

Sub-Accord of Environmental Clearance for river bed mining operations in Block 18, 19 and 20 of River Ans.

Reference: No: EAC/JK/22/12874-12889 Dated:03/03/2022; Minutes of 86th JKEAC Meeting held on 23rd of February, 2022 issued vide No: EAC/JK/22/12837-12849 Dated: 02/03/2022.

Site inspection by JKEAC Sub Committee comprised of , M ATak, B B Sharma and Prof. Anil K Raina- Members of JKEAC on 14-03-2022

Observations of JKEAC Sub-Committee:

- JKEAC Sub-Committee right at the outset of the field visit had an opportunity to observe the mining operations in the mining blocks located in vicinity of Kanthan Bridge at Arnas and for which Environmental Clearance had earlier been granted by JKEIAA. These blocks are located at the confluence of Ans River with River Chenab and the left bank of River Chenab.
- Huge deposits of river bed material, backed with sustained natural replenishment, sufficient to meet the RBM demand of more than 1 district were seen to have got accumulated at the confluence of river Ans with Chanab as well as the shoals on left bank of the river Chenab.
- Geology & Mining Department ought to explore the possibility of locating additional mining blocks at the confluence of river Ans with river Chenab and to adopt an enhanced/accelerated rate of extraction of RBM as mining blocks located in geologically similar locations will see assured annual replenishment and this in turn would arrest to some extent the siltation of Salal Dam Reservoir.
- Notwithstanding the various stipulations in EC, high capacity excavators and dumpers were seen deployed at the mining sites. JKEIAA/ JKEAC may consider formally allowing use of Heavy Excavators and dumpers for mining operations in such/ similarly located sites.
- The road from Arnas to Dharmari, stretching over 30 kms, was observed to be in shambles. A number of slide zones as have developed in this reach have led to creation of extreme dusty conditions. The damages to the road surface not only put severe brakes on vehicular speed, resultant dusty and bumpy conditions also pose grave hazard to health of people using the road.
 - Dharmari to Mahore road, stretching over a distance of 20 kms is under widening since many a year, the widening process has led to development of many active slides in this reach. The construction work and the loose debris falling on to road surface cause frequent interruptions to traffic. This stretch, extremely dusty and bumpy is opened to traffic only intermittently for short time periods to regulate the road constructions. The land mass movement and air pollution is of huge intensity at present. Any further addition to the traffic frequency, which in any case shall be inevitable due to transportation of RBM materials extracted from the minor mineral

mines being commissioned in the areas, shall be beyond the threshold limits and thus prove disastrous to public health. .

