

Copy of letter No. F.No.8-58/98-FC dated 6.11.2001 from Shri R. K. Gupta, Assistant Inspector General of Forests, Government of India, Ministry of Environment & Forests, F.C. Division, Paryavaran Bhawan, CGO Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110003 to Col. D.N.Yadav, DGMT (MT-5), General Staff Branch, Army Headquarters, DHQ PO New Delhi-110011 and copy to all PCCFs etc. Office of the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Rajasthan, Jaipur endorsement No.F16(Circular)2000/FP/ PCCF/11146-11295 dated 11.12.2001

Sub.: Use of forest land for field firing ranges by Indian Army-regarding compensatory afforestation under Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.

Sir,

I am directed to refer to this Ministry's letter No.11-9/96-FC dated 7.01.1997 on the above mentioned subject, wherein detailed guidelines for use of forest land for field firing ranges under the provisions for Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 were issued. One of the guidelines is that compensatory afforestation will be insisted over degraded forest land equivalent in extent to the 10% of the forest area of field firing range. These guidelines were issued after a joint meeting held in Ministry of Defence on 10.04.1996.

This nominal figure of 10% compensatory afforestation has been kept keeping in view the objectives of the Defence Forces and the fact that impact area is only a small portion of the entire range. Till recently this Ministry has been according clearances to field firing ranges under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 for the whole area although the actual impact area/non-forest use was quite small. Recently, while renewing the Narayangarh FFR, Haryana, during the Joint inspection with Army proposal was even less than 10% of the whole range.

Accordingly, the Ministry vide letter No.11-55/2000-FC dated 06.09.2000 clarified that Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 would be applicable only on the actual impact area and not on safety zone area. Keeping in view this clarification, the Ministry renewed the 5323 hectare Narayangarh FFR with diversion of only 268.75 ha. forest land (actual impact area). The compensatory afforestation in the instant case was stipulated over 100% of 268.75 ha. degraded forest land instead of on 532.30 ha. degraded forest land as per the earlier guidelines (10% of entire FFR). This new guideline has not only reduced the extent of diversion of forest land for non-forestry purposes but also reduced the quantum of compensatory afforestation funds to be paid by the Army Authorities.

Of late, this Ministry has been receiving representations from various approved FFRs, wherein, the above mentioned guideline dated 07.01.1997 and clarification dated 06.09.2000 has been interpreted by Army Authorities as if the compensatory afforestation would be applicable on 10% of the actual impact area. With regard to the above stated detailed explanation, it is to clarify that the proposals which have been approved/received prior to Narayangarh FFR proposal, compensatory afforestation would be levied as per guidelines dated 07.01.1997 while in new proposals compensatory afforestation shall be levied over 100% of the actual impact area.

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