

Panel to probe illegal mining across country

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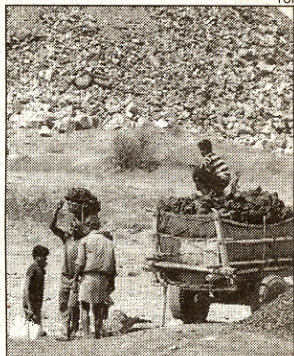
New Delhi: The Centre has decided to set up a commission under the Commissions of Inquiry Act, 1952, to investigate illegal mining of iron and manganese across the country.

With cases of rampant illegal mining in states like Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Andhra Pradesh coming to light, the commission, whose head will be chosen by the Prime Minister, will submit its report in 18 months.

The panel will also be tasked to submit interim reports.

The decision to set up the commission comes at a time when the government is considering a National Mining Regulatory Authority under the new Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act. The authority, which will have state-level branches, is expected to monitor and check illegal mining in future.

In what may add to UPA's political advantage, the inquiry could give a handle to the Centre over opposition-ruled Karnataka and Chhattisgarh while helping rein in



Tribals may get a 26% share of mining profits

mining groups' ever-increasing power in regional politics.

While the empowered group of ministers headed by finance minister Pranab Mukherjee did not meet as scheduled over the new MMDR Act last week, sources said there was a consensus on key provisions of the bill in the EGoM and the group will soon convey its recommendations to the Cabinet.

Mines minister B K Handique assured the Rajya Sabha that tribals would be given a 26% share from mining profits and justice would be done.