
Villagers near Wani North division of CIL WCL protesting

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Times of India reported that villagers near Wani perceive Coal India Limited's Western Coalfields Limited as their enemy number one, with their quality of their life deteriorating sharply ever since WCL began mining in the area.

Residents of Aheri, Besa Borgaon, Nilapur, Bramni, Kolra, Pimpri and Borgaon villages, which lie near the mines coming under the Wani North division of WCL, said that mining activities have affected their health, income and peace of mind.

Mr Vinayak Hepat of Besa said that since the mining activities started the water level had gone down sharply in the area creating a severe drinking water scarcity. The WCL staff lives in their townships and is least bothered about us. They won't care even if we die of thirst.

Mr Mahim Sheikh of Wani who regularly comes to these villages for business said that the sound of blasting is so loud that it is affecting the hearing of most villagers. I challenge any city slicker to stay in these villages for just one day. When they undertake blasting, the earth shakes with such intensity that you feel that the day of deliverance has arrived.

Mr Vijay Pidurkar member of Yavatmal Zilla Parishad said that while WCL wanted the villagers' lands for mining, it was always reluctant to help them. He charged that WCL's social welfare activities are a sham and this is causing the strong discontent among residents of the area. He said that when WCL acquired land belonging to Borgaon residents it was supposed to appoint a nodal officer so that the landless laborers of these villages could form a cooperative society, which would then bid for WCL works up to INR 4 crore. However, 10 years have passed but WCL has not appointed the officer. The laborers of Borgaon are illiterate and hence the cooperative society is in cold storage. WCL has done this to protect its contractors, who continue to get lucrative contracts.

Mr Pidurkar pointed out that "WCL officers are well aware that transportation of coal by truck to Wani town is badly affecting the crops in the region. However, they are doing nothing to develop the railway line to Wani North area, which was planned way back in 1984. They have also ignored recommendations of NEERI to develop a rope way."

He said that the mining company was reluctant to pay compensation to farmers whose crops have been damaged due to coal dust. In 2004, we had launched an agitation to demand compensation for 239 farmers in Wani North area. However, 5 years later the WCL board has sanctioned just INR 0.80 million as community development fund for 5 affected villages. Where does the question of community development arise? We are demanding compensation for our crops.

(Sourced from Times of India)

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