

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3937
ANSWERED ON:18.08.2010
ILLEGAL MINING IN MEGHALAYA
Gandhi Smt. Maneka Sanjay

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the foreign-owned Lafarge Umiam Mining Private Limited (LUMPL) has contravened the Forest Clearance Act (FCA) and started limestone mining operations in Meghalaya without taking proper clearances;
- (b) if so, whether the Supreme Court has found that it has violated FCA;
- (c) if so, whether inspite of this, the Ministry has rushed a special team to the site to provide out of turn clearance for the project; and
- (d) if so, the details of the promoters of the project and the need for seeking speedy clearance for the project?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH)

(a) & (b) The Lafarge Umiam Mining Private Limited (LUMPL) started mining of limestone at Phalangkaruh, Nongtra in East Khasi Hills District of Meghalaya after signing lease agreement with Shella Dorbar and on the basis of a letter issued by the concerned Divisional Forest Officer certifying that the mining area was non-forest land. Subsequently, during an inspection, by the officials of the Regional Office of the Ministry of Environment & Forests located in Shillong, it was noted that the mining area in fact was a forest land. M/s. LUMPL were therefore, directed to stop mining and seek approval of the Central Government under the Forest (conservation) Act, 1980. The proposal received from the Government of Meghalaya seeking prior approval of the Central Government for limestone mining by M/s LUMPL was processed and as per procedure, in vogue at that time, the positive recommendations dated 09.08.2007 of the Forest Advisory Committee, a statutory committee constituted under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, were submitted to the Supreme Court of India with a copy to the Central Empowered Committee (CEC). M/s LUMPL requested the Supreme Court for modifications in the conditions and sought interim relief. The Supreme Court vide Order dated 23.11.2007, as an interim measure, permitted M/s LUMPL to continue limestone mining and asked certain information.

With the approval of the Supreme Court vide its Order dated 12.04.2010, Ministry of Environment & Forests issued in-principal approval order for lime stone mining over the 116.589 ha. of forest land in line with the conditions prescribed by the CEC/ Supreme Court.

During one of the hearings in the case, the Supreme Court directed to stop mining. M/s LUMPL to get certain studies on impact of mining on ecology of area etc. conducted for its submission to the Court. The matter thus is in the Court.

(c) Before issue of in-principal approval for diversion of 116.589 ha of forest land for lime stone mining & other ancillary activities in favour of M/s. LUMPL, the Ministry of Environment & Forests constituted a team under the Chairmanship of the Regional Chief Conservator of Forests, North Eastern Regional Office, Shillong to visit the site to obtain first hand information on the aspects such as assessment of compliance of conditions stipulated, impact of mining on forest and wildlife, quantity of limestone lying in the yard etc.

(d) The promoter of the project is Lafarge Umiam Mining Private Limited having its registered office in Shillong, Meghalaya. It is fully owned by the Lafarge Surma Cement Limited incorporated in November 2007 in Bangladesh.

The promoter of the project has sought speedy clearance to its mining project to ensure supply of limestone to a cement plant set up by Lafarge Surma Cement Limited at Chhatak, Sylhet in Bangladesh.

Approval to the said mining project is also important for sustaining friendly relations with the neighboring country, Bangladesh and it has ramifications on our external relations particularly, on different agreement with Bangladesh.