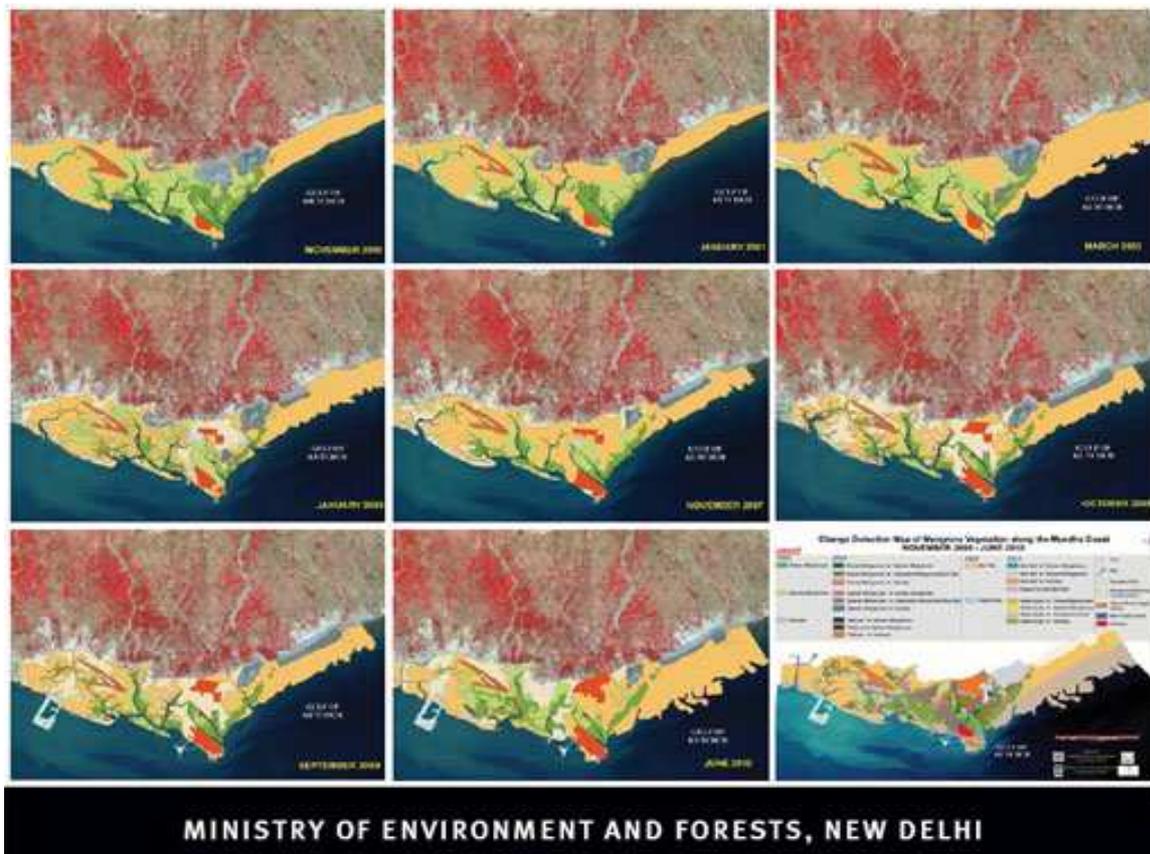


Adani project in Mundra has violated environmental norms, rules MoEF committee



Report provides incontrovertible evidence of destruction of mangroves, blocking of creeks and non-compliance of other clearance conditions

Committee recommends effective deterrence through creation of Environment Restoration Fund of Rs 200 crore or 1 per cent of total investment, whichever is higher

Recommends reform of Coastal Zone Regulations and monitoring systems

New Delhi, April 18, 2013: There is incontrovertible evidence that the Adani project – port and SEZ – at Mundra in Gujarat has violated and not complied with environmental clearance conditions. The company has also bypassed environmental procedures in certain cases – says the report of a committee set up by the Union ministry of environment and forests (MoEF) to inspect the project. The committee's report was officially presented to the Union minister of state for environment and forests, Jayanthi Natarajan, here today.

The Adani Waterfront and Power Plant project has been in the eye of the storm for its massive adverse ecological impacts. Based on complaints received, the MoEF had set up the Committee to examine allegations of environmental destruction and non-compliance, including distortion of the original HTL/LTL by the company. The five-member committee, headed by environmentalist Sunita Narain, included officials from the MoEF and experts on coastal ecosystems and disaster management.

Ms Natarajan received the report and assured that the recommendations would be looked into by her officials.

The Committee used remote sensing technology to assess environmental damage that had occurred over the past decade. It concluded that there were cases of non-compliance, including the following:

- There has been widespread destruction of mangroves; 75 hectares of mangroves have been lost in Bocha Island, which was declared as a conservation zone under the environmental clearance conditions.
- The company has not taken precautions to guard against blocking of creeks because of construction activities; satellite imagery shows signs of deterioration and loss of creeks near the proposed North Port.
- The company has not taken stipulated measures to ensure that the channels that bring large volumes of seawater for use in the thermal power plant and then discharge as well as the storage tank is lined so that there is no chance of salinity contamination in groundwater. This was a clear condition set at the time of clearance.
- The company was found to be wanting about the inventory of its fly ash utilisation and disposal.
- The company has been less than serious about reporting on compliance with the conditions set at the time of clearance. In many cases, non-compliance with reporting conditions has been observed.

Says Narain: “The Committee in its investigations has found that there have been instances to circumvent statutory procedures by using different agencies, at the Centre and state, for obtaining clearances for the same project. The public hearing procedure, which is a critical part of project clearance and helps to understand and mitigate the concerns of local people, has also been bypassed on one pretext or another.”

The fisher community, which depends on the coasts for their livelihood, is the worst hit by these changes. “The development on the coast, on their land has clearly left little space for them,” says Narain. The report of the Committee suggests that there should be a plan for their ensuring access and provision of basic facilities, including a dedicated fishing harbor.

Key recommendations

- The ministry should create an Environment Restoration Fund, which should be 1 per cent of the project cost (including the cost of the thermal power plant) or Rs 200 crore, whichever is higher. The Fund should be used for remediation of environmental damage in Mundra and for strengthening the regulatory and monitoring systems.
- Cancel environmental clearance of the North Port – this will lead to an increase in the mangrove conservation area and ensure ecological balance in this coastal zone.

In addition, the committee has also made a range of recommendations on mangrove conservation, flyash management and disposal, salinity control, coastal safety (read earthquakes and tsunamis), and project clearance conditions and post-clearance monitoring. In fact, the committee’s report notes that post-clearance monitoring is the

weakest area, and needs urgent strengthening. Says Narain: “If monitoring was rigorous, public and credible, there would have been no need for this committee. Which is why we have recommended that there is a need to create a monitoring system to ensure that corrective action suggested by this report is taken within a time-bound manner.”

- For more details, please contact **Souparno Banerjee** at souparno@cseindia.org / 9910864339.