- While at Mahore, the visiting team interacted with locals to know their viewpoint as well as the impact of mining operations on general environment and living conditions in the area.
- Mahore is a Tehsil headquarter and the small, narrow patches of sloppy area abutting the road passing through the bazaar is the only area available where all the offices and commercial establishments are located, in fact are concentrated, on the two sides of the road. The road is only 20-25 feet in width and the bazaar even now witnesses frequent and prolonged traffic hold ups. General public while appearing supportive of start of legal mining operations in the area, apprehend that movement of heavy RBM laden vehicles would not only damage the road, it would also worsen the traffic conditions causing discomfort/ harassment to locals visiting the bazaar and the offices.
- Locals at Mahore also pointed out that while Government and mine lease holder would gain from mining operations in their area, people in return would get only discomfort and harassment and that Authorities ought to take conscious, deliberate and positive measures to create economic avenues for locals as well making them a stakeholder in the overall development process.
- Locals, at Mahore, further suggested that to minimize the impact of movement of heavy RBM laden dumpers through narrow road at Mahore, Mine Lease Holder ought to make maximum use of tractors for transporting and meeting the RBM requirement in areas at and around Mahore and that heavy vehicles/ dumpers be made use of only when the mine lease holders need to supply the material outside Mahore Tehsil.
- Before proceeding to area of interest i.e. Ans River at & around Village Sungri, Sub-Committee spoke to Mr. S P Bhagat, Executive Engineer, Hydraulic Division, Dharmari to know the present status of the Khuls/ Canals as had been constructed in past under DRDA/ DPAP in general and the present conditions prevailing at and around Village Sungri.in specific with special reference to slope/ bank.
- Mr. S P Bhagat informed the Committee that large scale slips/ slides which were once triggered as routine occurrence due to cutting of slopes and the associated construction process and hindered the functioning of khuls constructed under DRDA/DPAP in the beginning had stabilized with passage of time. Mr. Bhagat further informed that slopes/ banks of Ans river at and around Village Sungri, where mining blocks 18,19 and 20 are located were quite stable and no new slides had been reported in the area in the recent past.
- Physical inspection of mine blocks 18, 19 and 20 by the Sub-Committee revealed that all the three blocks, criss-crossed by active channels at multiple points,are near contiguous and located at and around the confluence of Bhadhar Nallah with Ans River. Block 18 lies in close vicinity of Bagga-Sungri bridge.
- Committee observed that due diligence had not been shown while demarcating/ specifying the boundaries of the mining blocks 18, 19 and 20 and while active channels had been made part of the blocks, dry shoals, the very source of RBM which alone can be mined in conformance with sand mining guidelines, had been left out of the mine block

boundaries..The boundaries of block 19 and 20 need to be redrawn/ re-fixed and mining plans approved de-novo by the Competent Authority.

- Access to block 18 is readily available through a beaten track but as informed by DMO, the beaten track falls in a forest compartment and Forest Authorities were reportedly not amenable to grant of permission for passage of RBM laden vehicles through their area.
- Apprehensive that the permission from Forest Authorities would not be forthcoming,the Consultant has proposed to use an access route that would be common to block 18, block 19 and block 20.
- Taking off from Sungri- Bagga Road from a point located just upstream block 20, left bank Ans Nallah, the access route proposed for extraction of mined material would necessarily require to criss-cross the active channel/s of Ans River at multiple points and adoption of mitigation measures aimed at not obstructing/ disturbing / diverting the natural flow / flow pattern established with passage of time would be pre-requisite. .
- Block 19 is placed near a mound constituted of black textured muck/ overburden as has slipped down the hill located on left side of SungriBagga Road. This loose material, has now nearly stabilized and beaten path seen riding this stabilized mound is apparently being used by tractors for transporting the illegally mined RBM.
- Sub Committee is of the opinion that that the stabilized mound toe must not be disturbed/ mined for whatsoever reason lest it trigger fresh slides.
- The Block 20 contains a little portion of dry shoal wherein RBM can be extracted without active channel crossing however, due economic diligence shall dictate/ decide its working and execution.
- Sub-Committee also observes that Ans river is a rich resource of good quality silt free RBM i.e. aggregates and coarse sand backed with natural and speedy replenishment. Geology and Mining Department may consider locating additional mining blocks on Ans River Bed to optimally utilize the resource without causing any environmental degradation.The RBM so extracted can be utilized for local consumption up to Mahore and around Sungri- Bhudal without using any heavy vehicular transport, until the road beyond becomes stable and preference be given to tractor –trollies and lower tonnage vehicular transport only.

Recommendation:

Committee member are of the opinion that block 18 cannot be considered in the present form, unless an environmentally safe haulage route can be traced out, which eliminates multiple crossings of the river creek. The block 19 cannot be considered for EC in the present form, as its boundaries need to be redrawn / re-fixed and mining plan is approved de-novo by the Competent Authority. The same is true about block 20, however, a small

dry shoal available within the boundaries of the block in the present form can be extracted, provided the same stands out on the economic viability means of the project.

Sd/-
(B B SHARMA)

Member JKEAC

Sd/-
(ANIL K RAINA)

Member JKEAC

Sd/-
(M A TAK)

Member JKEAC