


A public Hearing was conducted under the president ship of Shri Niranjana Baruah, Additional Dy. Commissioner, Tinsukia on 14.10.2009 at 10.40 AM at Lekhapani Forest Inspection Bungalow on Lekhapani Open Cast Project of Coal India Limited, Margherita.

Shri Haliram Phukan, Regional Executive Engineer from Assam Pollution Control Board explained the purpose of the meeting. He said that this public hearing has organized by Assam Pollution Control Board before obtaining approval necessary opinion & suggestion from the public with steps to be taken to prevent the possible pollution will be discussed. The main object of this project is to extract coal by CIL for the proposed Thermal Power at Lakhapani & Bongaigaon Thermal Power Plant.

By Power Point presentation Shri Amrit Borthakur of NEC/CIL explained the details of the project. The main object to set up this project is to extract coal maintaining proper ecological balance and strengthen the national economy. It is told that 2.7 Million Ton of coal can be extracted from this project. The project work will be started by way of Drilling & Blasting and after that rock blasting will be applied. The work of this project will be completed by Shovel Dumper method. **235 hectare land** will be required and life of this project is around 26 years. This project is situated over 280-520 mtr. above sea level.


Addl. Deputy Commissioner
Tinsukia

Quality of surrounding air, sound, water, soil, flora & fauna survey, socio economic study, present land used (forest area covering 235 hectare) study of land to be used for this purpose details of anticipated environmental impact, i.e. air pollution, source of water pollution, source of noise pollution has been studied at length for a period of 3 months. Special technological method shall be applied to prevent the pollution and suitable measures will be taken to restore the environment within its limits. Employment opportunity will be created by direct & indirect way. Mining operation will be restricted in **80 hectare of land**. The road to be constructed for the project purpose can also be used by general public. Effluent treatment plant will be set up for treatment of raw mine water. Reclamation of land will be done as per guideline laid by Pollution Control Board. Necessary measures will be taken to monitor the environmental effects from time to time. Closure of mine on decommissioning scheme, will be announced 5 years in advance as per MoEF guidelines.

By opening this project, there will be scope for employment opportunity, revenue earning of the state and illegal mining/pilferage can be substantially reduced.

Arrangement of maintaining ecological balance will be made with due consultation of the Pollution Control Board of Assam.

North Eastern Coalfields is encouraging the social and cultural activities in this area and the same will be maintained in future.


Asst. Deputy Commissioner
Jinsukia

Coal will be supplied to the coal based thermal project and for this there is no other alternative but to open the new mine at Lekhapani at the site of proven coal reserve.

On the basis of CIL's submission about the project Hon'ble President /Additional Dy.Commissioner while addressing the meeting invites the opinion of the public present for socio economic development of the project area and other good and bad effects of the project.

Shri Lakhi Nandan Chetia, President, NSUI, Tinsukia welcomed the executive body of the AJYCP on the public hearing organized by PCBA and invite their opinion about advantage/disadvantage on opening the Open Cast Project. "We want our identity in this backward area. Preference should be given to the work culture instead of vested interest". He also requested the AYJCP to explain the reason about opposing the issue. Work of this project to be executed by maintaining the ecological balance by Coal India Limited & Pollution Control Board of Assam. "We want Open Cast Project and Power Project and from this our area will be developed". Necessary remedial measures should be taken by CIL & PCBA after reviewing the damage caused at Ledo Area. They have accepted some of the measures taken by Coal India Limited and requested to solve the balance work and questioned.


Addl. Deputy Commissioner
Tinsukia

- Question:
1. Refining Capacity of ETP?
 2. pH value at ETP outlet?
 3. pH value of drinking water?
 4. What is the arrangement for mitigating air pollution.?
 5. What is the arrangement to prevent Water Pollution ?

Coal is a natural resource and mining operation is compulsory. Number of trees are planted to maintain the ecological balance but the same was not properly looked after. What is the budgetary provision to control the pollution?

