

EC SENDS NOTICE TO SOREN OVER OFFICE-OF-PROFIT CHARGE

Relevant for: Indian Polity | Topic: Elections, Election Commission and the Electoral Reforms in India Incl. Political Parties

Hemant Soren

The Election Commission has sent a notice to Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren over an office-of-profit charge against him for allotment of a mining lease in his name last year, an EC official said on Monday.

Under Section 9A of the Representation of the People Act, Mr. Soren could face disqualification for entering into a government contract. The Opposition BJP in the State had raked up the issue earlier this year, demanding the resignation of the Chief Minister.

Former Jharkhand Chief Minister Raghubar Das had alleged that Mr. Soren misused his office by allotting a stone quarrying lease in his name on government land outside Ranchi while he was also the Mines Minister. Mr. Soren's party, the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, has denied the allegations, saying the mine was never functional and Mr. Soren surrendered the same.

The BJP had made a representation to Governor Ramesh Bais, who then sent a reference to the EC to examine the matter.

Section 9A of the Representation of the People Act deals with disqualification of a lawmaker for entering into a government contract.

The notice has been issued keeping the provisions of the section in mind. The commission *prima facie* has found he violated provisions of Section 9A.

"A person shall be disqualified if, and for so long as, there subsists a contract entered into by him in the course of his trade or business with the appropriate government for the supply of goods to, or for the execution of any works undertaken by, that government," reads the section.

The EC had recently written to the State government to share the documents related to the mining lease.

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