

We were not given a hearing: Reddy's mining firm

Obulapuram Mining Company (OMC), owned by rebel Karnataka Tourism Minister G. Janaradhan Reddy, Saturday said it was not given an opportunity to present its version by the Supreme Court's Central Empowered Committee (CEC), which recommended the controversial firm be asked stop illegal mining in Andhra Pradesh.

'The committee had no jurisdiction to submit such a report as there was no direction from the Supreme Court to that effect. The CEC is not even a party to the writ petition,' company managing director B.V. Srinivas Reddy said in a statement from Hyderabad.

In its report, submitted to the apex court, the committee said OMC had encroached upon mineral-rich areas outside their mining leases and was carrying out large-scale illegal mining in non-allotted reserved forest areas adjoining Obalapuram and H.Siddapuram villages in the border district of Ananthapur in Andhra Pradesh.

Terming the report hasty and biased, the company said the committee's observations and recommendations were made without giving it an opportunity to present its version of facts.

'It is an ex-parte report since OMC was not heard before making such a report,' the company said in the statement.

The company also accused the committee of preparing the report unilaterally despite the Andhra Pradesh government requesting it Oct 5 to issue notices to it and other affected parties.

'For instance, it is clear that the prayers extracted in the first page of the CEC report and its recommendations have no relationship,' the company pointed out.

As the matter is sub-judice before the Supreme Court, the company said it was restraining from making any adverse comments on the CEC report.

Noting that the report was contrary to the Andhra Pradesh High Court judgements in 2008-09 and the Supreme Court order of Aug 24, the company said issues relating to environment were not dealt with.

'There is no green issue involved. The boundary dispute between two private firms (OMC and Bellary Iron Ores Ltd) is not the concern of CMC as the dispute is adjudicated by the Andhra Pradesh High Court. Its judgement became final as no appeal was made against it,' Reddy said.

The report was prepared following a writ petition in the Supreme Court by Tapal Ganesh of Bellary in north Karnataka against illegal mining activities carried out by OMC and three other mining firms in violation of the Forest (Conservation) Act.

'Mining activities should be permitted to be resumed only after fresh demarcation of the boundaries of the mining leases was completed,' the report recommended.

Janaradhan Reddy and his elder brother and state revenue minister G. Karunakara Reddy belong to Bellary though they originally hail from Ananthapur district.

The committee also pulled up the Andhra Pradesh government for 'over-looking' the illegal mining activities of OMC and other firms in the reserved forest of its border district.

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