Objection to Proposed Rowghat Iron Ore Mines of the Bhilai Steel Plant/SAIL in Kanker and Narayanpur Districts of Bastar Region of Chhattisgarh

The proposed open cast 14 MTPA Rowghat Iron Ore Mine of the Bhilai Steel Plant (BSP)/SAIL will be executed over an expanse of 2,028.797 ha of reserved forest land in the Matla Reserved Forest of the Antagarh Block of Kanker and Narayanpur Districts of Bastar Region of Chhattisgarh. This mine has been granted Stage-II Forest Clearance on 3rd August 2009 and Environmental Clearance on 4th June 2009.

Aside from egregious violations of the Forest Conservation Act (1980), The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, and other relevant laws, the project would bring complete ecological devastation to a region which is widely considered a wildlife corridor for many migratory species, a cultural and religious bastion for the Madia Gonds, Abuj Madia and Madia adivasis, and a natural resource hub belonging to thousands of hill and plains villages of North Bastar. The broader impact to the region has been utterly neglected in the project documents and the precautionary principle is not being exercised by the project proponent.

Upon a thorough review of project related documents, conversations with project affected persons, scientists, lawyers, and civil society at large, we, who represent a community of people who represent and work with the project affected people, urge you to kindly draw your kind attention to the following detailed objection to the Rowghat Iron Ore Mine project:

1. The Rowghat Iron Ore Mine falls in the Rowghat Hills of the Matla Reserved Forest. The project location, at the border of the Kanker and Narayanpur Districts of North Bastar, in the Bhaupratappur East Forest Division, is in the midst of an extensive wildlife corridor stretching from South Eastern Maharashtra to North Western Orissa. In fact, the mining lease (ML) area is surrounded by tiger reserves including the Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve to the north west, Kawal Tiger Reserve to the west, Indravati Tiger Reserve and the Udanti-Sitanadi Tiger Reserve to the north east, to name a few. It further acts as a migratory route for tigers to the Eastern Ghats. Given that, according to government census there may be fewer
than 1,400 tigers left in the Indian subcontinent\(^1\), it is shocking that none of the above points have been mentioned in the company’s Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment Report, nor in its public hearing proceedings, nor in its application for forest clearance.

Above: The image taken from Google Maps shows the presence of nine wildlife sanctuaries, parks, and reserves which make up a regional corridor of which Rowghat (represented by point A) is the heart.

Key:

- A- Rowghat Hill Range, Chhattisgarh
- B- Sita Nadi Wildlife Sanctuary, Chhattisgarh
- C- Nagzira Wildlife Sanctuary, Kakada Gondi, Maharashtra
- D- National Park, Maharashtra
- E- Sunabeda Tiger Reserve, Odisha
- F- Tadoba Andhari Tiger Project, Maharashtra
- G- Udanti Tiger Reserve, Chhattisgarh
- H- Indravati Tiger Reserve, Chhattisgarh
- I- Kanger Valley National Park, Chhattisgarh
- J- Pamed Wildlife Sanctuary, Chhattisgarh

2. The mining lease (ML) area is situated betwixt one of the last remaining ranges of

the highly endangered Asian Wild Buffalo (*Bubalus arnee*). With a dwindling population of only 2,900 in India, what has been referred to by Supreme Court Justice Radhakrishnan as “the most impressive and magnificent animal in the world” is restricted to 3-4 geographical sub-populations in central India. The sub-populations are: the Indravati Tiger Reserve and the Pamed Wildlife Sanctuary which are located directly to the South of the ML area, and the Udanti-Sitanadi Wildlife Sanctuaries at the North Eastern helm of the ML area. Further, as early as 1975 the Geological Survey of India has recognised the presence of the wild buffalo in the Rowghat Hills range. Given the Supreme Court of India has ordered the state of Chhattisgarh to take effective and immediate steps to protect the Asian wild buffalo, it is shocking that the state government has completely neglected to mention this important habitat loss in its official communications regarding forest diversion for this mine. By pushing the project forward without an expert, independent assessment of the impact open cast mining would have on the Wild Buffalo, the Chhattisgarh government and the project proponent are in contempt of the Supreme Court of India.

