

# Business Standard

## Odisha gets nod to clear 1,524.17 ha of forest land for irrigation project

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As Per The Conditions Set By The MoEF For The Approval, The Legal Status Of The Diverted Forest Land Shall Remain Unchanged.

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The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has approved the diversion of 1,524.17 hectare of forest land for the construction of an irrigation project in Odisha's Nayagarh district, officials said on Tuesday.

In a statement, the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said that the state government has been waiting for the approval from the Centre for the last 30 years.

"After the completion of the Brutanga project, irrigation facilities can be provided to 23,000 hectares of land," it said.

"On the basis of the compliance report furnished by the state government... final approval of central government under Section 2 of the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980 is hereby granted for non-forestry use of 1524.17 hectares of forest land for construction of Brutanga irrigation project," read a letter issued by Assistant Inspector General of Forests Dheeraj Mittal on Monday.

As per the conditions set by the MoEF for the approval, the legal status of the diverted forest land shall remain unchanged.

The state government will have to ensure that the compensatory afforestation will be carried out over 1,524.17 hectares of non-forest land already transferred and mutated in favour of the state Forest Department, it said.

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"The state government will also have to ensure that compensatory afforestation over the non-forest land equal in extent to the forest land being diverted shall be raised within two years from the date of issue of the diversion order," it added.

"At least 1,000 plants per hectare will be planted on the non-forest land and if it is not possible to plant so many saplings in the area, the balance saplings will be planted in any other forests," the approval letter said.

The state government has been further asked to ensure appropriate mitigative measures to minimise the likely adverse impact of the project on the forests and wildlife in and around the command area by implementing the study of the impact on wildlife management.

Further, the MoEF has asked the state to set up at least three anti-poaching and anti-depredation camps at strategic locations and deploy an adequate number of forest personnel.

It will also need to construct at least two watch towers at strategic locations and depute adequate numbers of forest staff.

"Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi had discussed the issue with the Union Environment and Forests Minister Bhupender Yadav during his recent visit to New Delhi," the CMO statement said.

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