023 with a request to drop the project for "Formation of New Broad Gauge Railway Line between Rameswaram and Dhanushkodi".

6. I would like to request you to drop the project for the "Formation of New Broad Gauge Railway Line between Rameswaram and Dhanushkodi" due to the un-sustainable nature of this project.

with regards

Yours sincerely

V. Irai Anbu
24/04/2023

To
Thiru. Anil Kumar Lahoti
Chairman & Chief Executive Officer,
Ministry of Railways,
256-A, Rail Bhawan, Raisina Road,
New Delhi - 110001.

