PUBLIC HEARING
FOR
ENVIRONMENTAL CLEARANCE OF MINOR MINERAL (RIVER BED MATERIAL)
at
Village Sherkotla, Teh.& Distt. Kathua

Conducted by:

J&K Pollution Control Board

Proceedings of Public Hearing

for

ENVIRONMENTAL CLEARANCE

OF

MINOR MINERAL (RIVER BED MATERIAL)

at

Village Sherkotla,

Teh.& Distt. Kathua

Mining Area : 7.68 Ha
Production Capacity : 480000 TPA
Project Proponent : Sh. Abhijeet Singh
R/o Plot NO. 8, Zila Singh Farms, 7, Park Lane Kishangarh,
Vasant Kunj, South West Delhi-180070

Venue

S.K. FARMS
NATIONAL HIGHWAY, JANGLOTE MORH,
KALIBARI, KATHUA

Date : 22-MAR-2021

Conducted by :

J&K Pollution Control Board
Divisional Office, Kathua

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Minutes of the Public Hearing conducted on 22/03/2021 for Environmental Clearance of Riverbed Material Mining Project in Block - 01(28), Sahar Khad, upstream Railway bridge at village Sherkotla, tehsil & district Kathua over an area of 7.68 Ha and having production capacity of 480000 TPA :

Pursuant to the rule 7 (i) section (3) of EIA notification, 2006 issued by Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Govt. of India vide S.O. 1533 dated 14-09-2006, **Public hearing** for Environmental Clearance of riverbed material mining project in block 01 (28) at Sahar Khad, upstream Railway bridge at village Sherkotla, tehsil & district Kathua, over an area of 7.68 Ha and having production capacity of 480000 TPA**, was organized by J & K Pollution Control Board on 22/03/2021.**

The panel for conducting the Public hearing included:

1) Sh. Rahul Yadav, IAS, Deputy Commissioner, Kathua

2) Dr. Syed Nadeem Hussain, IFS, Regional Director, J & K Pollution Control Board, Jammu

3) Dr. Devinder Singh, District Mineral Officer, Geology & Mining deptt., Kathua

4) Sh. Anil Sharma, Divisional Officer, Pollution Control Board, Kathua

Elected representatives including DDC Vice-Chairman, Sarpanches, Panches, Ex-Sarpanches, Office bearers of NGOs and a large number of locals belonging to the panchayats in which the proposed mining block is located, attended the Public hearing. Approx. 250 no. of people attended the Public Hearing (Attendance sheet of the public is enclosed as Annex. 'A' and Attendance sheet of the panel is enclosed as Annex. 'B'). The entire proceedings were duly photographed & videographed. The photographs & Video CDs are enclosed as Annex. 'C' & 'D' respectively.

Minutes of the Public hearing :

The Public hearing started with introduction of panelists to the audience.

Divisional Officer, Pollution Control Board, Kathua welcomed the dignitaries and the audience present in the Public hearing and informed that the public hearing was being organized by Pollution Control Board, as mandated in terms of EIA notification, 2006, issued by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Govt. of India. He stated that for

riverbed mining projects having area more than 5 Ha, conduct of Public hearing is mandatory before grant of Environmental Clearance of the said project. He told the audience that it was with this purpose that the public has been invited to participate in the Public hearing for giving their valuable suggestions regarding the proposed mining project. He said that wide publicity of the public hearing was done in the villages through publicity hoardings as well as Public notice published in newspapers.

Thereafter, **Sh. Prateek Shukla, Environment consultant** (from M/s Cognizance Research India Pvt. Ltd., Noida) for the project proponent was invited to apprise & inform the audience about the salient features of the proposed riverbed material mining project. He began his address by informing the audience that the Public hearing for environmental clearance of the proposed riverbed mining project is being carried out in terms of EIA gazette notification of 2006 of Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate change and subsequent amendment notifications issued thereafter. He said that the projects having mining lease area of more than 5 Hectares but less than 25 Hectares fall in B-2 category of projects, which require mandatory conduct of Public hearing for the grant of Environmental clearance. He told the audience that the mining block for which the Public hearing was being conducted had an area of 7.68 Ha and hence falls in B-2 category of projects, under EIA notification, 2006 and subsequent amendment notifications issued thereafter. He further said that the said mining project is related to mining of riverbed material in Sahar Khad (riverine) and is located in village Sherkotla of tehsil & district, Kathua. He told that the name of the project proponent of the proposed mining project is Sh. Abhijeet Singh. The cost of the proposed mining project was mentioned to be Rs 6.50 Crores. He further told the audience that the distance of nearest railway station from the proposed mining block is approx. 7 km and the nearest airport (Pathankot airport) is located at a distance of approx. 28 Km. The nearest highway was mentioned by him to be NH-IA. He told that the facilities of hospital and school already exist in the areas around the mining block.

