Minutes of the Public Hearing conducted on 29/03/2021 for Environmental Clearance of Cluster of Riverbed Material Mining Project in Block nos. 22 (7.51 Ha), 23 (7.43 Ha) & 24 (7.54 Ha) in Chenab Riverbed at village Pandhal and Jerri, Tehsil Pouni, District Reasi over a Cluster area of 22.48 Ha and having production capacity of 1033951 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 cluster of riverbed material mining project in Block nos. 22, 23 & 24 in Chenab riverbed at village Pandhal and Jerri, Tehsil Pouni, District Reasi over a cluster area of 22.48 Ha and having production capacity of 1033951 TPA **, was organized by J & K Pollution Control Board on 29/03/2021.**

The panel for conducting the Public hearing included:

1) **Sh. Ajay Kumar Sharma, KAS, Deputy Commissioner, Reasi**
2) **Sh. Shafiq Ahmed, District Mineral Officer, Reasi**
3) **Sh. Hansraj Singh Galoach, Divisional Officer, Pollution Control Board, Reasi**
4) **Sh. Arshad Nazir Malik, Divisional Officer, Pollution Control Board, Jammu North**
   (Representative of Regional Director, J & K Pollution Control Board, Jammu)

Elected representatives including DDC members, BDC Chairman, Sarpanches, Panches, Ex-Sarpanches and a large number of locals belonging to the panchayats in which the proposed mining block is located, attended the Public hearing. Approx. 150 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, Reasi welcomed the dignitaries and the audience present in the Public hearing and informed that the role of Pollution Control Board in the public hearing was to bring the public and the government on one platform. He further told that the Environment Consultant engaged by the project proponent will give a detailed presentation on the proposed mining project in block nos. 22, 23 and 24. He said that the Public hearing was first step in the process of grant of Environmental clearance and the same is conducted to elicit views and opinions of the public of surrounding areas.

Thereafter, **Sh. Hussain Zia-ud-Din, Environment Consultant** (from M/P & M Solution, Noida, U.P.) 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 lecture by telling 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 cluster for which the Public hearing was being conducted had three blocks (Block no. 22, 23 and 24) having an area of 7.51 Ha, 7.43 Ha and 7.54 Ha respectively and having the Cluster area of 22.48 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 Chenab river bed and is located in village Pandhal and Jerri in Pouni tehsil of Reasi district. Giving break-up of the estimated project cost of each of the blocks, it was informed that the total cost to be incurred on mining in block no. 22 was Rs 241.16 Lacs and the cost to be incurred on fulfillment of obligations under Corporate Environmental Responsibility (CER) is Rs 4.82 Lacs. Similarly, investment on mining block no. 23 and 24 was revealed to be an amount of Rs 251.96 lacs and Rs 257.64 Lacs respectively and the corresponding CER cost for these blocks was mentioned by him to be Rs 5.03 Lacs and Rs 5.15 Lacs respectively. He further told the audience that the distance of nearest railway station (Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra Railway Station) from the proposed mining cluster area is approx. 15 km and the nearest airport (Jammu airport) is located at a distance of about 38.48 Km. The nearest highway was mentioned by him to be situated at a distance of 6.48 Km from the proposed mining cluster area.

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

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to be undertaken by the project proponent shall prevent degradation of river bed and erosion of banks, alteration of flow pattern of the river 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 30 people and indirectly to 70-80 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 river bed shall be restricted to a depth of 3m only.

To make the audience easily understand the scientific aspects of the presentation by the Environment Consultant, **Arshad Nazir Malik, Divisional Officer, PCB Jammu North** informed the audience that to bring the mining activity within the domain of legal framework, mining rules were framed by the Govt. of India, which have now been implemented in the J & K UT as well. He said that environmental impacts from unregulated and unscientific mining included air and noise pollution due to carrying out of mining operation during night hours without environmental safeguards, damaging of roads etc. However, now after implementation of mining guidelines issued by Govt. of India, the Contractor has to hire a Environment consultant from an approved agency, who in turn has to conduct an Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) study. The report prepared after completion of EIA study is called Environment Management Plan (EMP) and the same incorporates the environmental safeguards against the possible impact from carrying out the project activity. He further informed that the responsibility to ensure implementation of measures under EMP lies with the PRIs and the mining activity is not allowed unless the Environmental clearance of the project is granted by J &K Environment Impact Assessment Authority (JKEIAA). He said that the Public hearing report shall be submitted along with videography of the event to JKEIAA, who in turn will examine if the apprehensions expressed by the people got duly addressed by the project proponent in the EMP.

