

**Government of India**  
**Ministry of Environment & Forests**  
**(FC Division)**

**Proceedings of the Forest Advisory Committee Meeting Held on**  
**11<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> July, 2013**

**Agenda No. 3: Diversion of 22,777.50 hectares of forest land in Manipur for construction of Tipaimukh Hydroelectric Project in Manipur. (File No. 8-63/2005-FC)**

The FAC after preliminary examination of the proposal observed as below.

- (i) The proposal was discussed by the FAC in its meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> January 2012 and keeping in view that the project involves diversion of very large area of forest land and felling of more than 78 lakh trees in Manipur alone, the FAC recommended that a sub-committee of FAC along with domain experts in the field of ecology, wildlife, hydrology etc. may visit the project site to make an on-the-spot assessment of the impacts, the project is likely to have on flora, fauna and also on the socio-economic conditions of the local residents;
- (ii) The FAC in its said meeting further recommended that the sub-committee may also suggest appropriate measures, including reduction in dam height, to minimize requirement of forest land for execution of the project;
- (iii) MoEF in consideration of the said recommendation of the FAC constituted a committee under Chairmanship of Dr. Mohammad Firoz Ahmed, non-official member of the FAC. However, due to certain unavoidable reasons the Committee could not inspect the forest land proposed to be diverted.
- (iv) Keeping in view the repeated requests from the Ministry of Power and the user agency to expedite decision on the proposal seeking diversion of the forest land for the project, the MoEF referred the proposal back to FAC for its re-examination and appropriate recommendations.

As desired by MoEF and after examining the grounds for delay in site inspection by the sub-committee constituted by the Ministry on its recommendation, the FAC decided to re-examine the proposal of the State Government without insisting upon the report of the sub-committee. After a thorough examination and interaction with representatives of the user agency, who made a presentation, the FAC observed as below:

- (i) The State Government of Manipur initially submitted a proposal to obtain prior approval of Central Government under the FC Act for diversion of 20,464 hectares of forest land which they revised to diversion of 25,822.14 hectares of forest land. Later, in consideration of the recommendations made by the North Eastern Regional Office of the Ministry of Environment & Forests, the area of forest land proposed for diversion was reduced to 22,777.50 hectares.
- (ii) For the same project, a proposal seeking prior approval of Central Government under the FC Act for diversion of 1551.60 hectares of forest land in Mizoram has also been received by the MoEF and is being processed separately.

- (iii) This project thus requires 24,329 hectares of forest land which is more than one-fifth of the total 1,18,184 hectares of forest land diverted for execution of 497 hydel project in the entire country after the FC Act came into force.
- (iv) The forest land required for the project is more than 100 times the average rate of diversion forest land for the hydel projects for which approval under the FC Act has been accorded by the MoEF, so far.
- (v) The per-megawatt requirement of forest land (16 hectares of forest land per megawatt) for the above project of 1500 MW installed capacity is much higher than the average per mega watt requirement of forest land for the existing hydel projects in the country. The forest land required for the project is almost two-thirds of the average annual rate of diversion of forest land for non-forest purpose (35,890 hectares per annum) during the 32.50 years of the existence of the Act.
- (vi) Forest land proposed to be diverted in Manipur contains 78,16,931 trees and 0.27 lakh bamboo culms. It is also home of several endangered species (including those listed in schedules to the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972) of flora and fauna. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Manipur has observed in his report that "no compensatory measure would help in mitigating the adverse impact caused by loss of such large forest tracts on the habitat, flora, fauna, biodiversity, micro-climate and environment unless additional Non-forest areas in affected districts or adjoining districts are taken up for compensatory afforestation."
- (vii) The Chief Conservator of Forests (Central), North Eastern Regional Office, Shillong in his site inspection report has opined that such a diversion proposal involving a huge stretch of critically important forest and wildlife habitat where compensatory measures may not be proved effective, may not be advisable.
- (viii) Forest land proposed to be diverted is a known habitat of several wildlife species such as Jungle fowl, Barking deer, Wild Boar, Assamese macaque (*Macaca assamensis*). Animals such as Leopard (*Panthera pardus*), Clouded Leopard (*Neofelis nebulosa*), Slow Lorries (*Nycticebus coucang*), Golden-cat (*Felis t. mincki*), Hoolock Gibbon (*Hyllobates hoolock*), Capped Langoor (*Presbytis pileatus*), Pangolin (*Manis crassicaudata*) Hog Badger (*Arctonyx caloris*), Himalyan Black Bear (*Selenarctos thibetanus*), etc, and birds like Great Indian Hornbill, Bamboo Partridge, etc. are also reported to be available in the forest land proposed to be diverted.

- (ix) Project involves displacement of 12 villages consisting of 557 families having a population of 2,027 Scheduled Tribes in Manipur. Several representations have been also received from individuals, civil society organizations and environmental groups against this proposal.
- (x) The regular employment likely to be generated from the project is only 826 persons. Therefore, it appears that employment opportunities likely to be created by the project is not commensurate with the loss of land and natural resources which are generally the main source of livelihood of the tribal population of the state.

The FAC after detailed deliberations concluded that requirement of forest land for the project is large and is disproportionate to its power generation capacity. Also very high ecological, environmental and social impact/cost of the diversion of the vast tract of forest land will far outweigh the benefits likely to accrue from the project. The FAC therefore, strongly recommended that approval for diversion of the said forest land should not be accorded.

The FAC further recommended that in case the user agency desires, they may explore feasibility to construct smaller dams involving diversion of smaller forest area commensurate with their power generation capacity.