3. Aside from the irreparable damage the project would engender on the habitats of the tiger and the wild buffalo, the company has failed to seriously consider the impact it would have on the natural migratory pathway of hundreds of rare and endangered animal species. The company’s proposed railway line in itself, stretching from Dalli Rajara (in the North) to Jagdalpur (in the South) via Rowghat Mines, and its mettle road leading to the conveyor gallery of this mine will completely fragment the aforementioned pristine wildlife. In the Rapid EIA Report it is stated that “pits will ensure termination of all migrations across a consistent wildlife habitat” without providing a clear plan for any mitigation of this impact.

4. The plant biodiversity of Rowghat Hills is unparalleled. As it is at the intersection of the Eastern and Western parts of the nation it forms a rare convergence of both sal and teak trees, seen nowhere else in India. The Rapid EIA Report even states that “even under severe constraints the study team could discover 26 rare and endangered species of vascular plants” which is only 9.7% of the total number of vascular species of Rowghat. In EIA/EMP p.2.106 it is stated that “presence of such a vast number of endangered, rare, and indeterminate plant species included in the RED LIST of India makes the whole ecosystem of Rowghat ‘fragile’. It can be

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3 T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad vs Union Of India & Ors, of 13 February, 2012
confidently assumed that if the ecosystem is opened to indiscriminate human access these species of rare occurrences would become totally extinct from this location in the near future. Large scale access in the form of mining will surely bring about a devastating change in the habitat of these species." The fact that the state and central government has granted the requisite environmental clearances to the project proponent, knowing the extent of devastation to wildlife, shows that the company lacks adherence to the precautionary principle (upheld by the Supreme Court of India in *Vellore Citizen’s Welfare Forum v. Union of India* (1996), *Narmada Bachao Andolan Vs. Union of India and Others* (2000), etc).

5. In the Rapid EIA Report it is stated that the mining waste dumps cannot be located in a flat landscape at the foothills of the mountain due to “economic unfeasibility”. Alternately the company has chosen to locate its waste dumps which will contain 23 cubic million tonnes of waste in two ecologically disastrous locations—one at Tarhur ridge top and the other at a ridge top near Block A. NEERI, in its EIA, admonishes the company, stating that location of the overburden dump is “possibly the worst option for such activities...It lies at the centre of the primary catchments of the Sarang Kohra Nala, the major tributary of the Mudiyaldodki Nadi, the only semi-perennial river draining a vast forest area in the western valley and ultimately meeting the Kukur Nadi at the southern exit of the valley near Baisangbahar village.”

   It goes on to state, “If the OB dump is created at this wrongly selected site...catchments will be destroyed causing drying up of the Sarang Kohra Nala to ultimately affect the flow of the Mudiyaldodki Nadi and in turn the drainage pattern of the entire valley. Death of a river...will have devastating fall-out effect on the biogeography of a very large area of high ecological importance.” The fact that this project is being implemented without a thorough study of the downstream impacts, and without a plan for effective remediation for the loss of this important water body, is appalling, and should be grounds for the immediate halt to all project related activities.4

6. As per the Forest Conservation Act, 1980 section 2, no State Government nor other authority shall make, except with the prior approval of the Central Government, any order directing that any forest land or any portion thereof may be used for any non-forest purpose. According to the Department of Mines, Chhattisgarh Bhilai Steel Plant (BSP)/ Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) has been granted ML for 20 years (21.10.2009 to 20.10.2029) for an area of 2028.797 ha. Yet, forest clearance

4 The layout plan prepared by Bhilai Steel Plant on toposheet 65 E/1 shows the presence of at least 100 different rivers and streams which originate at the site of the ML area. The impact on these water bodies has been completely ignored in the Rapid EIA Report.
for this project was granted on only 3rd August 2009 for a mere 883.22 ha, which is
less than half of the ML area. Seeing as the entire lease area comes under
reserved forest (of the Matla Reserved Forest) and in that the majority is dense
forest it is unfathomable how the company plans to carry out mining and mining
related activities on over 1145.577 ha of land for which it has not obtained the
requisite Forest Clearance.

