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NGO, civil society members move SC against coal block allocation

Thu 4 October 2012 23:11 [Soibam Rocky Singh](#) [New Delhi](#)

Former Chief Election Commissioner N. Gopalaswami, Admiral (retired) RH Tahiliani, and two former cabinet secretaries along with NGO Common Cause Thursday moved the Supreme Court seeking a court-monitored SIT investigation into the coal blocks allocation made by the central government from 1993 to 2012.

The petition has sought to quash the entire allocation of coal blocks to private companies made by the Union of India since 1993 alleging that blocks were allotted to few select private companies at no cost in a "completely arbitrary and non-transparent" manner, causing a huge loss to the public exchequer running into tens of lakhs of crores of rupees.

The petition filed through advocate Prashant Bhushan has alleged that the blocks were allotted to few companies "at breakneck speed" whom had "links with politicians or ministers."

The petition claimed that the show-cause notices issued by the government to few companies was a "sham since they obfuscate the real issue that the allocation was per-se illegal."

"The current CBI investigation only focuses on the misrepresentations made by a select few companies rather than the allocation process itself. This is not surprising since the CBI works as a department of the Central Government, and here the Prime Minister was directly in charge of the Ministry of Coal for most of the time," the petition alleged.

"The policy of Coal block allocation through competitive bidding was first announced by the Ministry of Coal (MoC) in June 2004. Nonetheless, a non transparent process for allocation of coal blocks for captive mining through a screening committee was resorted to," the petition stated.

It added that the irregularities in the allocation cost the national exchequer about Rs 1.86 lakh crore, according to the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG).

"Under these circumstances, the Petitioners have prayed for a thorough court monitored investigation through an Special Investigation Team (SIT) to unearth the full magnitude of the Coal Scam, which involves not only to the Ministry of Coal but also to the PMO (in charge of Ministry of Coal for intermittent period from 2004 to 2009), Ministry of Steel, Ministry of Power and various Governments of various States where the coal blocks are located," the petition added.

The petition has also sought to recover punitive damages from companies that made false claims and got blocks allocated.

Earlier on September 14 last, the apex court had on another petition against the coal block allocation issued notice to the centre.