Environment Consultant then informed the audience that the Baseline environmental data of areas falling within 10 Km radial distance of the proposed mining cluster was collected for a period of three months from October 2020 to December 2020 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}, monitored at eight Air quality monitoring stations; it was informed that the same ranged between 35.1 $\mu g/m^3$ (minimum) to 54.1 $\mu g/m^3$ (maximum). The prescribed PM_{10} limit, as per MOEF, Govt. of India standards, was mentioned by him to be 100 $\mu g/m^3$. Similarly, the $PM_{2.5}$ concentrations as monitored in the Baseline study ranged between 15 $\mu g/m^3$ (minimum) and 23.3 $\mu g/m^3$ (maximum), which again were found less than the prescribed standard of 60 $\mu g/m^3$. The concentration of gaseous pollutants as monitored during Baseline environment study were revealed by him to range between 4.4 $\mu g/m^3$ (minimum) and 8.6 $\mu g/m^3$ (maximum) for SO_2 and between 7.1 $\mu g/m^3$ (minimum)and 15.2 $\mu g/m^3$ (maximum) for NO_X against the prescribed limit of 80 $\mu g/m^3$ for both SO_2 as well as NO_X. For monitoring of Water quality, groundwater samples were collected from six different places in the study area. It was informed by the Environment Consultant that the groundwater from all sources was found suitable for drinking purposes as all the constituents were found to be within the limits prescribed for drinking water standards notified under Indian standards IS : 10500. As for the results of Soil monitoring, he informed that the samples collected from identified locations indicated that the soil is sandy type and the pH of the soil ranged from 7.46 to 7.88, which confirmed the alkaline nature of the soil. He also informed that there are no ecologically sensitive areas present in the study area. Similarly, the noise monitoring was carried out at 6 locations and the monitored results indicated that both the daytime and night time noise levels were well within the prescribed standards, as notified under Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. 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 entire road stretch 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 Environment Consultant informed that for the developmental needs of the panchayats in jurisdiction of 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 concessional 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 15.01 Lakhs shall be earmarked under CER fund, which is 2% of the total cost (Rs 7.50 Crores) of the proposed mining project, for socio-economic and developmental needs of the concerned panchayat. One of the participants, Sh. Gautam Kumar, Sarpanch Kolsar suggested to him that the CER funds should be directly given to the concerned Gram panchayats so that developmental works may be carried out as per the wishes and requirements of locals of the concerned Gram panchayat.

The Environment Consultant 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) **S. Gurdeep Singh (R/o Jerri)**

He demanded that a protection wall should be constructed for the agricultural lands situated along the river bank to save the crops in their agricultural lands from the intrusion of wild animals. He told that for want of the same, the frequent intrusion of wild animals has made it impossible to recover even the investment cost of sowing of seeds.

ii) **Sh. Ghulam Hussain (Sarpanch, Upper Talwara)**

He told the panel and the audience that all the developmental works had got stalled due to scarcity of minor minerals. He said they could not lift the minor minerals from their own nallahs due to ban on mining. He expressed happiness that with clearance of mining cluster in the Public hearing, mining activity in the area shall be started very soon. He further demanded that the DDC members, BDC Chairpersons and the Sarpanches should be given their due share of the funds to carry out developmental works in their respective jurisdiction. He requested the panel that the CER funds should be directly given to the concerned panchayats.

iii) **Sh. Karuna Nidhi (Sarpanch, Keralair)**

He told the panel that due to ban on mining activity in the area, minor minerals were not available to carry out developmental works as well as construction of houses and whatever minor mineral material is available; the same is sold at exorbitant rates that are out of reach of general public. He demanded that once the mining cluster is opened, the locals should get the minor minerals at concessional rates. He also demanded that all the mining blocks should be opened, particularly the minor mineral blocks at Kund Khanayari, Bharakh, Keralair and Beullian so that the general public can easily obtain the minor minerals at genuine rates for construction of their houses and the developmental works of the panchayats also get started.