7. The forest clearance which has been granted to the company is questionable due to
the severe discrepancies in information provided in the project documents. For
example, the Rapid EIA Report repeatedly lists contradictory figures for the project's
land requirements. On p. 3.60 it is stated that the “the BSP plans to embark on an
open cast mining within a mining lease area of 1,702.70 ha to be excavated in two
phases which will include the need for securing Forestry Clearance Area of 984.34
ha.” Similarly on p. 3.61 of EIA/EMP it is stated “the mining activity would be further
responsible for reduction of forest cover by 984.34 ha.” However, on the same
page, P.3.60, an area-wise break down for project activities is provided for a total
forest area of only 883.31 ha. Ultimately the FC order dated 03 August 2009 is for
883.22 ha (less than half of the mining lease area).

8. The forest clearance order has not been publicly communicated in any forum—
nor through electronic media, nor print media, nor government websites. Instead
the Ministry of Environment and Forests’ official website states that that Forest
Clearance was granted for Prospecting of 883.22 ha of Rowghat Hills on 3rd
August, 2009, the same day that Forest Clearance (FC) was granted for mining
activities over 883.22 ha. It is impossible that FC for the project was granted for
mining on the same day as was the FC for Prospecting. The Ministry is clearly
misrepresenting the facts, perhaps deliberately, to mislead the public (see
Annexure 1).

9. Grave misrepresentation of facts is present in the Project Proponent's application
for FC. In the application p.7 (part 2) there is an elaborate letter from SK Paikra,
Van Mandal Adikari, Narayanpur in which he explains that the proposed mine is in
the catchment area of the Indravati River, Mendki River, Tadoki River, Gudra and
Anjrel Nala. For this reason there is an immense presence of wildlife such as wild
boar, leopard, bears, fox, hyena, deers, nilgai, kotari,mongoose, langur, and many
birds like wild foul, peacock, etc and rare herbs including benth. If the company
goes forth with this project, it will mean “the complete destruction of trees in 1486
ha area”. Thus, “an expert opinion should be consulted before this project goes
ahead”. He also states, “this is an adivasi dominated area, and Anjrel, Phulpar,
Korgaon and Khadkagaon villages dwell within 5 km of the mine” and “the adivasis
meet many of their needs through their access to this area”. All of the above statements are corroborated by evidence provided in the Rapid EIA Report and visits by members of the Chhattisgarh Bachao Andolan to the proposed project area. However, on the following page another attestation from the same Van Mandal Adikari, Narayanpur, SK Paikra, along with and Van Mandal Adikari, Bhanupratapur, endorses the project on the following basis:

1. BSP has reduced their forest requirement. 2. There is no non-forested land in the area. 3. The proposed area is not ecologically sensitive, and there are no water bodies, natural water bodies, nor adivasi settlements within 5 Km. 4. There are no national parks, wildlife sanctuaries nor reserved forest within 5 km of the ML area.

The contradiction of facts inherent in the attestation casts serious doubt on the authenticity of the process by which the company’s application for FC was verified. Until these contradictions are explained, the FC order should be considered null.

10. On 23-11-2000 The Ministry of Environment and Forests (F.C. Division) of the Govt. of India issued an order which outlined a methodology by which mining operations could be undertaken in the Rowghat Hills in lieu of the ecological and biological importance of the region. Here, the Ministry categorically states,

This Ministry had rejected the plea for no-objection for the iron-ore mining lease sent to it by the State government for mining by SAIL, Monet and Jaiswal Neco in the heavily forested areas of Raoghat, Metabodli and Chhote Dongar of Bastar district. But keeping in mind the necessity of industrial development, the ministry suggests the following:

1. Instead of giving out separate mining leases to separate entities for different areas, the State Government should prepare a proposal through the I.B.M. for “cluster mining” in one single area of not more than 200-300 ha, so that as little forest cover is destroyed as possible.

2. The companies for which PL’s have been approved could also be considered for the cluster.

The project has never shown any compliance to the Ministry’s 23-11-2000 order—rather than opening up an area of 200 ha to mining, it has sought 2028.797 ha for the ML. Further, in the Environmental Clearance letter it is stated, “Mining shall begin from Phase-I. Phase-I will involve development of Block-A, Tarhur and Anjrel which will comprise of an area of about 520.37 ha. In Phase-II, it is proposed to
develop three blocks viz. Korgaon, Kharkagaon and Takrel.” Nowhere in the EC letter is the Roadongri sub-block of Block-F (Fe content 61.62%) mentioned, despite the fact that it is the closest sub-block to the road. The fact that the previously mandated cluster mining approach has not been implemented due to unsupported claims to economic unfeasibility shows that the company is violating the precautionary principle and should be grounds for cancellation of this project.

