

55

ORISSA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Case No.2226 of 2008.

Lingaraj Majhi & Others

.....Petitioners.

Date: 31st August 2010.

A large number of villagers of Rengopali in the district of Kalahandi in their petition dated 22-12-2008 alleged that environment of their village is badly affected by the Vedanta Alumina Refinery at Lanjigarh, as a result of which most of the people are suffering from TB, eye sore, malaria and other diseases.

On being noticed, the Collector, Kalahandi furnished a report vide his letter No.1796/Judl dated 20-12-09. It is stated in the report that the dust from the red-mud pond was found to be causing irritation in the eyes and M/s. Vedanta Alumina Ltd. was instructed to install one more sprayer in the pond, and the same was complied with. The report, however, does not appear to be supporting the other complaints and has summarised that the main demand of the villagers was to get their lands acquired by the company giving them all the benefits available to the displaced families under the new rehabilitation policy.

A copy of the report as above was sent to the petitioners for their response, if any. No response was received from them despite adequate time having been allowed for the purpose.

However, in view of the report of the Collector, Kalahandi that the dust out of the red-mud pond is causing irritation in the eyes, the Member Secretary, State Pollution Control Board (SPCB) was requested vide order of the Commission dated 24-12-2009 to take

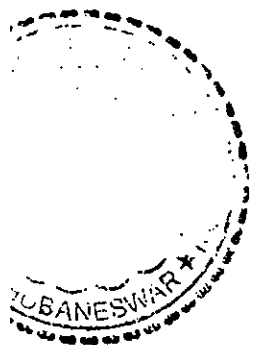
appropriate action in the matter immediately and furnish an action taken report to the Commission.

The Collector, Kalahandi, in the meanwhile furnished a further report vide his letter No.363/Jud1 dated 18-2-2010 stating that he visited the villages Bandhaguda and Rengopalli during this winter and found that the condition of Bandhaguda has remained more or less same and the level of pollution as well as noise pollution was not noticeable. In the village Rengopalli, he found that the situation has improved very much, but the remnant of the pollution was still there. The stinging sensation in the eyes has come down, but the causticity in the air was still detectable.

A copy of the report of the Collector, Kalahandi as above was sent to the Member Secretary, SPCB vide order of the Commission dated 2-3-2010 with a request to address the same in his report.

In compliance, the Member Secretary, SPCB furnished a report vide his letter No.7000 dated 24-4-2010. From his report, the Commission noted that the Pollution Control Board, in exercise of powers conferred by section 31(A) of the Air (PCP) Act, 1981 and section 33(A) of the Water (PCP) Act, 1974, has issued direction to M/s. Vedanta Alumina Ltd., At/PO-Lanjigarh, Dist-Kalahandi vide Board's letter No.6256 dated 12-4-2010 to take immediate corrective action to remove the following defects observed during the inspection carried out by the Board on 3-3-2010 and 4-3-2010.

- Permanent water sprinkling arrangements at the red mud pond has not yet been made to prevent generation of dust.
- Arrangement for reuse of decanted water of ash pond has not yet been made, rather it is stored for the time being.



- Ambient air quality monitored at Rengopali, Bundel and Bandhaguda villages shows the RSPM and SPM concentration above the stipulation standard. Similarly, RSPM concentration over the roof of the project office inside the factory premises is not meeting the prescribed standard.

The Member Secretary, SPCB was requested to send a further report on action taken by the plant as directed by the Pollution Control Board, in compliance to which the Member Secretary, SPCB has furnished a report vide his letter No.11171 dated 14-7-2010. In this report, he has stated that the following corrective measures have been taken up in compliance to the direction of the Pollution Control Board:

Observation/Direction

Permanent water sprinkling arrangements at the red mud pond has not yet been made to prevent generation of dust.

Corrective Measures

Permanent water sprinkling arrangement not provided in red mud pond. However, the entire wet mud pond has been kept in wet condition by regulating discharge of red mud into the pond at different locations for proper distribution of the slurry to keep the pond in wet condition. No visible dust emission was observed from the pond area.



Arrangement for reuse of decanted water of ash pond has not yet been made,

Laying of recycling pipeline near decantation pond is under progress.

rather it is stored for the time being.

There is no overflow from ash pond. Less quantity of water is generated due to adoption of high concentration ash slurry disposal practice by the industry.

Ambient air quality monitored at Rengopali, Bundel and Bandhaguda villages shows the RSPM and SPM concentration above the stipulated standard. Similarly, RSPM concentration over the roof of the project office inside the factory premises is not meeting the prescribed standard.

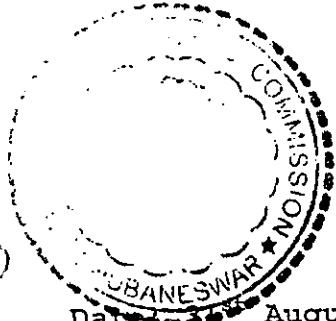
Ambient air quality was monitored in industrial and residential area in respect of SPM & RSPM which are found to be within the prescribed standard. The air pollution control devices were found to be working satisfactorily.

It is also reported that the inspecting officers have carried out the ambient air quality monitoring at different locations within and outside the plant premises as well as at different locations of human habitation and have found the same to be within prescribed limit for industrial area as well as residential area. Moreover, water samples from the area and the neighbourhood has been tested and found to contain PH value within the prescribed standard.

In view of the report as above which confirms that adequate corrective measures have been taken for protection of environment and the quality of ambient air and water is found to be within the prescribed standard,

the Commission does not consider it necessary to continue further enquiry into the matter.

With an advice to the State Pollution Control Board and the Collector, Kalahandi to keep a watch against any possible damage to the environment, the Commission would like to close the case.



Date: August 2010.

Dr. R.N. BOHIDAR
MEMBER