The Environment Consultant then made the audience aware about the benefits that would accrue from the proposed riverbed mining project. He told that the scientific riverbed mining to be undertaken by the project proponent shall prevent degradation of nallah bed, alteration of flow pattern of the stream as well as flooding of the areas along the banks of nallah during monsoon season. He also said that the implementation of the said mining project will directly provide jobs to at least 40-50 people and indirectly to 100-150 people. He further told that the proposed mining project shall boost the pace of development in the area, be it the construction of schools, buildings, bridges or roads. He said due to bringing of riverbed material mining within legal framework, Pollution prevention measures shall be given special consideration. He told that unscientific mining results in many harmful impacts that include creation of deep pits in the riverbed, excessive mining in riverbed, use of unmaintained and old vehicles causing air & noise pollution. However, the scientific riverbed mining resolves all such issues of concern, besides bringing

revenue to the government, which is utilized by the government for carrying out developmental works. He further informed that the mining in the nallah bed shall be restricted to a depth of 3m only and the mining will be stopped if the surface water level is reached, even if the same is at a depth of less than 1 m from the nallah bed.

He informed the audience that the Baseline environmental data of areas falling within 10 Km radial distance of the proposed mining block was collected for the attributes viz. Ambient air quality, Water quality (surface and groundwater), soil quality, noise level and the samples collected thereof were analyzed in the laboratory. He informed that the analysis results were found to be within the prescribed standards, as notified under Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. As regards the Baseline status of Ambient air quality for the parameter of PM_{10}, it was informed that the same ranged between 36.75 µg/m_3 (minimum) to 53.05 µg/m_3 (maximum). The prescribed PM_{10} limit, as per MOEF, Govt. of India standards, was mentioned by him to be 100 µg/m_3. Similarly, the $PM_{2.5}$ concentrations as monitored in the Baseline study ranged between 16.79 µg/m_3 (minimum) and 23.84 µg/m_3 (maximum), which again were found less than the prescribed standard of 60 µg/m_3. The concentration of gaseous pollutants as monitored during Baseline environment study were revealed by him to range between 4.1 µg/m_3 (minimum) and 8.04 µg/m_3 (maximum) for SO_2 and between 7.04 µg/m_3 (minimum)and 14.39 µg/m_3 (maximum) for NO_x against the prescribed limit of 80 µg/m_3 for both SO_2 as well as NO_x. He also said that even after commencement of the mining project, the air quality, water quality, soil quality and noise level shall be monitored after every six months.

As regards the Air pollution prevention measures, the Environment Consultant told the audience that the haul roads shall be regularly water sprinkled for containment of dust emission due to plying of vehicles transporting mined material and the loaded material in the vehicles shall be properly covered with tarpaulin. He also told that the plantation along the roads in the panchayat shall be done. He told the audience that the mining activity is not likely to cause water pollution as the mining shall be carried out in dry riverbed. He informed that the mining in the block shall be done well above the groundwater table. As for the noise pollution control measures, the environment consultant informed that there shall be no mining during night hours in the mining block, use of horns by vehicle operators in the project area shall be restricted and only well maintained vehicles shall be allowed access in the mining block. He further said that there shall be no soil pollution as well, as the loaded material in the trucks shall be covered with tarpaulin; therefore there shall be no emission of sand from the moving trucks and hence no soil pollution.

As regards the socio-economic benefits to be provided by the project proponent, the consultant informed that for the developmental needs of the panchayats in jurisdiction of Page which the mining block falls, the extracted minor minerals shall be provided free of cost and for the individual requirement of such material by the locals of these panchayats, such material shall be provided at half rates. He also told that the medical camps shall be organized in

the villages falling in concerned panchayats on regular basis. He told the audience that an amount of Rs 13 Lakhs shall be earmarked under CSR fund, which is 2% of the total cost (Rs 6.50 Crores) of the proposed mining project, for socio-economic developmental needs of the concerned panchayat.

He then requested the audience to bring forth their suggestions or raise their queries regarding the possible impact on environment due to the proposed mining project.

After the brief given by the Environmental Consultant for the Project proponent, the floor was thrown open for wider public participation and several prominent citizens, elected representatives expressed their opinion. The following speakers expressed their views:

i) **Sh. Raj Kumar (Ex – Sarpanch, Sahar)** :

He demanded that people of surrounding panchayats should get the minor minerals at half-rates from the auctioned block. He further demanded that it should be ensured that the lands adjoining to the auctioned block do not get damaged and water problem in the area does not get aggravated. He said that the mining should be carried out on scientific lines, so that no loss is accrued to the people of surrounding panchayats.

ii) **Sh. Raghubir Singh (District president, Pradhan Mantri Rozgar Kalyan Yojana)** :

He told the gathering that the minor mineral mining is a burning issue throughout the country. He said that unscientific mining has resulted in creation of pits as deep as 10-12 m in some areas and many a times, animals fall in these pits and die over there. He said that the condition of Sahar khad in upstream areas of two bridges in the area can be gauged to see the losses. He demanded that the maintenance needs of the assets of panchayats should be taken care of by the project proponent as well as the nearby stone crusher owners. He then said that there should be no losses accruing to the people of surrounding panchayats and District administration must ensure the same.

iii) **Sh. Karan Singh (Ex- Sarpanch, Logate)** :