11. According to section 4(5) of Scheduled Tribes & Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, there can be no removal or eviction of people from forest land unless the tribal rights under this act have been recognized and the verification procedure is complete. In order to ensure the compliance of this section, MOEF, vide its circular F.No. 11-9/1998-FC (pt) dated 3 August, 2009, made it mandatory for the state government to submit a number of certificates to GoI, before any proposal for diversion under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 can be considered. This is to include letters from each of the affected gram sabhas, indicating that all formalities/processes under the FRA have been carried out, and that they give their consent to the proposed diversion.

On the contrary, as per official Kanker District data, no community forest claims have been settled in the Bhanupratappur Division of Kanker. Likewise, Government of Chhattisgarh data shows the number of “pending, partially accepted, rejected, referred back and approved” community claims as 0 in all categories. Further, the requisite letters from the concerned gram sabhas referred to above have not been obtained by the government, nor have the affected gram sabhas been consulted. The government should put an immediate halt to the execution of project related activities until all community rights under the FRA have been rigorously settled.

12. In the landmark judgment, Orissa Mining Corporation Vs Ministry of Environment and Forests and Others, 2011 the Supreme Court rejects the government's narrow definition of Project Affected People which violates the nature and spirit of the Forest Rights Act (2006). Similarly, in the case of Rowghat Mining Project the company has callously portrayed the cost to oustees to be “nil” (see the company's Application for Forest Clearance p.26 part 2). In actuality tribals from a vast region extending to the North Bastar Region to the South to Abujmad and to the West to Gadchirolli District in Maharashtra frequent the Rowghat Hills for their community and individual livelihood rights which have been enshrined in the The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006.

13. Google Earth images show the presence of at least 26 forest settlements on the border of the mine (See Annexure 2). The Rapid EIA prepared by NEERI in 2006 lists at least 35 villages as within a 15 km radius of the proposed mining site (see
Annexure 3). In fact, each one of the sub-blocks of Rowghat mines is named after a village (ie Anjrel, Tarhul, Takrel). The EIA further goes on to provide a detailed depiction of these forest dependent communities, which are comprised of Madia Gonds and Abuj Madia and Madia, and concludes that the tribals and the Matla Reserved Forest have an “interdependent relationship” with the study area.

14. Tens of thousands of tribals consider a region that encompasses (but extends beyond) the 2028.797 ha proposed ML area to be sacred and essential to their religious needs, cultural heritage and existence. At the helm of Rao Dongri block of Rowghat Mines sits a famous temple dedicated to the goddess Rao Devi that thousands of tribal come to worship every year. In fact, the tribal people of this region believe that Rao Devi is embodied by the Rowghat Hills. Throughout the mining lease area, especially leading to Anjrel Block traditional places of worship dot the face of the mountain. These religious rights were never recognized by the project proponent—in fact it has provided fraudulent NOCs from Sarpanches, stating that there are no sites of religious significance within the affected lease area.

15. Section 3.1(i), 3.1(e) and Section 5 of the FRA makes it clear that the forest dwelling tribals of the larger region which access the Rowghat Hills are to be treated not only as right holders entitled to grazing and minor forest product collection, but also as the statutory body empowered with the authority to protect the Rowghat Hills from any activity which adversely affects the animals, wildlife or biodiversity and preserve it from destructive practices affecting their cultural and natural heritage. On the contrary, gram sabhas have not been consulted nor informed about the destruction that will be wrought on their traditional resources.

16. The study area examined in the Rapid EIA, reports that medicinal plant species comprise 35% of total flora of the study area. The local tribal people have an extensive knowledge system centered on the collection, identification and application of these medicines. The diversion of community forest land to the Bhilai Steel Plant without the rigorous application of Forest Rights Act, 2006 violates the tribal peoples rights to access biodiversity, intellectual property, and traditional knowledge under Section 3 (1) (k) of the Act.

