



OFFICE OF THE DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER, KEONJHAR DIVISION

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Memo No. 12950 /6F-Mining-195/2017
Dated, Keonjhar the 14th November, 2023

To

Regional Chief Conservator of Forests,
Rourkela Circle, Rourkela

Sub:

Proposal for seeking prior approval of the Central Government under Section 2 (ii) of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 for non-forestry use of 42.608 ha of forest land (16.658 ha in Keonjhar Forest Division and 25.950 ha in Bonai Forest Division) within Kalmang West (North Part) Block for Iron Ore Mines in Keonjhar and Sundargarh District of Odisha, allotted to M/s Tata Steel BSL Limited (Formerly known as Bhusan Steel Ltd.)(Online Proposal No. FP/OR/MIN/49169/2020).

X-Sub:

Submission of point wise compliance on observation noticed by MoEF&CC, GoI, New Delhi vide letter dated 01.09.2023.

Ref:

- (i) Memo No.19964/FE&CC dated 21.09.2023 by OSD-cum Special Secretary to Government, FE&CC Dept. Govt. of Odisha, Bhubaneswar.
- (ii) F No.8-12/2022-FC dated 01.09.2023 of MoEF&CC Govt. of India.

With reference to the memo cited above on the captioned subject, the required information in respect of this division is furnished below:-

i. Observation of MoEF:-

Since many proposals of Iron Ore Mining in this landscape are in the process at the Central Government level or being proposed for diversion. Therefore, there is a need to analyse the issue at the landscape level in order to conserve the forests and biodiversity. In this regards, detailed consultations with the state Govt. authorities and other stakeholders including mining lessees shall be carried out by the DDGF (C) Bhubaneswar by involving ministry officials and will and report shall be submitted in 45 days.

Information:-

A meeting was convened by the DDGF, IRO, MoEF & CC, Govt. of Odisha, Bhubaneswar on 17.10.2023 at Bhubaneswar where, the DDGF, PCCF (Nodal), DFOs and mining lessees coming under Keonjhar & Bonai Forest Division were present. The issues regarding protection and conservation of wildlife and Biodiversity in the landscape were discussed. The details are to be shared by the O/o Deputy Director of General of Forests, IRO MoEF&CC Govt. of India, Bhubaneswar or the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Forest Diversion and Nodal Officer, FC Act, O/o the PCCF & HoFF, Odisha, Bhubaneswar.

ii. **Observation of MoEF:-**

Further, considering the present situation of mining in the area and rise in human elephant conflict the compensation mechanism for the victims by the user agencies needs to be developed.

Information:-

The current compensation mechanism is both comprehensive and practical in addressing the on-going human-elephant conflict (Annexure). Furthermore, it is a service falling under the right to the timely delivery of public services and is part of the Mo Sarkar initiative by the Government of Odisha. Consequently, the compensation provided by the government is deemed sufficient and is disbursed in a timely manner. User agencies also contribute funds through Site-Specific Wildlife Conservation to address the human-elephant conflict. Therefore, there is no necessity to establish a separate compensation system for victims by the user agencies. Otherwise it may invite delays and distort the compensation systems for various social security measures being done by different arms of the government.

iii. **Observation of MoEF:-**

The CSIR-NEERI has given its recommendation on carrying capacity vis-à-vis pollution in these area and the Suggested Ore Transportation Mode (SOTM) in 2014. After lapse of about 9 years, many changes in the landscape and fresh mining in the region, the State Govt. shall examine and report with justification, whether there is a need to re-validate the said study or a need to carry a fresh study in this regard.

Information:-

As per CSIR-NEERI recommendation, Sustainable Annual Iron Ore production from Odisha is 201MT (including Joda, Koira, Baripada and Jajpur sector) which is 93% of countrys iron ore requirement in 2020-21. As per report Suggested Ore Transport Methods (SOTM) was to be implemented in 5 years such as Rail Transport of iron ore was 45% in 2014, which was to be increased to 60% in 5 years. However, it has not been achieved.

Parking plaza for individual existing mines owner and common plaza for small mines was to be constructed in 1 year's i.e. by 2016 but same could not have been achieved yet. These non-compliances might have impact on pollution in these mining areas which means the sustainability aspect might have been compromised.

An annual production of 201 MT as per recommendation was not achieved. Importantly the use of low-grade Iron Ore- Fe up to 45% by 2020,40% by 2025 was envisaged. The same is still far away from the reality. This might have resulted in overestimation of the mines expansion plans by IBM and reserve underestimation by Ministry of Steel and Mines, IBM &GSI in recent years.

Non utilization of low-grade ore must have played a critical role in giving new virgin mines to cater to iron ore requirement of 450 MT to produce 350 Mt steel by 2030 as per National Steel policy 2017. It also contradicts the recommendation that "Exhaust all iron and Manganese ore of existing mines first".

But various legal entanglements, FRA settlement issues, Violations, lapsing of lease etc. has caused non-functioning various mines having high quality iron ore. It needs to be studied thoroughly and sorted out. There are 32 nos. fresh mining leases awarded in Joda Sector while 88 numbers are non-functional mines.

Water is a limiting factor for iron ore beneficiation that is to utilise the low-grade iron ore. Numerous beneficiation plants are coming up in Joda and Kiora sector for which water is apportioned from Baitarani River. Its correlation with water requirement for agriculture and drinking water in summer needs to be studied.

All these non-conformities with the CSIR NEERI recommendations have impacted on wildlife movement especially elephants at landscape level. Habitat fragmentation is continuing with the opening of fresh leases and related SOTM infrastructures. Mining in phased manner by exhausting existing mines could have delayed the negative externalities and might have prevented man elephant conflict by minimizing various hazards.

However, WTI has been given the task of formulation of Landscape Level Wildlife management plan to minimise and mitigate the negative impacts of mining on wildlife especially elephants.

Hence, there is a need to revalidate the CSIR -NEERI Study to suit to present realities. Regional Carrying capacity study must be conducted for each of the regions (Joda, Koirra, Baripada) on regular interval of 5 years to ensure adoption of sustainable mining practices with expected/committed societal development in the region.

Encl : As above.


14/11/23
**Divisional Forest Officer,
Keonjhar Division.**

Memo No. 12951 /Dated 14.11.2023 14/11

Copy forwarded to the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Forest Division and Nodal Officer, FC Act, O/o the PCCF & HoFF, Odisha, Bhubaneswar for favour of kind information and necessary action.


14/11/23
**Divisional Forest Officer,
Keonjhar Division.**