iv) **S. Jaspal Singh (Sarpanch, Bharakh)**

He told the audience and the panel that it was for the first time that the Public hearing was being organized for opening of minor mineral blocks. He said that they had been waiting since long for opening of mining blocks so that all the stalled developmental works get re-started. He demanded that the mining blocks in his Bharakh panchayat should also be opened and instead of auctioning of the mining blocks in his panchayat, the mining rights should be given to panchayats or social activists. He said that the rates of minor minerals should be fixed in a manner that they are within the affordability range of all and it was not possible to construct houses under PMAY with existing high rates of Sand and Bajri.

v) **Sh. Shamun Bahadur (R/o Jerri)**

He told the panel that three villages in Jerri panchayat are situated along the banks of Chenab river namely Jerri, Jambri and Pandhal and the lands in these villages had already got damaged from the floods in Chenab. He said that the mining should be allowed in Chenab riverbed but before that the lands situated along banks of Chenab river must be protected. He said he favoured the opening of mining activity as the people are facing scarcity of minor minerals since last 1- $1^{1/2}$ years; however there should be no tendering of the mining blocks as already in many places in the Chenab riverbed, mining has previously been done to the extent of 20 ft. and allowing further mining in the riverbed will render their lands vulnerable to damage from floods in near future.

Responding against the apprehensions projected by Sh. Shamun Bahadur, the Environment Consultant told him and the audience that the mining shall be carried out only in the earmarked area that has been allotted to the project proponent. He informed that the mining shall be restricted to a depth of only 3 m in the riverbed

and the mining will be stopped once a depth of 3 m is reached in particular portion of the mining block. He further told that scientific mining to be undertaken by the Project proponent will only lessen the chances of flooding of the adjoining lands. He however assured that the proposal of building a Boulder protection wall along the bank of river from the CER funds to save the adjoining lands from seasonal floods could be deliberated upon. He further assured the public that the mining shall not be carried out along the embankments and the methodology of leaving out the prescribed margins from the embankments shall be strictly adhered to while carrying out the mining in the allotted block.

vi) **Sh. Dev Raj Sharma (Ex- Sarpanch, Jerri)**

He told the panel that lands situated along the Chenab river bank got damaged in 1992 floods, when about 7.5 Lakh cusecs of water was released from Salal dam. He informed that after construction of dam, no fresh minor mineral deposition is taking place in the riverbed in their area. He demand that the mining blocks should be opened with adoption of previous practice of allowing lifting of minor minerals by anyone after payment of royalty to the department and he did not favour the tendering process for making the minor minerals available to the locals.

Responding to the apprehensions expressed by Sh. Dev Raj Sharma, the **Environment Consultant** informed him that the scientific mining to be undertaken by the project proponent shall only lessen the chances of flooding along the river banks and hence save the adjoining lands from erosion. He told that the mining shall be carried out in a manner that the flow pattern of river is not altered and also it shall be ensured that there is no alteration of channel bed form, its shape and morphology. He also informed that the proposal to build a Boulder wall along the river bank adjoining to which the private proprietary lands are situate, can also be considered out of CER funds.

To further allay the apprehensions of the speaker, **Divisional Officer, PCB Jammu North** informed him that the role of PCB in conduct of Public hearing was to bring the public and the Contractor at one platform where all the queries, doubts and apprehensions of the public have to be duly addressed by the Environment Consultant representing the project proponent. He told that previously the mining activity was carried out in an unorganized manner and now the public hearing is being conducted to allow the mining activity in a regulated and scientific manner. The panel is hearing the views of the locals and whatever commitment the public demands from the Project proponent, be it the construction of Bund along the bank of river or any other issue; the same may be projected before the concerned authorities. He further

informed that the Environment Consultant shall make a visit to the project site every six months and he will check whether the commitments made by the Project proponent in the public hearing have been honoured.