Shri Amulya Kumar Baruah (Social Worker) told that wrong information was fed to the local organizations about the OCP. There is no description about the villages of the surrounding areas of the project. Existence of Lekhapani Nepali Gaon, Saliki Gaon, Tribel belt area are not shown. It should be Ledo Colliery Gaon Panchyet instead of Ledo Gaon Panchyet. We appreciate public sector organisation Coal India Limited for undergoing development work. Coal India Limited is strengthening the national energy sector based on the scheme formulated by Late Indira Gandhi. But the local people of this area is not benefited from the Private Sector Enterprise. We must say that the set up of Lekhapani OCP by Coal India Limited is right decision but we are doubtful about the forthcoming situation. On closure of underground mines the duty of this industry is no more. PCBA attention was not drawn upon the 40 Coke Bhatta to prevent the misuse of national resources. PCBA does not noticed the pollution caused due to coke bhatta at

Samukjan Area. **White cloth becomes black** . The existence of various species of birds and animal like Vulture, Monkey is diminishing. Fish in the river is not seen. Coal India has to prove that all these are not totally due to polluted mining water. We are not happy about the performance of CIL, PCBA and local administration on this issue. Report on pilferage of coal published in the newspaper. It is not true that local people are getting job. Local people are working under the contractor appointed by CIL. Coal India Limited being a principle employer never pay attention on this matter. Lekhapani Project is set up in the same manner and the Ministers and Officers forget their commitment. Speeches of the union leader are not bible. It cannot control the public. Local public should conscious. We should allow to set up this OCP. Our local economy will enrich by this project but obey the rules and regulation else pilferage of coal will increase. We present our opinion and support in favour of the enterprise. Due to lack of proper care the planted trees are not surviving. CIL should show desire ness about responsibility to the society .There is grate problem of drinking water in this area. We thank Coal India Limited for extending facility of Mobile Medical Van but there should not be any compromise about the pollution control. We are speaking this about the greater interest of the country and society.

Shri Surjyakanta Dutta, President Purbanchal Welfare Sangh said that "We are opposing the issue since inception of OCP by CIL. This organization is not against the policy of extract of coal. We object this verdict because there is a tradition and history of this Patkai Hills. Different species of animals and people are living here.

It can be anticipated about the situation if the total hills are destroyed. British government had introduced Underground mine as this hill was attracted them, it is needless to say the intensive damage done by the present Coal India Limited. We cannot allow to do anything based on promise only. We should examine these promises. The fertile land of Ledo area damaged and production capacity became nil. It is felt from the practical experience that by this project the local people of this area will face serious threat and ecological balance will not improve. Devastating damages caused at the hills of Ledo & Tikak will continue if this new project is set up. The number of people may get employment but why the Open Cast Mining is set up in this manner. We want coal & thermal project but will this thermal will set up within 26 years? We should watch whether we are losing more than the profit earned by Coal India Limited by extracting of coal. This type of public hearing should not be arranged on such a bandh day. You are saying that these area is not polluted but as per opinion of the specialist, water of this area is maximum polluted. The pH value of water is below 1.7 causing pollution to water resources. We cannot accept these false commitment if this type of pollution is happening. Therefore, we will go head to long term divesting process. So start this project by Underground mining then maximum number of unemployed will get employment and save the ecological balance & rivers will not be polluted”.

Shri Haketu Chema , local resident (President, Tinsukia District Gaon Bura organization) – “This area was fully dense forest about 25/30 years back, and there was no educational facility in this area. Since then this area was declared as Tribel

Belt Area. Coal India has not done anything for development for us in this Lekhapani Area. Not a single person of this locality has got employment but for greater interest, we are in favour of setting up of industry and we do not have any objection if the pollution is properly controlled. We support your good gesture if the thousands of people benefited from this project. Committee consisting of people of this area should be formed and written commitment for development and employment should be given by the proponent CIL. We do not have any objection about setting up this project if preference is given to the people of this area with contractual jobs. Training to be imparted to the local educated person and employment to be provided to the inhabitant of this area”.

Shri Lathu Langching- Social Worker thanks the project and said that, “We expect that in coming days we will be benefited from this project with 100 % pollution control measures.

Shri Binod Taina (Social Worker) “There is no mention about the resident of this area in the report presented by CIL. Man and animal dies here and the people residing at the hills are affected. Effort are made to stop their voice by paying money. The peoples of this hilly range should not be neglected Nation will be developed only if they developed but commitment to be given to provide employment to the unemployed persons of this area. This is my demand on behalf of the people of this area” .