17. Section 12B (a) of the FRA also specifically provides for Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups and requires that the process for the recognition of their rights be expedited and be based on consultations with the traditional institutions of such groups. It is well known that the Rowghat Hills is a place of religious worship for the Abuj Madia (a PVTG of Bastar region). It is shocking that the state has so blatantly disregarded their rights under this act.

18. In April 2013 when a team of CBA members visited Phulpar village, one of the
Rowghat mining-affected villages, in attempt to carry out a training on the implementation of FRA, a battalion of over 100 paramilitary personnel detained three of the resource persons, threatened them, and seized their mobile phones and ID cards. The team was then instructed told by Superintendent of Police, Kanker, not to visit the Rowghat area. This incident, along with the recent attempt to brand Professor Nandini Sundar as a “Naxal ideologue” after she raised objections to the disregard of law in the implementation of Rowghat mines, shows that the administration is utilizing extreme and undemocratic measures to execute the project at any cost, even if the cost is the lives of the tribal people.

The project has, perhaps intentionally, sought to cover up displacement of entire villages and has failed to carry out a legal procedure for the same. According to the EIA/EMP the Anjrel Village, would have to be “displaced entirely for establishment of Explosive Magazine” and the Rowghat Railway Station would be built “at the present location of Phulpar Village” (see p.3.64 of Rapid EIA Report). It is shocking that the company has just casually mentioned the displacement of two tribal villages but has not formally drafted any plan to rehabilitate the displaced villagers, nor assessed the total cost to oustees in its EIA, nor has it informed the concerned gram sabhas about the usurping of these villages. This aside from being a violation of the constitutional right to life is a glaring violation of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 or PESA of the Schedule Five of the Constitution of India, which states that the Gram Sabha shall be consulted before making the acquisition of land in the Scheduled Areas for development projects and before resettling or rehabilitating persons affected by such projects in the Scheduled Areas (section 4 i).

19. Rather than submitting copies of requisite gram sabha resolutions BSP has produced six “Non Objection Certificates (NOCs)” in its application for Forest Clearances. Three of the six NOCs the company has furnished are partially illegible and/or lack key specifications (like village and designation of the signatories). For example the NOCs are signed by Sarpanches from Khadkagaov, Sulega, Karlapal Villages, one Sushil Kumar Umeti from an illegible village, one Shina Gavre from an unspecified village, and Meghnath Ghuv from Talabeda Village in its application for Forest Clearance. Aside from these NOCs not having any legal validity as the Sarpanch is not the legal authority to give permission for land diversion, the copy and paste nature of these statements shows that these statements were drafted by company officials. Interviews conducted with the Sarpanches of Talabeda, Baihasalebhat, and Kolar in April 2013 also revealed that these statements were

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signed under duress and without the signatories having any prior knowledge about the project or its effects to environment, people, and economy. Since the company does not have consent to operate in the Rowghat Hills from the gram sabha, it is in violation of PESA, 1996 and should immediately be halted.

20. In 2013 the Chhattisgarh PUCL found that in and around BSP’s proposed mining lease area, Special Police Officers are conducting regular attacks on villagers in contravention to the Supreme Court’s order in *Nandini Sundar & Ors. Vs State of Chhattisgarh*, 2011. In villages that are to be taken over for mining, particularly Anjrel Village of Narayanpur District, the local police with the support of CRPF/BSF personnel conduct regular attacks and instruct the people to “move to Narayanpur or join the SPOs”. Additionally 15 families have left this village out of fear in the past 3 years. The proposed construction of 22 Border Security Force camps by the Project Proponent along with the deployment and training of at least six battalions to protect the Rowghat mines, will only escalate an already critical human rights crisis. Any acquisition of land for the construction of paramilitary camps should be immediately halted until these human rights violation are redressed.

21. It has been reported that the 500 families who have lost their lands for Rowghat railway line in 2008-09 are “reeling under acute poverty” and have yet to receive proper compensation or jobs. Farmers who have been compensated “received a meager Rs 20,000 to 50,000 per acre against the actual cost of Rs 5 lakh” (See Annexure 4). In actuality, the compensation should have been provided to them at the rate of 8 lakh as per the state policy, only after carrying out the legal procedures under PESA and FRA. The complete rehabilitation of these persons should be carried out by the project proponent prior to any commencement of mining activity.

