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COAL OUTPUT, CENTRE AUCTION
60 COAL BLOCKS**



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IN A BID TO INCREASE DOMESTIC COAL OUTPUT, CENTRE TO AUCTION 60 COAL BLOCKS

In a bid to increase the coal production in India, the Union Minister of Coal and Mines G Kishan Reddy launched the 10th round of the commercial coal block auction on Friday

According to a statement by the Union Ministry of Coal, in this round of coal auction, 60 blocks will be offered.

The Coal India Limited (CIL) had previously awarded 23 coal mines to private sector bidders under a revenue-sharing model, aiming to exploit the latent coal reserves in some of its closed and discontinued underground mines.

The coal mines in the 10th round of allocation are located in Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Telangana and West Bengal. Sixteen mines will be offered in Odisha, followed by Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh where 15 coal mines will be auctioned.

According to the Ministry of Coal, so far it has allocated/ auctioned 161 coal mines with peak rated capacity of 575 MT. Out of which 58 mines have received mine opening permission and 54 mines are into operation. Last year these mines have produced total of 147 MT of coal, which constitutes 15 per cent of the total coal production of the country

The Commercial coal block auction was launched by the Prime Minister in 2020. Since then, the Ministry has successfully auctioned 107 coal blocks during the last nine rounds. So far, 11 commercial coal blocks have been operationalized in the country.

On the 23 coal mines given to the private bidders Coal India said “The cumulative peak rated capacity of these mines is 34.14 million tonnes/year (MT/Y) while the total extractable reserves are estimated at 635 MT”.

Coal India identified 34 discontinued mines with dormant good-quality coal reserves that were not financially viable for the company to mine.

As a result, CIL decided to tender and offer these mines to willing private sector

players who could operate them, produce the dry fuel, and share parts of the revenue with CIL.

The successful bidder would be the one offering the maximum revenue to the company. “The minimum revenue to be shared is 4 per cent. The contract period is for a maximum of 25 years,” the company stated.

The company added that this move is advantageous in several ways, including resource conservation, effective substitution of imported coal for the non-regulated sector, and providing livelihoods to local communities where these mines are revived. Environmentally, there would be no land degradation as the mining infrastructure is already in place.

CIL is also identifying additional mines to attract wider participation, with relaxed bid norms.

For coal sold exclusively for coal gasification or coal liquefaction, 50 per cent of the contracted percentage of revenue share will be provided to the operator. Coal India said that the successful bidder or mine operator will take over the mine on an “as is where is” basis and can use the existing infrastructure and project facilities without additional payment to Coal India.

In case of a consortium, foreign bidders are allowed to participate as the second or third members, according to the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) portal. The mine operator will act as the agency responsible for selling coal mined from these mines at market-driven prices through an auction process on behalf of the authority. They will have the freedom to choose their preferred technology and deploy mining machinery to extract coal from the mines.

Of the 34 identified mines, West Bengal-based Eastern Coalfields Limited and Jharkhand-based Bharat Coking Coal Limited account for 10 each. Western Coalfields Limited has 5, South Eastern Coalfields Limited has 4, Mahanadi Coalfields Limited has 3, and Central Coalfields Limited has 2.

