

Mining scam in Orissa

1933. SHRI BHAGIRATHI MAJHI: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has taken any action to investigate the mines scam in Orissa which is a great loss of revenue to the country and also to the State Government;

(b) whether Government would take this case under CBI or any other subsidiary investigation agency which is under the Central Government to have a fair investigation; and

(c) if so, by when all the related issues would be investigated and the same may be brought to the notice of the House?

THE MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI B.K. HANDIQUE): (a) to (c) Some instances of illegal mining of iron ore and manganese ore in Keonjhar district of Orissa have come to the notice of the Government. The Indian Bureau of Mines in preliminary investigation has found evidence of illegal mining of 1957 tonnes of iron ore and 56453 tonnes of manganese ore of a value of approximately Rs.23.39 crores in one of the mining areas by Ms. Ram Bahadur Thakur Limited (RBTL). The report of Indian Bureau of Mines was referred to the State Government to take suitable action

The State Government of Orissa has informed that :-

- A Vigilance investigation is underway
- Administrative enquiry is underway
- The State Government has arrested 8 persons (of which 6 are Government officials and 1 retired officer of the State Government) on 12.8.2009, who were subsequently released on bail.
- State Level Task Force has been reconstituted under the Chairmanship of Chief Secretary.
- All the District Collectors have been directed to hold District Level Task Force meetings regularly, verify the lease hold areas and take appropriate action.
- The State Level Enforcement Squad constituted earlier has now been strengthened and enforcement activities intensified.
- The Department has introduced newly designed Transit Passes printed in Government Printing Press.

The State Government has also reported on 16.11.2009 that it has taken the following additional action in this matter:

- 128 mining leases for various minerals including iron ore, manganese, chromite, limestone, dolomite and quartzite, where application for renewal of lease had been pending have been verified and mining operations suspended.

- 482 licences granted by the State for trading and storage of minerals have been suspended/cancelled.
- State Level Enforcement squad is conducting intensive inspection of non grant areas to check for illegal mining.
- The Mines Department in the State has begun verification of the mining lease boundaries, for which remote sensing technology is also proposed to be used.
- Four Committees have been constituted at State level for setting up integrated check gates, Revenue Intelligence, Study rationalization of weigh-bridges, and Study to deploy IT application in mineral administration.
- Filling up vacant post in the Mines Department of the State Government to enhance enforcement.

The State Government has further reported on 24.11.2009 in this matter that:-

- Vigilance enquiries have been converted into investigation by registering an FIR under various sections of law.
- As on date, investigation is under progress in 7 cases and as estimated by vigilance, total estimated loss of revenue to the State exchequer is Rs.526.13 crore.
- The investigation is continuing and due action will be taken based on final findings. The State Level Enforcement Squad (SLES) which undertook intensive enforcement from 10th to 19th October, 09 conducted raids on different areas and during one such raid, the SLES members were attacked by illegal operators.
- Orissa Government has noticed that mafias are operating across the State borders of Orissa and Jharkhand states and in order to check illegal mining activities, matter has been taken up at senior level drawing attention to illegal inter-state mining operations and suggesting that a common platform should be set up so that team of officers from both the States can plan and work together.
- Between 10.11.2009 and 19.11.2009, the State Government has seized 4 vehicles, 19513 metric tonne of iron ore, 158 metric tonne of manganese ore valued at Rs.2.27 crore.

The situation is being closely monitored by the Central Government for ensuring strict action against the guilty.

Allocation of iron ore mines in Jharkhand

1934. SHRI N.R. GOVINDARAJAR: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

- (a) whether recently some cases of misuse of power in allocation of mineral resources have been noticed by Government in case of iron ore allotment pertaining to Jharkhand;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and