22. On the one hand, the Bhilai Steel Plant claims it is facing a shortage of iron ore and thus must urgently commence mining in Rowghat Hills. At the same time, in the Kacche Mines at Ari Dongri in Kanker District, BSP has relinquished its mining lease to a private company, Godawari Ispat Ltd on the false premise that the quality of the ore left in Kacche is substandard and that the mine was unprofitable for BSP. Whereas, the quality of ore in this mine, being of high grade (>65% Fe2+) is compatible with BSPs expansion requirements. Similarly, while BSP develops all of the necessary facilities for this mine including the railway line, roads, paramilitary camps, the state intends to transfer this mine to private companies in the long run. Thus, the claims that the mine will be beneficial to the public interest are clearly false.

23. The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification, 2006 issues guidelines to conduct a public consultation for industrial projects in a “transparent manner.

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6 Details of this plan are outlined in IBM’s Report on Formulation of Regional Development Plan of Iron Ore Deposits in Chhattisgarh State, 2002.
ensuring widest possible public participation" involving “concerned persons having a plausible stake in the environmental aspects of the project”. The public hearing for this mine was conducted on 25th June 2007 and 29th June 2007 in Narayanpur and Antagarh towns respectively. In the Narayanpur public hearing minutes it is stated that “villagers have given their permission for the Rowghat Project". Ironically, in the minutes there are only comments recorded from one villager from the affected area, who expressed blatant disapproval for the project. The remainder of the comments recorded are from individuals from Narayanpur town, 20 Km from the proposed ML area.

24. The official minutes from the public hearings state that, “As per the rules, information regarding Public Hearing was provided through the Local and National news papers one month in advance.” The Narayanpur public hearing minutes continue, “Copy of draft E.I.A Report and Summary E.I.A. Report (Hindi and English), both soft(CD) and hard copy has been provided to all concerned people at Collectorate Office, Narainpur District, Zilla Panchayat Jagdalpur, Nagar Panchayat Narainpur, Secretary of Business and Trade Center Jagdalpur, Sarpanch, Gram Panchayat Khadkagaon, Sarpanch, Gram Panchayat Bijlee, Sarpanch, Gram Panchayat Sulega (Khodgaon), Sarpanch Gram Panchayat Kandaadi of Kurusnaar Block, Narainpur District” and “Sarpanch, Gram Panchayat Talabeda, Sarpanch, Gram Panchayat Baihasalebhat, Sarpanch, Gram Panchayat Bhaisgaon, Sarpanch, Gram Panchayat Kolar, Sarpanch, Gram Panchayat Khodgaon of Antagarh Block, Kanker District.”

In actuality the draft EIA Report was never distributed, nor made public prior to the hearing, rather the Executive Summary of the EIA Report which was provided in English, a language which is inaccessible to the locals of this region, was given to a select few individuals on the day of the hearing. The failure of the regulatory authority to inform villagers of the hearing one month in advance would be prohibitive to meaningful public participation, as Antagarh is nearly 60 km and Narayanpur is 20 km by road from the mining-affected area.

Even if we accept what is written in the minutes as fact, the question would remain that why were only these nine Sarpanches selected to receive official information about the project when there are at least 35 tribal villages within 15 km radius of the project, and many which are much closer to the proposed mining project than the mentioned villages.

25. As per the EIA Notification, 2006, section 7 (vii) a final [comprehensive] EIA Report must be prepared after taking into consideration the outcome of the public hearing and public consultations. However as per RTI information obtained by members of CBA from the Ministry of Environment and Forests, the company has only made
public a Rapid EIA Report dated September 2006, which was undertaken using
data collected during the winter season of 2005-2006 only, rather than a three
season study which is the minimum requirement for a comprehensive EIA Report.
Till date no comprehensive EIA Report has been made public. In fact, when
members of CBA requested the final EIA/EMP Report from the project proponent
via Right to Information, it was denied to them on grounds that sharing it “would be
detrimental to the business interests of the company”.