Source: Times of India

AUCTION OF COAL MINES FOR SALE OF COAL

20TH TRANCHE OF AUCTION UNDER COAL MINES (SPECIAL PROVISIONS) ACT, 2015

10TH TRANCHE OF AUCTION UNDER MINES AND MINERALS (DEVELOPMENT AND REGULATION) ACT, 1957

LIST OF COAL MINES

S. No.	Name of the Coal Mine	State	Act	"Status of Exploration"	Coal/ Lignite
1	Bundu	Jharkhand	CMSP	Explored	Coal
2	Gare Palma IV/5	Chhattisgarh	CMSP	Explored	Coal
3	New Patrapara North	Odisha	CMSP	Explored	Coal
4	New Patrapara South	Odisha	CMSP	Explored	Coal
5	Bhatgaon II Extn (Bojha)	Chhattisgarh	CMSP	Explored	Coal
6	Mahanadi (Revised)	Odisha	CMSP	Partially Explored	Coal
7	Mandakini-B	Odisha	CMSP	Explored	Coal
8	"North of Arkhapal Srirampur (Revised)"	Odisha	CMSP	Explored	Coal
9	Tandsi-III & Tandsi-III Extn	Madhya Pradesh	CMSP	Explored	Coal
10	Bicharpur South	Madhya Pradesh	MMDR	Explored	Coal
11	Chainpa (Revised)	Madhya Pradesh	MMDR	Partially Explored	Coal
12	Jamui (Revised)	Madhya Pradesh	MMDR	Partially Explored	Coal
13	Kaima	Jharkhand	MMDR	Partially Explored	Coal
14	Kerendari-BC North	Jharkhand	MMDR	Partially Explored	Coal
15	Kotmer North	Chhattisgarh	MMDR	Partially Explored	Coal
16	Kotmer South	Chhattisgarh	MMDR	Partially Explored	Coal
17	Marwatola South	Madhya Pradesh	MMDR	Partially Explored	Coal
18	Nabasan	West Bengal	MMDR	Explored	Coal
19	Nawagaon East	Chhattisgarh	MMDR	Explored	Coal
20	Nawagaon West	Chhattisgarh	MMDR	Explored	Coal
21	Sarai East (North)	Madhya Pradesh	MMDR	Partially Explored	Coal
22	Sarai East (South)	Madhya Pradesh	MMDR	Partially Explored	Coal
23	Senduri	Madhya Pradesh	MMDR	Partially Explored	Coal
24	South of Hingla	West Bengal	MMDR	Explored	Coal
25	Tambia South	Madhya Pradesh	MMDR	Partially Explored	Coal
26	Tangardihi North	Odisha	MMDR	Partially Explored	Coal
27	Tangardihi South	Odisha	MMDR	Partially Explored	Coal
28	Teram	Chhattisgarh	MMDR	Explored	Coal
29	Ulia Gamhardih	Chhattisgarh	MMDR	Partially Explored	Coal
30	Ustali Central	Odisha	MMDR	Partially Explored	Coal
31	Ustali North	Odisha	MMDR	Partially Explored	Coal
32	Ustali South	Odisha	MMDR	Partially Explored	Coal
33	Vijaynagar North	Chhattisgarh	MMDR	Partially Explored	Coal
34	Vijaynagar South	Chhattisgarh	MMDR	Partially Explored	Coal
35	West of Chhal	Chhattisgarh	MMDR	Partially Explored	Coal

S.No.	Name of the Coal Mine	State	Act	"Status of Exploration"	Coal/ Lignite
36	Badibahal	Odisha	MMDR	Partially Explored	Coal
37	Bicharpur East (Revised)	Madhya Pradesh	MMDR	Explored	Coal
38	Dhulia North (Revised)	Jharkhand	MMDR	Explored	Coal
39	Gawa (East)	Jharkhand	MMDR	Partially Explored	Coal
40	Gomarpahari Siulibana	Jharkhand	MMDR	Partially Explored	Coal
41	Kabirtirha	West Bengal	MMDR	Explored	Coal
42	Kahua Khireti North	Madhya Pradesh	MMDR	Partially Explored	Coal
43	Kahua Khireti South	Madhya Pradesh	MMDR	Partially Explored	Coal
44	Kantaikoliya	Odisha	MMDR	Partially Explored	Coal
45	Kardabahal-Brahmanbil (Revised)	Odisha	MMDR	Explored	Coal
46	Kartala North	Chhattisgarh	MMDR	Partially Explored	Coal
47	Kartala South	Chhattisgarh	MMDR	Partially Explored	Coal
48	Kosala East	Odisha	MMDR	Explored	Coal
49	Kosala West (Western Part) Revised	Odisha	MMDR	Explored	Coal
50	Kushaha	Chhattisgarh	MMDR	Partially Explored	Coal
51	Lakshmipur North	Bihar	MMDR	Partially Explored	Coal
52	Mirzagaon North	Bihar	MMDR	Explored	Coal
53	Mirzagaon South	Bihar	MMDR	Explored	Coal
54	Nigwani Bakeli - A (East)	Madhya Pradesh	MMDR	Partially Explored	Coal
55	Nigwani Bakeli - A (West)	Madhya Pradesh	MMDR	Partially Explored	Coal
56	"Phuljhari East & West (Revised)"	Odisha	MMDR	Partially Explored	Coal
57	Sarai West	Madhya Pradesh	MMDR	Partially Explored	Coal
58	Sravanapalli (Revised)	Telangana	MMDR	Explored	Coal
59	West of Baisi (Revised)	Chhattisgarh	MMDR	Explored	Coal
60	Yensa	Maharashtra	MMDR	Partially Explored	Coal
61	Bartap (Revised)	Odisha	MMDR	Partially Explored	Coal