Shri Mohan Sharma of Lekhapani Mandal Congress present a speech thanking PCBA to organize this public hearing. He said "One Thermal Project is coming up at Lekhapani and for this purpose coal will be required, therefore, by opening this OCP coal can be supplied. On commissioning thermal project the electricity crises of this area will be improved. Constructive criticisms upon this project should be made. PCBA should be vigil after setting up ETP. We demand for opening this OCP subject to proper control of environment and maintenance of inhabitant of this area. We request PCBA in this hearing that attention to be given if any injustice made by CIL in coming days."

Shri Jogendra Nath Buragohain- (Retired employee of Coal India Limited and local resident) said that "People of this locality are getting something from CIL. If the pollution of various places of Assam can be controlled then why this area cannot be done.? We want project but Patkai range should not be destroyed. Necessary protection to be given for the pollution created at this area."

Shri Rajkumar Bishanan Singphow - said that there is no mention about the damage of residents of Singphow houses caused due to pollution. PCBA should pay necessary attention over this issue. Project should be started without making any loss.

Shri Arjun Chetry, Gaon Bura of Lekhapani said "As local gaon bura we have not been informed by letter. CIL should inform measures to be taken for damage of

agriculture land by coal dust. We should be informed how employment to be provided. Steps taken for controlling of Air & Water pollution to be informed to us at regular intervals by CIL.

Shri Tanbir Sema – Chairman, Lalpahar Gaon- told that till date CIL has never provided employment to anybody of this area. Agreement to be made in providing medical treatment to the peoples of this locality then the project will be advanced. The benefit of this project is extending opportunities to the outsiders and we will not except this injustice. CIL & PCBA should look after this backward area before starting the project.

Shri Krishna Kumar Saikia- (BMS) – told that “He is in the same opinion as in the public hearing of Ledo OCP. Almost all the industries of Assam are in a dying condition. Places will be development only after setting up of new and new Industry. I feel bad, by observing worst economic condition of Assam. Our youths are not employed. Can we survive by seeing only this beautiful hill with empty stomach. Trees are uprooted in various areas like this Patkai Hill by the wood mafias. Therefore, can we prevent the Global Warming alone.? This industry is absolutely necessary in our Assam. Pollution Board should pay attention to prevent pollution in scientific manner. This should not be entrusted to CIL alone only. Concrete Platform for dumping the coal although projected, but till date the same is not done in any coal dumps of CIL. Effluent treatment is not proper. Industry is necessary, but same to be set up only after proper pollution control

measures. UG mining method should be revived. A committee should be formed with head of the various organizations to study the quantum of pollution and give time to time advice to CIL and then only the problem of pollution will be solved.

Shri Sanjib Ulup, President, AJYCP opposing this public hearing and submitted a memorandum to the President of Public Hearing (A.D.C., Tinsukia), which he read out.

Shri Atul Bora (Trade Union Leader) said that "We came forward to start this project to develop this area. The contribution of Coal India towards Indian economy is remarkable. We are lagging behind the coal production. We should join hands towards the development of India. The population of Margherita has increased manifold and for socio-development of the people of Margherita and its adjoining area, new industry is a must. Local Minister of Power has come forward to set up a coal based thermal power project in this area. Therefore, the required quantity coal to thermal project to be supplied from this Open Cast Project. There is no base of economic development in this area without CIL. If we reject this project, we will be looser. Therefore, we request all the organization to extend co-operation, as there is numerous remedial measures to control water pollution, therefore, CIL & PCBA should take care for setting up new water/effluent treatment plants. Contribution towards sports activities by CIL is remarkable and in medical front CIL's contribution to the local population is appreciable. He again requested cooperation of all section of people for opening up this project.

Shri Rajani Konwar said that role of coal industry in developing this area cannot be denied and after nationalization of Coal Industry, the role of NEC/CIL in developing the socio-economic status of this area is remarkable. ASEB is depends upon Coal India Limited in this whole Margherita Sub-Division as CIL is paying Rs. 70 lacs as power tariff to ASEB per month. Therefore everybody should co-operate & come forward to open a new industry, else this area will be under the grips of anti social elements . We request Coal India to strengthen the economy of this area and set up OCP after prevention the pollution.

