

ಪತ್ರಿಕಾ ತುಣುಕುಗಳು
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Conflict of interest? Ask CM, says Anand Singh

BJP leaders defend minister, say cases not proven in court

BENGALURU, DHNS

Forest Minister Anand Singh on Wednesday downplayed concerns of "conflict of interest" over his portfolio, but admitted that he had cases of mining and forest violations pending against him.

Singh, when contacted by *DH*, said the question of whether or not there was a conflict of interest should be posed to Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa. "Since the CM has made me a minister, he should answer this question," he said.

Speaking to reporters earlier in the day, Singh said that there were cases of "minor violations" against him. He likened this to cases of traffic violations against those who own vehicles. "Similarly, since our family has been involved in the mining business for long, it is natural that there are cases," Singh said.

According to his election affidavit, Singh has declared 15 pending cases against him under various sections of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act read with the Karnataka Forest Act. Of the 15, 11 are in the Forest department.

of the Karnataka Lokayukta in connection with alleged illegal mining, three by the Anti-Corruption Bureau of the CBI for corruption charges and one by the Forest department.

Two of Singh's Cabinet colleagues jumped to his defence. Deputy Chief Minister Laxman Savadi said the allegations against Singh were yet to be proven in court. "All cases are mere allegations that are not proven. The party will take a call after the cases are decided," he said.

Kannada & Culture Minister CT Ravi also toed the same line saying cases against Singh were still under investigation. "There are many who are accused in cases and are eventually ruled innocent in a court of law. Hence, we cannot say

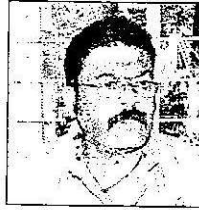
he is guilty when cases are being heard," Ravi said. This is the reason why Singh was inducted into the Cabinet, Ravi added.

The news of Singh's appointment as Forest minister

gained traction on social media.

No top leader of the Opposition Congress commented. Singh was a two-time BJP MLA from Vijayanagar (Balarai) until 2018, when he joined the Congress and won from its ticket. Last year, he defected to the BJP, winning the bye-election in December 2019.

Former Lokayukta N Santosh Hegde, who exposed illegal export of iron ore when he was in office, took a strong position against Singh's entry into the cabinet.



Anand Singh