KARNATAKA OKAYS CENTRE'S PROPOSAL TO REVIVE GOLD MINING AT KGF

The Cabinet has given its approval for the central government's proposal to continue the mining activities in 13 tailing dumps of 1,003.4 acres at the defunct Bharat Gold Mines Limited's (BGML) mine at KGF in Kolar district. The Cabinet on Thursday allowed the Union government to take up mining activities on tailing dumps attached to Bharat Gold Mines Ltd. The state government has also sought transfer of 2,330 acres of the defunct company to set up an industrial park there in lieu of arrears of Rs 75.24 crore from the company. The Cabinet has given its approval for the central government's proposal to

continue the mining activities in 13 tailing dumps of 1,003.4 acres at the defunct Bharat Gold Mines Limited's (BGML) mine at KGF in Kolar district, under MMDR (Mines and Minerals (Regulation and Development) Amendment) Act's section 17, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H K Patil told reporters. "The mining of these dumps will provide employment opportunities to many in the region, therefore, we have agreed to allow mining in these dumps by the BGML, he said.

Source: The Hindu

CIL AWARDS 23 ABANDONED MINES TO PRIVATE OPERATORS ON REVENUE SHARING MODEL

Coal India (CIL) in a bid to tap the latent coal reserves of some of its closed and discontinued underground mines has awarded 23 such mines on revenue sharing model to successful bidders of the private sector. The cumulative peak rated capacity of is 34.14 million tonnes/year (MT/Y) while the total extractable reserves are estimated at 635 MT.

Earlier, CIL had identified a total of 34 discontinued mines where good quality coal reserves are lying dormant but may not be financially viable for CIL to mine them. CIL has decided to tender and offer these mines to willing private sector players who are prepared to operate and produce the dry fuel and share part of the revenue with CIL. Successful bidder is the one who offers the maximum revenue to the authority, which is the coal company. The minimum revenue to be shared is 4%. The contract period is for a maximum of 25 years.

The advantages are conservation of resource, effective substitution of imported coal for non-regulated sector with good quality coal locked up in these mines and provision of livelihood to the local communities where these mines are revived. From environmental point of view there would be no land degradation as the mining infrastructure is already in place. CIL is also identifying few more

mines for the purpose to attract wider participation with bid norms relaxed.

On the total quantity of coal sold exclusively for coal gasification or coal liquefaction purpose in a year, a 50% on contracted percentage of revenue share of the authority will be provided to the operator.



The mine operator shall act as the agency responsible for selling coal mined from these mines at market driven price through an auction process on behalf of the authority. They shall have the freedom to adopt their preferential method of technology and deployment of mining machinery to extract coal from the mines.

Of the 34 identified mines, the West Bengal based Eastern Coalfields and Jharkhand based Bharat Coking Coal account for 10 each. Western Coalfields -5, South Eastern Coalfields -4, Mahanadi Coalfields -3 and Central Coalfields 2 add up the remaining.

