

File No.: 8-14/2024-FC
Government of India
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
(Forest Conservation Division)

Indira Paryavaran Bhawan,
Aliganj, Jor Bag Road,
New Delhi – 110003
Dated: As per e-Sign

To,

The Principal Secretary (Forests),
Government of Chhattisgarh,
Raipur

Sub: Proposal for seeking prior approval of the Central Government under Section 2 (1) (ii) of the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980 for non-forestry use of 230.780 ha. of forest land (63.930 ha. Protected Forest & 166.850 ha. Revenue Forest land) for Coal mining in Bhatgaon Underground Mine of SECL, Bhatgaon Area in Surajpur District in the State of Chhattisgarh (Online Proposal No. FP/CG/MIN/39553/2019)- regarding.

Madam/Sir,

Please refer to your letter number F 5-56/2023/10-2 dated 04.02.2025 on the above mentioned subject. In this context, the information submitted by State Govt. has been examined in the Ministry and it has been observed that:-

- i. The State Govt. vide above referred letter has submitted the compliance of conditions stipulated in Stage-II approval vide letter No. 8-55/2016-FC dated 04.07.2017 for diversion of 75.055 ha of forest land for Bhatgaon mining project in favour of M/s SECL, wherein it has been observed that :-
 - a. CA over the degraded forest land, twice in extent to the area of forest land proposed to be diverted shall be raised within a period of 3 years with effect from the date of issue of Stage-II clearance. However, the State Govt. has not submitted any compliance/information regarding the compensatory afforestation.
 - b. The State Govt. and the user agency shall implement the approved wildlife conservation plan alongwith conservation activities for Avi-fauna. The State Govt. has not submitted the action taken for implementation of approved wildlife conservation plan
 - c. User agency either himself or through the state forest department shall undertake gap plating and soil & moisture conservation activities to restock and rejuvenate the degraded open forests (having crown density less than 0.4), if any, located in the area within 100 mtr from outer perimeter of the mining lease. The State Govt. has not submitted any compliance/information regarding action taken to undertake gap plating and soil & moisture conservation activities to restock and

rejuvenate the degraded open forests.

- d. User agency either himself or through the state forest department shall undertake Afforestation on degraded forest to the area used for safety zone. The compliance/information for implementation of above condition has not been submitted by the State Govt.

Further, the State has now given the detail of other FC proposals pertaining to the instant mine, which have been approved in the past. However, the status of compliance in their case has not been submitted. In this regard it is pertinent to mention here that as per para 7.8 (i) (e) of Chapter 7 of Van (Sanrakshashan Evam Samvardhan) Rules, 2023, any proposal for diversion of forest for mining involving any forest land in respect of which diversion has been approved earlier will invariably be submitted along with the present status of compliance of the conditions of all previous FCs duly certified by the concerned Regional Officer of the MoEF&CC. Therefore, State Government shall submit present status of compliance of the conditions of all previous FC approvals duly certified by the concerned Regional Officer of the MoEF&CC.

- ii. The Ministry vide its letter dated 14.08.2024 requested State Govt. to submit a copy of approved mining plan. However, the same has not been submitted by the State Govt. Therefore, the State Govt. shall submit a copy of the approved latest mining plan. The proposed land use in the diversion proposal should be commensurate with the mining plan. The detailed comparative analysis of the component wise area proposed for diversion and the component wise breakup as per mining plan shall be submitted. The reclamation plan shall also be submitted with the proposal.
- iii. The State Govt. has submitted the details regarding encroachment on surface on Bhatgaon underground lease area. However, the State Govt. has not submitted the action taken regarding the removal of encroachment on the surface area of Bhatgaon underground lease.
- iv. The State Govt. has not clarified whether the approval under the Van Adhiniyam, 1980 has obtained in case of Helipads which have been developed during May 2022 in the Reserved Forest land (Range- Surajpur, Comp-1692P) and whether or otherwise.
- v. Examination of the various project KML file as submitted by the State Govt. revealed that the KML file of Mahan Open Cast project is found overlapping with the instant mine lease boundary of Bhatgaon UG Mine. The State Govt. shall submit comments in the regard alongwith updated KML file.
- vi. The State Govt. reported that the 15.420 ha Revenue forest land was previously approved for Mahan OC Project. However, the KML file boundary of the same has not been submitted along with letter of approval obtained under the Van Adhiniyam, 1980. The same shall be submitted.
- vii. As per DSS analysis, out of 231.111 ha (as per KML file and 230.780 ha as per the proposal) forest land proposed for diversion for Bhatgaon UG mine,

2.924 ha Revenue forest land is found overlapping with the Mahan OC Project boundary. The State Govt. shall submit comments in the regard alongwith updated KML file.

- viii. DSS analysis reported that the State Govt. has calculated the distance of mine lease boundary w.r.t. the core of Tamor Pingla WLS due to this distance of proposed forest land is found to be 15.20 Km. However, the KML file of instant project boundary has been again checked by the DSS Cell of FC Division and it is observed that the Mine lease boundary of instant project is touching the boundary of Tamor Pingla WLS and this fact has also been verified using the Tiger Reserve and Tiger corridor boundary as available on the NTCA website <https://ntca.gov.in/dss/#decision-support-system>. Therefore, comments of CWLW in this regard needs submission alongwith KML file of Wildlife Sanctuary.
- ix. As per Subsidence Prediction Report attached with the proposal, the maximum value of predicted subsidence at the end of mining is 1.875 m. The peak horizontal strain is likely to be 24.46 mm/m at the end of 5 years of mining, 28.56 mm/m at the end of 10 years of mining and 30.56 mm/m at the end of mining. Wide cracks are also likely to be formed on the surface. Therefore, the State Govt. shall furnish comments regarding effect on surface vegetation and mitigation measures to minimize the effect of underground mining on the surface.

In view of the above, it is requested to furnish the above information for further processing the proposal.

Yours faithfully,

Sd/-

(Suneet Bhardwaj)

Assistant Inspector General of Forests

Copy to:

1. The PCCF (HoFF), Department of Forest, Government of Chhattisgarh, Raipur.
2. The DDGF (Central), Regional Office, Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Nagpur.
3. The Nodal Officer (FCA), Department of Forest, Government of Chhattisgarh, Raipur.
4. The Sub-office, Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Raipur.
5. User Agency.
6. Monitoring Cell, FC Division, MoEF&CC.