Sh. Dev Raj in his concluding remarks told the panel that the mining activity should be started in the Chenab riverbed but only through the previous practice of payment of royalty to the department and not through the tendering process for mining in the riverbed.

vii) **Sh. Darshan Lal (R/o Jerri)**

He demanded that the minor minerals should not be excavated from the embankments of the river along which the proprietary lands are situated. He also demanded that measures to prevent intrusion of wild animals into agricultural lands should be put in place at the initiative of District administration.

viii) **Sh. Sunil Kumar Sharma (Panch, Kolsar)**

He told the panel and the audience that the rates of minor minerals should be fixed before the tendering process. He demanded that for construction of houses under PMAY, Sand & Bajri should either be provided free of cost or at concessional rates.

ix) **Sh. Gautam Kumar (Sarpanch, Kolsar)**

He told the panel and the audience that the public wants the mining to be opened but the mining should not be carried out with mechanical excavating machinery. He demanded that the mining in riverbed should be restricted to a depth of 1 m only. He also demanded the mining rights for the panchayats and said that the same should have been granted before allotting minor mineral blocks to private contractors. He also told the panel that the rates of minor minerals should have been fixed before the allotment of mining blocks to highest bidders and demanded that the locals should get a priority in lifting of minor minerals from the allotted mining blocks.

District Mineral Officer, Reasi while responding to the demands raised by Sarpanch, Kolsar told him as well as the audience that the proposal to grant mining rights to five panchayats in Reasi district has already been submitted to the higher authorities after preparation of mining plans for the mining blocks to be allotted to the panchayats under Short term permit (STP). He informed that after grant of Environmental

clearance by JKEIAA, the mining blocks under STP shall be allotted to the panchayats immediately by the competent authority.

Deputy Commissioner, Reasi also assured Sarpanch, Kolsar that the process of grant of mining rights to panchayats in the district shall be expedited and all the genuine demands raised in the public hearing shall be appropriately addressed.

x) **Sh. Ajay Kumar (R/o Pouni)**

He demanded that the mining blocks in Kund Khanayari and Reyalla village in Jagir panchayat should also be opened.

xi) **Rahul Jamwal (Representative of the Project proponent)**

He told the audience that the excavation of minor minerals shall not be carried out at the banks of river. He further assured that all the commitments made in the Public hearing shall be fully honoured by utilizing funds under CER. He said that the nature of works to be carried out under CER shall be decided by the concerned panchayats. He assured the public that Crate wall shall be constructed, as per the popular demand, to prevent erosion of lands situated along the banks of Chenab river and falling in the project area.

Deputy Commissioner, Reasi suggested to the representative of the project proponent to transfer the CER funds directly into the accounts of concerned panchayat, as and when the mining cluster is opened.

xii) **Sh. Pawan Kumar Sharma (BDC Chairman, Pouni)**

He told the audience that the mining blocks for clearance of which the public hearing was being conducted are in the State land only and no private proprietary land is involved in the proposed mining blocks. He appreciated the endeavour of the government to elicit the views and opinions of the public before opening of the mining blocks. He requested the panel that for the widows of concerned panchayat and BPL people as well as those constructing their houses under PMAY, the minor minerals should be provided free of cost. He said that as an elected public representative, he has been given mandate by the public to usher in a phase of development in the panchayats falling in his block. He requested the panel that all

genuine issues raised during the public hearing should be duly addressed and demanded that the contractor should undertake the mining activity in a systematic and transparent manner.

xiii) **Smt. Reeta Sharma (DDC member, Pouni)**

She thanked Deputy Commissioner, Reasi for conducting the Public hearing in the far-flung Jerri panchayat of Pouni block. She said that as elected representatives, they had been facing questions from the public as to when the mining activity shall be re-started and they had been assuring the public that the mining activity shall recommence very soon. She supported the opening of mining blocks in the area and demanded that at the same time the problems of the people including the apprehensions of possible damage to the lands falling along the banks of river should be duly addressed. She also demanded that mining block at Kund Khanayari in Pouni panchatyat and also a small Khad called Pouni khad should be opened at the earliest so that the locals in the area can meet their requirement of Sand and Bajri. Lastly, she demanded that for construction of houses under Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana (PMAY), the minor minerals should be provided at concessional rates.