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MINES MINISTRY APPROVES RS.154.8 CR FOR MINES EXPLORATION AND EXPANSION PROJECTS

Mineral exploration projects and financial assistance to the exploration agencies will provide auctionable mineral blocks to the nation and will help in realizing the Aatmanirbhar Bharat in mining sector

The Mines ministry on Wednesday approves Rs. 154.84 crores to National Mineral Exploration Trust (NMET) for exploration and enhancing capabilities. The Executive Committee (EC) meeting of National Mineral Exploration Trust (NMET), Ministry of Mines was held under the chairmanship of Vivek Bharadwaj, Ssecretary, Ministry of Mines. "Projects of mineral exploration and enhancing institutional capabilities in exploration worth Rs.154.84 crores were approved," the Ministry of Mines said. The mineral exploration project includes graphite, iron, coal, zinc and associated minerals, bauxite, base metal, phosphorite/glaucconitic sandstone, PGE & associated minerals, tin & associated minerals, manganese and limestone

to boost the mineral exploration in the country, it added. Financial assistance for enhancing mineral exploration and institutional capabilities of Geological Survey of India (GSI), Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM) and State DGMs/DMGs was also approved. These mineral exploration projects and financial assistance to the exploration agencies will provide auctionable mineral blocks to the nation and will help in realizing the Aatmanirbhar Bharat in mining sector. With the amendment of Mines & Minerals (Development & Regulation) MMDR Act in 2021, private agencies can also participate in exploration for the mineral sector after getting duly accredited by QCI-NABET (Quality Council of India-National Accreditation Board for Education and Training).

Source: Live Mint

INDIA LOOKS AT RUSSIA TO SECURE RARE MINERAL MINING TECH, PARTNERSHIP

Collaboration part of broader strategy to attract investment, foster cooperation in mineral exploration

In a bid to secure critical mineral processing technology, the Ministry of Mines has initiated bilateral meetings with Russia, Business Standard has learned. The initiative aims to secure advanced technologies essential for the extraction and processing of key minerals, which are vital for various high-tech, automotive, and defence applications, officials said.

This collaboration forms part of a broader strategy to attract investment

in the mining and metal sectors and foster cooperation in mineral exploration.

"The first round of consultations was held earlier this month. We are seeking Russian technology and their collaboration in exploring and mining minerals in India," an official said.

Official queries sent to the mines ministry seeking details of the deal remained unanswered until the time of going to press.

The collaboration comes at a time when India is intensifying its ef-

forts to achieve self-reliance in the mining sector, particularly in the context of critical minerals. While major chunks of foreign capital will be needed to exploit the reserves, India will also require advanced exploration techniques used by Russian firms to discover new mineral reserves, the official said.

It is believed that this cooperation could uncover significant mineral deposits within India, enhancing the country's resource base and reducing dependency on imports for key minerals.

Officials pointed out that Russia is home to several leading mining companies. Among them, Norilsk Nickel (Nornickel) stands out as one of the world's largest producers of nickel and palladium, while Alrosa dominates as the world's largest diamond mining company.

Alrosa recently opened up its representative office in Mumbai on the territory of Bharat Diamond Bourse, according to Invest India. Polyus Gold is the top gold producer in Russia and ranks highly on the global stage.

Other notable companies include Severstal, a major steel and mining firm, and SUEK (Siberian Coal Energy Company), Russia's largest coal supplier and one of the largest coal producers worldwide. Last year, SUEK said it was in talks to open an office in India.

Mechel and EVRAZ are major players in coal and iron ore mining, with EVRAZ also being a major steel manufacturer. Ural Mining and Metallurgical Company is a leading producer of copper and zinc, and RusAL is one of the world's largest aluminium producers.

By inviting Russian expertise, India is also opening doors for foreign investment in its mining projects. This influx of capital can drive innovation, boost production, and create numerous job opportunities in the sector.

Quid pro quo

The mining partnership with Russia has major implications for India's

foreign policy push to secure newer sources of energy and minerals. This is because, in return for the mining technologies, Russia is keen on attracting Indian investments in its resource-rich Far Eastern region comprising vast swathes of Siberia, officials at the Ministry of External Affairs said.

Talks have accelerated since Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Vladivostok in 2019 for the Eastern Economic Forum. Back then, the region's government had said the trade turnover with India in the region increased by more than 20 per cent, a growth that translated into more than \$42 million.

