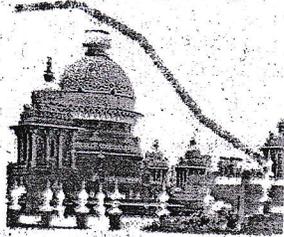


Vedanta moves HC as TN rejects 'green copper' unit proposal at Thoothukudi

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The Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) has refused to issue a 'consent to operate' (CTO) to multinational business conglomerate Vedanta Ltd for establishing a 'green copper' plant on the Thoothukudi Sterlite plant premises, which has remained non-functional since 2018. The company approached the Madras High Court with a plea to quash the rejection order.

also sought an interim direction to the TNPCB to permit the petitioner to have limited and conditional access to the Sterlite Copper facility in Thoothukudi so that it could carry out preparatory and operational activities for the scientific assessment.

Chief Justice Manindra Mohan Shrivastava and Justice G Arul Murugan on Wednesday directed Additional Advocate General (AAG) J Ravindran to give instructions by February 26 regarding the constitution of an expert committee to study the possibility of permitting the 'green copper' facility.

Opposing the writ petition filed by Vedanta, the AAG said: "They are trying to pour old wine into a new bottle and call it green copper." He said, the company ought to have gone on statutory appeal against the board's order instead of filing a writ petition. He also stated that protection of environment was more important than the economic aspects, which the company was stressing upon. Vedanta contended that the TNPCB's rejection order does not reflect any genuine statutory evaluation of the 'green copper' proposal, but rests on a fundamentally "flawed" premise.

Vedanta submitted an application to the TNPCB on January 9, seeking the CTO, but the board rejected it on January 27. Assailing the rejection order, senior counsel Satish Parasara contended the application had been rejected in an arbitrary manner without providing advance notice or an opportunity for hearing to his client.

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To ensure a fair and impartial adjudication of Vedanta's applications/proposal for establishing the 'green copper' facility, the counsel urged the Bench to order the constitution of a court-monitored multidisciplinary expert committee, comprising representatives of the State government as well as the Centre, along with independent experts in relevant fields, to examine the proposal independently, comprehensively, and scientifically. Until the disposal of its main writ petition, Vedanta

Explaining the benefits of 'green copper,' the company told the court that the term refers to copper produced with a significantly lower carbon footprint in comparison with conventional smelting processes. The reduction would be achieved by maximising the use of recycled copper as input. "Using recycled copper minimises the need for copper concentrate processing, which was the primary source of slag generation in smelting operation," it said.