

issue of final approval, the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) received complaints including a representation from Amnesty International on violation of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 and the Scheduled Tribes and Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006. MoEF has constituted a committee to look in to this aspect.

Disappearance of seized iron ore

2351. SHRI K.N. BALAGOPAL: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has noticed disappearance of close to a million tonnes of seized iron ore;

(b) if so, the details of persons held responsible and whether the investigation has been completed; and

(c) whether any other similar cases of disappearance and shortage of iron ore have been reported recently?

THE MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI B.K. HANDIQUE): (a) and (b) As per available information, the Karnataka State Forest Department has seized about 8,05,991.083 metric tonnes of ore without valid permits. A Forest offence case was filed vide FIR No. 17/2009-10 dated 15.3.2010 under section 2(7)(b)(iv) 62, 80, 24 Karnataka Forest Act and Rule 143 and 162 of Karnataka Forest Rules. The seized material was kept at the disposal of Port Conservator, Belikere Port for safe custody. However, on the basis of a report on 20.6.2010 that the seized material has been exported illegally, the Karnataka State Forest Department investigated the matter, which revealed that 6.00 lakh metric tonnes of seized material has been illegally exported. The state Government has initiated action against the erring Port Conservator and he has been kept under suspension. Further the investigation by the Hon'ble Lokayukta and State Corps of Detective is in progress and stringent action would be initiated against the culprits. Hon'ble High Court of Karnataka has also prohibited export of ore seized in the Belekeri port. State Government of Karnataka vide notification dated 28.7.2010 has banned issue of Mineral Despatch Permit for the purpose of export of iron ore till further orders.

(c) No, Sir. However, instances of illegal mining of iron ore have come to the notice of Government.