Some of India's largest state-owned and private companies have already begun investing in the region, the official pointed out.

While the largest of these include state-owned oil major ONGC Videsh's 20 per cent stake in the Sakhalin-I oil and gas project, private entities such as Tata Power are developing coal deposits in the Kamchatka Peninsula.

Sun Group is developing the Klyuchevskoy gold deposit in Siberia as part of a joint venture with Chinese and South African firms.

With Moscow requesting India to expand its presence at Vladivostok port, the government is finalising the Chennai-Vladivostok maritime shipping corridor.

High stakes

Critical mineral processing technologies involve extracting, separating, and refining essential minerals

Critical minerals are crucial for manufacturing high-tech devices, defense technologies, renewable energy systems, and maintaining stable supply chains

India has auctioned 38 critical mineral blocks so far

India is exploring critical mineral mines in Australia, South America, and Africa

Source: Business Standard

STATE-RUN COAL INDIA EXPLORING LITHIUM ASSETS IN ARGENTINA WITH US COMPANY

India and the United States said on Monday they were co-investing in a lithium resource project in South America and a rare earths deposit in Africa to diversify critical minerals supply chains

State-run Coal India Ltd is exploring lithium blocks in Argentina along with a US company to secure supplies of the battery material, an Indian source with direct knowledge said on Tuesday.

The efforts are part of India's membership under the US-led Minerals Security Partnership (MSP), which New Delhi joined last year to ensure ade-

quate supplies of minerals to meet zero-carbon goals.

India and the United States said on Monday they were co-investing in a lithium resource project in South America and a rare earths deposit in Africa to diversify critical minerals supply chains.

India has been in talks with several countries, including the US, to collaborate in lithium processing and avoid relying on China, Reuters had reported.

“Coal India has come forward for the Kachi block in Argentina in which a US company and two other countries are interested to explore under the MSP,” the source said, declining to be identified due to the sensitive nature of discussions.

Preliminary studies are being conducted, the source added.

In February, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on a trip to Argentina that the US was exploring investment opportunities in critical minerals, especially lithium

Coal India and India’s federal Ministry of Mines did not immediately respond to Reuters’ emails for comments.

Under the minerals partnership, which India had joined last year, New Del-

hi was invited to participate in 20-25 critical minerals projects, of which four have been identified by the Indian government, with two of these are in collaboration with the US, the source said.

The second project is in the Kangankunde block in Malawi, the source said, which is being explored by India’s state-owned IREL (India) Ltd for rare earths.

IREL did not immediately respond to a Reuters email seeking comments.

Source: Business Standard

RAJASTHAN GOVT TO EXPEDITE AUCTION OF MINOR AND MAJOR MINE BLOCKS

To prevent illegal mining, the state will prioritise preparing and auctioning as many mining blocks as possible

The Rajasthan government has decided to expedite delineation work for the auction of minor and major blocks in the state.

“At the same time, we have decided to take strict steps to recover the penalty amount in cases of illegal mining activities,” Mines Secretary Anandi said.

To prevent illegal mining, the state will prioritise preparing and auctioning as many mining blocks as possible, she said. The department has already prepared a monthly road map from June.

Anandi said drilling for the exploration of minerals in the state and analysis of reports would stop illegal mining activities of precious minerals and boost revenue and employment opportunities in the state.

She said senior officials would have to take on a supervisory role so that an effective monitoring system of all the activities related to the mineral department can be ensured.

The government has asked officials to develop a water harvesting system in the offices and areas of the mineral department. She also directed the officials to operate the e-file system effectively in departmental offices and improve the disposal time.

Rajasthan is one of the richest states in terms of availability and variety of minerals in the country, producing over 57 different minerals. The mines department earned a revenue of over Rs 7,490 crores during 2023-2024.

In April, the state’s mines department had drawn out a strategy to increase revenue during this financial year (FY25). “Though the official target has not been fixed for FY25 until now because of the model code of conduct due to Lok Sabha polls, we are sure to see a substantial increase in revenue during the current financial year,” an official in the mines department said.