26. Public consultations conducted by CBA in April 2013 show that the people from the
entire region including those who will be the most severely affected are unaware of
the project or the projected impacts. In fact even the Rapid EIA Report p.2.181
states that “most of the [affected] people are not aware about the proposed project”.

27. In 2009 the EAC recommended that the company submit an action plan “for
abatement and compensation for damage to nearby agricultural land/common
property land (if any) due to mining activity” to the Ministry within six months. Till
date no such plan has been presented to the affected communities.

While providing a small and almost negligible amount of employment to the local
population, this project hits the weakest members of Indian society the hardest and
violates the rights of the Bastar tribals as enshrined in Schedule Five of the Constitution of
India, the PESA Act, 1996 and the Forest Rights Act, 2006. We, on all of the grounds listed
above, call on the responsible authorities at all levels to put an immediate halt to the
proposed devastation that will be wrought by this project to a vibrant region of tremendous
cultural, historical, and environmental significance.

Signed,

Conveners Collective—Chhattisgarh Bachao Andolan
Annexure 1:
Below: A screen shot of The Ministry of Environment and Forests website showing that BSP has availed forest clearance for Prospecting of Rowghat Iron Ore Mines on 03/08/2009, the same date it has been granted Forest Clearance for mining in the same area. Website accessed on 3/23/2013.
Annexure 2:

Above: Google satellite images show the presence of at least 26 forest settlements on the border of Rowghat Iron Ore Mines.
Annexure 3:

Above: This map prepared by NEERI for the Rapid EIA Report shows the presence of 35 villages within 15 km of the ML area.
Raoghat project-hit people
reeling under acute poverty

Five years on, displaced farmers not yet given compensation, jobs

By Manish Sahu
BHANUPRATAPUR, Sep. 3

THE famous Raoghat Railways Project, that paved the way for BJP into clinching a high pedestal at the popularity chart boosting its chances in the upcoming Assembly polls, has a murky story of staggering exploitation lurking in its background. Almost 900 families, who were displaced from their farmland during the year 2008-09 by State Government for laying the railway lines, are reeling under acute poverty, since the last five years without a monetary compensation, jobs or hopes.

Lands of several farmers from Bastar, Kanker, Bhanaupratapur and Belod were acquired with the promise of high-paying permanent jobs in Railway Department and compensation, calculated with reference to number of acres acquired.

However, throughout the past three years, displaced farmers of Kanker district have been tussling with Chhattisgarh State Revenue Department and Crisis Management Department for receiving right compensation against the acquired land. However, farmers were only distributed Rs 25,000 to 50,000 per acre compensation against the actual cost of land Rs 5 lakh per acre.

On March 15, 2011, farmers raised their voice for jobs and compensation in a public demonstration. Following which, Upper Collector (North Bastar), Kanker assured the villagers to fulfill their demands and distribute compensation of Rs 5 lakh per acre.

Till date, the promise remains unfulfilled. In order to keep the farmers in dilemma about the whole situation, South East Central Railway, Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh on April 8, 2011, announced the recruitment of a family member of each of the displaced families, qualified minimum secondary education, under pay band of Rs 5,200 to Rs 20,000 and grade wage of Rs 1,800. They also announced to induct only the candidate between 18 to 33 years of age for general, laxity of 5 years to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes and laxity of 3 years to candidates belonging to Other Backward Classes. Department invited and collected applications till May 16, 2011.

Once the applications were sent, the entire Railway Division simply forgot to process the same.

After waiting for more than a year, displaced families staged protest for continuous days during June 2012, department backed from its promise and did not provide jobs to any of the displaced family member. (Contd on page 5)

Yet again the department took the demands into consideration and announced just 10 recruitments. To add insult to injury, they even described that only 53 of the applicants made it to the list of eligibles, although the beneficiaries claim that only those candidates had applied for the jobs, from each of 453 families, who met the underlined criteria. Several other candidates were randomly recruited to the vacancies.

Now, the Farmers claim that the Railways and the State Government has made a mockery out of their misery and robbed them off their sole source of survival, their land. Almost four years since their unceremonious evacuation, the farmers are now considering migrating to other states for jobs simply to stay afloat in this world. Piqued family members wrote a letter addressing President and Governor of India on May 4, 2013. Goes without saying, they are yet to receive an answer.