

Tamil Nadu: Probe finds over 200 quarries violating rules in Karur district

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KARUR: A fact-finding team which probed the murder of an anti-stone quarry activist has asked the state government to form an expert committee to inquire into the illegal activities of stone quarries in Karur district and submit a white paper on it.

The nine-member team comprising Manapparai MLA P Abdul Samad of Manithaneya Makkal Katchi, Swaraj India party national president Christina Samy, R R Srinivasan of Poovulagin Nanbargal and advocates Mohan, Balamurugan, Kennedy and I Asir of HRD carried out day-long inspections at 26 quarries in K Paramathi area on Saturday.

It was here that activist R Jeganathan, 49, of Kalipalayam was mowed down by a truck on September 10. Based on a complaint by his wife, police arrested S Selvakumar, 39, owner of Annai stone quarry in Kalipalayam village, truck driver Sakthivel, 24, and labourer Ranjithkumar, 44, for murder.

The team met the victim's wife P Revathy and two sons. The team told reporters that none of the quarries they visited had any information displayed about their nature, extent, period of lease etc. This lack of basic information amounted to fundamental violation of mining rules. They said that over 200 quarries functioning in the district were dug to a depth of 350 feet or more. They mined the quarries beyond the permitted depth. They said the information provided by the officers about quarries was contradictory to what they found during the inspection.

Hence, they demanded that the government form an expert committee under the direct monitoring of the chief minister which should come out

with a white paper on the functioning of quarries. The team also insisted on providing security to social activists.

Saying that Jeganathan faced threats to his life a few times earlier, the team demanded that the government announce Rs 50 lakh compensation to his family as well as a government job to a member. The body of Jeganathan was accepted by the family on September 14 after four days of protest.

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