He told the panel that the mining carried out previously in Sahar khad had rendered the paddy growing agricultural land in his panchayat barren and now it is not possible to grow paddy over there. He told that in the nallah bed falling in downstream of the bridge, very deep pits have been created due to mining and many a times animals fall into these pits. He further said that the water table has gone much down in their areas as a result of mining. He demanded that instead of the mining projects in the Sahar Khad, Check dams should be constructed so that water

scarcity problem in the area gets alleviated for future generations.

iv) Sh. Raja Ram Singh (Sarpanch, Logate):

He told the audience and the panel that it was for the first time that the Public hearing was being carried out on mining activity in the area. He then said that before tendering process, preservation of water bodies, ponds, saving of community assets in panchayats and agricultural lands should be given due consideration. He then told that 350-400 kanals of agricultural land in his panchayat is located adjoining to Sahar khad and water availability to these lands should be ensured. He demanded that it must be ensured that the stone crushers located around Sahar khad install latest Pollution Control Devices and follow all the guidelines of Pollution Control Board. He further demanded that no royalty should be charged against development works of panchayats and the locals should also get the minor minerals free of cost. He suggested to the panel that if the assets falling in the panchayats, be it the State lands, Shamlat lands, have to be protected, then more involvement of the panchayats, BDC Chairpersons, DDC members must be ensured. He said that mining should be carried out in scientific manner and it must be ensured that the mining is carried out in the earmarked area of the mining block only.

v) Sh. Bholi Singh (Sarpanch, Sahar) :

He told the audience and the panel that it was for the first time that a public hearing was being organized by Pollution Control Board for mining activity in the area and he thanked Deputy Commissioner, Kathua for presiding over the public hearing. He further said that if the public hearing was now being organized for mining activity in the Sahar khad, then it is matter of investigation which agency was previously charging royalty at the rate of Rs 500/- per tractor trolley for lifting of minor minerals from Sahar khad, without giving proper bill or receipt. He demanded action against those people who were charging royalty illegally from the locals. He told that the mining block of 7.68 Ha for which the public hearing was being organized for the environmental clearance, falls in his panchayat, covering four villages of the panchayat namely Sahar, Sherkotla, Kagyar and Kamala. He further told that the said mining block has been identified in an area having high water table and there is cultivable land on both sides of the mining block and paddy crop is grown in Kharif season over there. He said that if mining is allowed in that area, water table will get depleted and the paddy growing lands will be rendered barren and all those people earning their income from these cultivable lands will lose their livelihood. He requested the panel to take into consideration that aspect.

He demanded a share of 2% for the panchayats of Sahar and Logate from the Mineral Development Fund, so that pace of development in these panchayats can pick up. He further said that a total of 692 Kanals

of land from National Highway to Kathera covering 10 Km distance on both sides of Sahar khad is Grazing/ Kahcharai land and 80% of that land falls in Sahar panchayat. He informed that the said Kahcharai land has also been rendered barren due to illegal mining activity up to a depth of 10 m. He requested Deputy Commissioner, Kathua to save the said Kahcharai land from further degradation. He further told that as per an Order dated 18-08-2020 of industries & Commerce department, Geology & Mining deptt. has to allot minor mineral blocks to Panchayats for income generation for development of panchayats and the payment of royalty from the existing blocks is exempted for the concerned panchayats. However, no action in compliance of that order has been taken by the concerned department. He said that the mining blocks should be identified in those areas which have low water table so that people of surrounding villages do not suffer for their drinking water needs. He demanded that the first priority in allotment of mining blocks should be given to the concerned Panchayats and if deemed feasible thereafter, the other mining blocks could be put to auction by the Geology & Mining deptt.

vi) Sh. Radha Krishan (Owner of a stone crusher at Sahar Khad)

He told the panel that for the last two years they have been facing difficulties for operation of the stone crushers around Sahar khad, as they are forced to procure the raw material from the approved mining block located in a far-off area. He told that they have taken huge loans from the banks for installation of stone crushers and have obtained all the requisite NOC's from the concerned departments; however due to ban on mining, they are not able to operate the stone crushers. He demanded that the mining blocks should be opened at the earliest, even if the same are allotted to the concerned panchayats or the highest bidder of the auctioned mining block.

vii) Sh. Sunil Majotra (Owner of a stone crusher at Sahar Khad)

He told the audience and the panel that mining activity in Sahar Khad was being carried out since last 20-25 years. Now, as per the NGT guidelines, the mining blocks have to be operated after obtaining the Environmental clearance. He told that as per the prescribed procedure for establishment of a business, NOCs from various departments have to be obtained. He said it is the duty of the government to provide the raw material, once a stone crusher is established. He further told that it is not possible to run all the stone crushers in the district from a single approved mining block at Mahi Chak. He said that for stopping illegal mining activity, a proper legal framework has to be adopted so that nobody gets harassed. The mining blocks may be allotted to either the panchayats or the highest bidder of the auctioned blocks or operated by the department itself, but the same should be opened at the earliest. He further said that if the said mining block has already been auctioned and