SCCL ‘violating’ environment norms, says panel

Fresh approvals not taken while renewing mining leases

The expert appraisal committee of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEF) has pointed out violation of environment impact assessment notification amounting to illegal mining by Singareni Collieries Company Ltd in case of its 13 mines and has sought the Ministry’s advice on the issue.

In its meeting held on March 21 and 22 at New Delhi, the appraisal panel has confirmed the violation of environment impact assessment (EIA) notification in case of Ravindra Khani No. 8 Incline, Ramagundam Opencast-I Expansion Phase-II, Godavarikhani-7, Venkatesh Khani No. 7 Incline, Koyagudem Opencast-II Expansion, Kasipet-1 Incline, Dorli Opencast-I Expansion, Jalagam Vengal Rao Opencast-I Expansion, Indaram Khani-1A Incline and the cluster of underground coal mines – Godavarikhani No.1 & 3, Godavarikhani No.2 & 2A Inclines and Godavarikhani No.5 Incline.

Action recommended

The MoEF panel observed that environmental clearance (EC) for the projects should have been obtained while renewal of the mining leases and as it was not yet done it amounts to violation of the EIA notification. The committee has recommended the State government and State Pollution Control Board (SPCB) to take action against the project proponent under the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act and not to give consent to operate or till the projects are granted EC.

Further, the committee recommended the project proponent to conduct public hearings, prepare environment management plans, to submit bank guarantee equivalent to the amount of remedial plan and natural and community resource augmentation plan with the SPCB prior to the grant of EC. Besides, the project proponent is liable to pay compensation against the illegal mining under the provisions of Mines and Minerals (Development and Regularisation) Act.

While deferring the proposals for issuance of recommendation for EC, the expert committee has decided to seek advice of the ministry on the procedures to appraise such cases including where credible action for violation of the EP Act is not visible.

The committee has also pointed out that production of coal was 41.321 million tonnes in excess of the quantity permitted in the EC for five mines during the period from 2007-08 to 2016-17.