

# **The Goa Foundation**

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20 July 2011

## **GOA FOUNDATION PRESS NOTE ON MULGAO MINING DISASTER**

The Goa Foundation today criticised Vedanta/Sesa Goa company (owners of Dempo Mining Corporation mines at Bicholim/Mulgao) as well as the statutory authorities for their collective negligence which led to the Mulgao mining disaster on 16 July 2011. It urged the village community to take steps for irrevocable closure of all the Sesa Goa mines in the area as they are being operated in unsafe conditions and in violation of environment laws.

The Foundation stated that as per the records accepted by the Bombay High Court today (20 July, 2011), both the Sesa Goa mining leases involving Mulgao village did not have mandatory consent required from the Goa Pollution Control Board under the Air Pollution Act 1981 and the Water Pollution Control Act of 1974. These mines were operating for two years outside the framework of these environment laws.

The Pollution Control Board today informed the court by affidavit that the Board will issue directions suspending operations in these mines and the Court has directed that the report would be produced before it in two weeks time.

The Goa Foundation also has access to the mining plans of these two mining leases covering Mulgao. It is clear from the details in the mining plan that the mining was not been carried out in conformity with the approved plan. In fact, several overburden dumps have been located on the steep slopes of Mulgao and Lamgao villages which is not permitted as per mining regulations.

The mining company is also in violation of specific provisions of the MCR Rules and the lease agreement which require the entire lease to be demarcated which has not been done.

The 16 July disaster which was caused by dangerous mining practices aggravated by the heavy rainfall in the week has fatally damaged several of the five Mulgao lakes. Such large-scale destruction of water bodies which supply irrigation and water to the village is not permitted as per the mining plan and the conditions in the lease deed.

The Goa Foundation has demanded that the entire group of five mining leases belonging to Vedanta/Sesa Goa should be frozen pending an enquiry into the mining operations and their conformity with the mining regulations including the mining plan. The authorities need to know how much of ore was removed when the mine owners did not have statutory consent of the Pollution Control Board.

These demands are made in addition to any demands for compensation, punitive damages and buffer zone claimed by the village community of Mulgao.



(Dr Claude Alvares)  
Director