Shri Subrata Bhattacharjee (President, Rastriya Coal Mazdoor Union) said

Project to be commissioned

Pollution to be controlled

Prevent the theft of coal produced by OCP

“Everybody present in the meeting expressed their views on the above three points. Coal is the main source in developing country. So we must extract coal from under ground. Trend of opening of factory/industry under various scheme are increasing. Coal is necessary for the thermal project as announced by Prime Minister. Starting of this OCP is must if the thermal power project is commissioned at Lekhapani. Number of problem will come to set up of this OCP, but the same should be solved after due discussion with statutory bodies, NGO's

and individuals. Economical base can be strengthened by opening new industry only, therefore necessary arrangement to be made to start the project. Coal India Limited should provide employment to the local youths after imparting training facility etc.”

Shri Abu Ali (Chairman, Lekhapani Nepali Gaon) said “Residents of our Nepali Gaon has no objection for the Lekhapani OC Project. The residents of our village have no objection if the project is set up after due prevention from pollution. Where the labours working in the nearby Tea Garden of the project area will go? They will work in the new industry. Existence of pollution is in every houses. We will never tolerate the disturbance made by the people coming from outside the project area who will not be affected at all. Our view is for opening up of Lekhapani OCP.”

Smt. Kabita Bora of Jaya Mahila Samity told that “They will help for setting up this project. Demanded for provision of employment to the unemployed youths. Make necessary arrangement to award job to the local contractors. We come forward with zindabad slogan. Coal India zindabad, Open Cast is must.”

Smt. Ranju Bora(Secretary, Tipong Mahila Samity) said that this project is must and our sons must get employment.


Addl. Deputy Commissioner
Tinsukia

Shri Lalit Goswami said that "Set up of industry is must and everybody should cooperate."

Hon'ble President said that if everybody agrees than he may conclude the meeting.

Shri Numal Gogoi (Resident of Ledo) told upliftment of local residents is must. Contractors should increase the salary to their worker. Peoples are compelled to pilfer the coal due to low wages and salary. For this purpose a committee should be constituted and Lekhapani Project to be set up.

Shri S.P. Chaki of Coal India Limited replied the quarries raised by the speakers present in the public hearing. He told that PCBA is monitoring the different pollution parameters regularly. Moreover from Coal India side regular monitoring are made by on different environmental parameters. CIL is sending the recorded parameters regularly to CPEB and PCB. We are receiving instruction regularly from them for different pollution control measures and the same are being followed by Coal India Limited. Highest agriculture production certificate received from Agriculture Department in Sonali Pathar area, which is near to Tirap OCP. This was possible due to CIL's all out efforts to control water pollution from Tirap OCP. CIL may have some lapses and to over come it CIL solicits suggestions from every individual, organisation for the new project.

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Shri S.N.Changmai (CIL) told that here Operation of Open Cast Mining is depend upon gradient of the coal in Assam and presently previous policy is not functioning. Now new policy received from Government and therefore we cannot apply the old UG Mining Technology as it is economically unviable. We should supply coal due to scarcity of energy and in the meantime we have taken two viable new projects on 26 years lease.

Dr. Sarkar,(General Manager) CIL – “We are always concern about pollution. We may have lapse in certain pollution control measures, but in near future we are definite to control the anticipated pollution by using the latest technology.

Shri Rakesh Jaiswal said that CIL Hospital never extend the treatment facility to the outsiders without cost. We will not object to this OCP, as the decision made by the public on this issue..

The President in his conclusive speech said that “Everybody presented their speech on this public hearing as organized by PCBA. Many distinguished persons present their valuable speeches. It is observed that discussions are mainly on pollution but for the sake of development of the area most of the speakers are in favour of the project. He told that after plantation it should be maintained properly. He also mentioned about non execution of any work under social welfare activity in Tribel Belt Area expressed by the speakers. Coal India should pay special attention on this issue. Routine check up of the existing OCP’s to be done. The presider

administration has taken the initiative to minimize the pilferage of coal and illegal mining. For any advice regarding pollution and control measures, the Administration of CIL and PCBA should be informed. I am also in the opinion about the preference of the local people for regular/temporary appointments. I conclude the public hearing by requesting NEC/CIL to go ahead with new project as per the demand of the audience present and thanks to all."



**Deputy Commissioner
Tinsukia**