

F. No. 6-73/2011.WL  
**Government of India**  
**Ministry of Environment and Forests**  
(Wildlife Division)

Paryavaran Bhawan, CGO Complex,  
Lodhi Road, New Delhi 110003

Dated 31.08.2012

**OFFICE MEMORANDUM**

**Subject: Permission for installation of Coastal surveillance RADAR and power supply source at Narcondam Island Sanctuary – reg.**

A proposal was received in the Ministry of Environment and Forests for consideration of the Standing Committee of National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) from Indian Coast Guard, Headquarters Region (A&N), seeking diversion of 0.637 ha of forest land for installation of coastal surveillance RADAR and power supply source on Narcondam Island within the Narcondam Island Sanctuary in Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The proposal was duly recommended by the Andaman and Nicobar Island Administration along with the concurrence of the SBWL.

2. The Island is on the easternmost location, having only 6.82 km<sup>2</sup> of geographical area with an altitude from sea level to about 700 msl. It harbours tropical mixed forests and within these forests, a tiny population (about 350) of Narcondam Hornbill, an endemic species on this Island. The bird represents unique endemism, and is in globally endangered category of IUCN, and in Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act 1972 also. The area earmarked for the proposed installation of equipment, and the area covered by the proposed road leading to installation site from the shore is the one which is inhabited and frequently used by these birds. The proposal of Coast Guard is a part of the chain of static RADAR sensors all along the Indian coast for remote monitoring of activities in coastal sea. Narcondam Island is the site for one of several such units planned along the entire coast.

3. The proposal was considered in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee of NBWL held on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2011, wherein a site inspection was prescribed, and the same was entrusted to Dr A Rahmani, Member, along with a representative of the Chief Wildlife Warden, A&N Islands, for submitting a report to the Committee after site inspection. Site inspection was carried out and the report submitted by Dr Rahmani proposed that the proposal should not be recommended due to the unique status of this habitat, being the only abode of the highly

endemic species of Narcondam Hornbill. The report was considered in the 25<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee held on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2012.

4. Subsequently, several representations were received in the Ministry related to the conservation value of the Island and the unique Narcondam Hornbill also. It is understood that the majority of the nests of the small population of this species (less than 350 birds) are located at about 200 meter height, which is generally the same area in the Island, which is to be used by the project for installation of RADAR. For the duration of egg-laying and chick-rearing, the females shed the flight feathers and are incapable of flight. In the circumstances, even if the area to be used for the project is less than 0.7 hectares, disturbances and damage caused to the habitat due to cutting of road through the area, and because of the regular functioning of RADAR system, is likely to cause irreversible adverse impact on this unique bird, and can even wipe out the whole population of this bird, which is less than 350.

5. As far as the project of coastal surveillance RADAR of the Coast Guard is concerned, an alternative analysis in terms of choice of technology and other options for locating the surveillance system have not been elaborated in the proposal. Ministry is of the view that the other options for the purpose, like installation of off-shore structures and several other viable options are available, which can spare the unique habitat of Narcondam Island from disturbance. However, there is no such option available for the Hornbill whose survival may get seriously threatened if the establishment of proposed RADAR is allowed on the Narcondam Island.

6. In view of the aforesaid, the proposal for diversion of 0.637 ha of forest land for installation of Coastal Surveillance RADAR and power supply source at Narcondam Island Sanctuary can not be recommended. The proponents are advised to constitute a committee of experts to study and explore other alternatives like aerial, satellite, off shore, ship-based or land-based surveillance systems at other islands, for ensuring the defence and economic security of the country. The experts may represent the disciplines of :-

- (i) Security and sea water surveillance (possibly DRDO)
- (ii) Islands and marine ecology
- (iii) Marine structural engineering
- (iv) Coast Guards

7. This issues with the approval of the Minister of State (Independent Charge) Environment and Forests, and the Chairperson of the Standing Committee for NBWL.

Jayee 31/8/12  
(Vivek Saxena)

Deputy Inspector General of Forests (WL)

1. Chief Secretary, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Port Blair
2. Principal Secretary Forests and PCCF, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Port Blair
3. Principal Secretary (WL) and Chief Wildlife Warden, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Port Blair

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