xiv) **Sh. Kewal Krishan (DDC member, Pouni 'A')**

He demanded that as an assurance to fulfill the popular demand emerging during the public hearing regarding construction of a protection wall to save the agricultural lands adjoining to river bank from intrusion of wild animals; the concerned contractor should furnish an undertaking on a affidavit to the people that the said demand shall be fulfilled in a time bound manner. He also demanded that rates of minor minerals should be fixed before opening of mining blocks in the area and if the rates of minor minerals in Jammu district are considered reasonable, then the same should be adopted for this area as well. He told the panel that with the existing high prices of Sand & Bajri, people are finding it extremely difficult to construct houses under PMAY having a limited budgetary support of Rs 1.5 lakhs. He demanded that for construction of houses under PMAY, minor minerals should be provided at $1/3^{rd}$ or $1/4^{th}$ of the rates and the widows of the area should be provided the same free of cost. He further demanded that the mining blocks in Bharakh panchayat and Kheral khad in Pouni block should also be opened. He told the panel that as elected public representatives, they wanted that all the commitments made during the public hearing by the representative of the contractor regarding provisioning of CER funds in presence of Deputy Commissioner should be duly honoured by the contractor.

xv) **Sh. Hemraj Sharma (R/o Jerri)**

He told the panel that the locals of the area wherein the proposed mining blocks fall, have natural rights over the minor minerals and as such there should be a written assurance that most of the people to be engaged in the project activity, whether labourers or tipper and JCB service providers, shall mostly be locals of Jerri, Pandhal and Jambri villages only, as these villages will be most affected from the mining in the area.

Divisional Officer, PCB Jammu North in his address suggested that the Contractor should install a Display board at the entry & exit points of the mining blocks, wherein all the commitments made during the Public hearing shall be prominently posted along with the proposed timeline for fulfillment of the commitments, be it repairing of roads or plantation of trees; so that when the Environment consultant visits the place for preparation of Compliance report, he is able to check whether those commitments have been honoured or not. He further told the audience that before selection of a particular mining block, a physiological study of the riverbed including assessment of deposits of minor minerals and hydrology of the river is carried out in a study spanning over a period of 4-5 years and if found feasible, the mining blocks in a particular stretch of riverbed are thrown open for auction by the government. He said that till now, the mining activity was being carried out in an unorganized manner, resulting which the people of surrounding areas faced the problems of noise and air pollution. However, with adoption of scientific mining, the problems of air and noise pollution shall be largely alleviated, as the mining activity shall be restricted to time slot of 8 AM to 6 PM only; mining shall be restricted to a depth of 3 m only and only fit vehicles shall be used for transporting the mined material from the Pit head area. He informed the audience that the role of PCB is to bridge the gap between the public likely to be impacted and the Contractor. In the last, he asked the participating public to raise their hands if they favoured the mining activity in the area. Most of the people present in the public hearing raised their hands in endorsement of their decision favouring the commencement of mining in the said area. The declaration of decision of the participating public in favour of the mining activity in the proposed mining cluster was made at the end of public hearing.

The Public hearing concluded with presentation of Vote of thanks by Divisional Officer, PCB Jammu North.

(Arshad Nazir Malik)
Divisional Officer
PCB, Jammu North

(Hansraj Singh Galoach)
Divisional Officer
PCB, Reasi

(Shafiq Ahmed)
District Mineral Officer
Reasi

(Ajay Kumar Sharma, KAS)
Deputy Commissioner
Reasi

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DC for mining rights to Panchayats

GJ REPORT

REASI, MAR 29: A public hearing for environmental clearance for Minor Mineral Mining Blocks in Chenab river bed at village Pandhal and Jerri of tehsil Pouni was organised here today. Deputy Commissioner, Ajay Kumar Sharma presided over the proceedings of the public hearing for mining river bed material in block number 22, 23 and 24 spanning 7.51 hectare, 7.43 hectare and 7.54 hectare, respectively. The hearing was organised by J&K Pollution Control Board. Deputy Commissioner, Reasi in his address assured the public that genuine concerns of the locals for reasonable rates of minor minerals; mining rights to Panchayats and other issues raised during public hearing would be appropriately addressed. The DDC members Pouni and Pouni-A; BDC Chairman Pouni, Sarpanchs, Panchs, ex-Sarpanchs and prominent citizens also addressed the public. Environmental Consultant of M/s P&M Solution, Hussain Zia-ud-Din, representing the project proponent, briefed the audience about the details of the proposed mining block clusters including the mining method and anticipated impact from the mining in the area and the measures proposed under Environment Management Plan and Corporate Environmental Responsibility.

trengthening Police-public relations

She further called for strengthening the Police public relations and assured the public that all the issues raised at this