

'In-principle' nod for Asolamendha irrigation project

Jul 31, 2024, 04.48 AM IST



Nagpur: After deferring the project twice, the MoEFCC's Forest Advisory Committee (FAC) has finally granted 'in-principle' approval for the diversion of 316ha of forest land under Section 2 of the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980, for the renovation of the Asolamendha irrigation project in Chandrapur district.

Earlier, the project was deferred in January and April 2024 due to various anomalies and serious concerns over the significance of the proposed area as a tiger and wildlife habitat. However, the FAC meeting held in Delhi on July 4 gave 'in-principle' clearance to the project.

The medium irrigation project encompasses Saoli, Mul, and Pombhurna talukas in three forest divisions. The Asolamendha project was constructed by the British in 1914. Now, a fresh proposal is to raise the height of the existing dam by 2.70 metres for irrigation purposes. The project will destroy more than 1.17 lakh trees.

The forest area proposed for diversion does not fall under any wildlife sanctuary, eco-sensitive zone, or protected area. However, site inspection reports state the area is important from a wildlife point of view, and they also report the presence and movement of tigers and leopards and warn of conflicts.

While approving, the FAC has set three major conditions without the fulfilment of which the irrigation department will not be able to execute the project. The user agency has to furnish a report from the State Dam

Safety Organisation (SDSO) regarding all technical aspects of the dam. Further, the govt has to obtain approval from the National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA).

“Keeping in view the significance of the area as a wildlife habitat, it is important that the project’s impact on the wildlife and its habitat is considered beforehand. Therefore, the proposal will be considered for approval only if the approval for the same is accorded by the standing committee of the National Board for Wildlife (SC-NBWL),” the FAC has said.

Irrigation department officials said, “The potential of the instant project is proposed to increase from 9,919 hectares to 54,879 hectares in Mul, Saoli, and Bramhapuri talukas due to the increase in the height of the dam.”

However, wildlife experts claimed the project is a wasteful expenditure as Gosikhurd dam canals have already reached many parts of the three talukas.

The irrigation department officials said the non-forest land identified for the compensatory afforestation (CA) is situated on the periphery of the Bemla reservoir in Yavatmal district.

We also published the following articles recently

Project Tiger set to displace 5.5L forest dwellers: ReportOn International Tiger Day, a report by the Rights and Risks Analysis Group revealed that India's Project Tiger is set to displace at least 5.5 lakh tribals and forest dwellers. The report criticizes the lack of land for resettlement and highlights the successful co-existence of tigers and tribals in the Biligiri Rangaswamy Temple Tiger Reserve in Karnataka.112120288

Rs. 3300 crore worth 29 new proposals from AP and Vizag Port under Sagarmala projectThe Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways received 29 proposals from Andhra Pradesh and Visakhapatnam Port Trust, totaling Rs. 3300 crore under the Sagarmala project. Thirteen projects worth Rs. 2500 crore, including Ro-Pax jetties and port modernization, are already being funded. Nearly 22 out of 36 AP projects have been completed.112049212

UPPCL, irrigation dept to ensure zero sewage discharge in VarunaIn a bid to rejuvenate the polluted River Varuna, Uttar Pradesh has tasked UPPCL and the irrigation department to finalise sewage discharge plans. They are looking to seek IIT-BHU consultancy, but funding delays persist. The irrigation department will arrange the

budget. Key projects, including sewage treatment plant expansions, await approval. Pumping stations and mosquito control efforts are also planned.112092638