

CSE warns States over DMF rules



PNS ■ RANCHI

Warning the States over District Mineral Foundation (DMF), Environmentalist Sunita Narain said that under the rule proposed by Rajasthan the communities, actually affected from the mining activities, are being kept away from the decision making and also lacks representation of multi-stakeholders. Referring to Rajasthan's recently released draft DMF rules, Narain said that the rules failed to make the DMF an institution "of the people and for the people."

Union Ministry of Mines and Steel has recently proposed to create a District Mineral Foundation (DMF) in every district affected by mining, which will be funded by an additional levy related to royalty.

Center for Science and Environment on Friday organized a workshop in Ranchi on the subject 'District Mineral Foundation: Opportunities and Challenges' attended by journalists, activists and stakeholders from Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Odisha. According to the CSE states need to set rules to make DMFs functional.

According to Narain, though some of the state like Rajasthan has started doing it, they have been found to be non-inclusive and do not meet the objective of setting up DMFs. CSE also recommended clarity and transparency in developing guidelines on identifying ben-

eficiaries, allocating responsibilities and managing funds. She however, said that a positive approach must be adopted to make it come on the ground.

"There were many challenges with DMF, but we must also remain positive about the prospects. We need to make sure that DMF is developed," said Narayan.

She further added that, "This is evident in the mining-affected communities being kept out from every aspect of decision-making. The institutional design is deficient as it lacks multi stakeholder representation. It completely leaves out how the beneficiaries will be identified. There is little clarity and justification on how and where the money will be spent, rather some functions as such as spent on organizing melas, inter-school sports events which is completely meaningless. It largely renders DMF as another source of revenue to be used as 'general development fund.'"

If states began to follow the Rajasthan model, the core idea of having a DMF would be defeated," said Narain.

Expressing his views during the workshop, CSE Deputy Director General Chandra Bhushan on the other hand said that DMF being a benefit sharing mechanism with the people should be a people-centric institution where mining affected people must be made a part of the decision-making of how and where the money coming to DMF should be used. "But the way the states are envisioning DMF is really alarming for all of us," said Bhushan.

The CSE also released a set of recommendations for the governments in the mining states which includes, setting clear guidelines for identifying beneficiaries, specifying how and where the money should be spent, specify who should administer the funds, ensure effectiveness, transparency and accountability of DMF.