According to officials of the mines department, the department has drawn out a plan aimed at ensuring daily monitoring by preparing a road map for exploration, drilling, preparing blocks and plots for auction, making an auction calendar, and revenue collection.

This year the state government plans to take up the work of exploration, drilling, and auction on a large scale so that scientific and legal mining can be promoted and the state can earn maximum revenue from the mining sector, the official said.

Source: Business Standard

HINDALCO BIDDING FOR TWO NICKEL, COBALT MINES IN MAHARASHTRA, K'TAKA: MD

Hindalco Industries Managing Director Satish Pai said the company is not scouting for any critical mineral blocks overseas as there are a lot of blocks that have been put up for sale in India

Aditya Birla Group firm Hindalco Industries on Friday said it is in the process of bidding for two nickel-cobalt mineral blocks in Maharashtra and Karnataka.

Speaking to the media, Hindalco Industries Managing Director Satish Pai said the company is not scouting for any critical mineral blocks overseas as there are a lot of blocks that have been put up for sale in India.

“We are bidding for two nickel cobalt mines,” he said.

Critical minerals such as copper, lithium, nickel, cobalt, and rare earth elements are essential components in many of today’s rapidly growing clean energy technologies -- from wind turbines and electricity networks to electric vehicles.

“We are participating in those auctions. Because we believe there are quite

a few interesting mines in India that have not been explored, so the government is coming up with nickel-cobalt mines, lithium mines, copper mines, and we are going to focus more on India than going overseas,” he said.

The company, he said, had bid for the lithium block but did not get it.

“We are looking to all these critical mines activity in India... we have expertise,” he said.

Pai further said the company would not be bidding for any coal blocks as its further expansion will be in renewable power.

The government has started the auction of 38 blocks of critical minerals.

Hindalco Industries Ltd is the metals flagship company of the Aditya Birla Group.

Source: **Busniess Standard**

CONFLICT OVER CRITICAL MINERAL PROSPECTING IN ODISHA SIGNALS NEED FOR BETTER COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

India’s exploration of graphite, a critical mineral for a clean energy transition, is fuelling conflict in the forests of Odisha.

Tribal communities in the Lamer village, have the legal right to manage and preserve their forests and are resisting graphite prospecting that could threaten forest produce and in turn, their livelihood.

Given the importance of mining critical minerals for energy transition, there is an urgent need to develop a framework for community benefit agreements, say experts.

India’s focus on critical minerals for its clean energy transition has come in conflict with the rights of forest dwellers in Odisha, highlighting policy gaps in forest land acquisition and the need for community benefits in the country’s journey towards clean energy.

A graphite prospecting effort in a community forest in the state last year, was contested by the local people, eventually leading to the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes initiating an inquiry against the district ad-

ministration and mineral exploration agency for violating the Forest Rights Act and threatening tribal people. Graphite is a critical mineral in India’s clean energy transition.

In July 2023, residents of Lamer village in the state’s Kalahandi district opposed graphite prospecting, by the district administration and the Odisha Mineral Exploration Corporation Limited (OMEL), in the forest that is legally recognised as the community’s forest rights area, under the Schedule Tribe and Other Forest Dweller (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act (FRA). As the village residents stopped JCBs from felling trees, they were told that permission had been given by the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), says Binod Majhi, Lamer Gram Sabha secretary, who claimed that the community was not informed about the tree felling. The residents managed to stop the prospecting at that time.

However, the conflict escalated in November when the district

administration forcefully entered the village along with a police force to complete the prospecting work. Protesting residents from the village were detained. “Three of us were kept in police custody. They said that we were inciting people against the prospecting activity. They told us that we must make the people understand and agree to let OMECL continue their work, or things will get difficult. While we were in custody, on November 30, OMECL officials, along with district administration officials and police force, came to the village to resume prospecting,” said Karuna Harijan, resident of Lamer and a member of the Kalahandi Gram Sabha Mahasangh, a federation of CFR villages in the district, who was also taken into custody. The Lamer Gram Sabha moved the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes against the district administration and the OMECL for violation of FRA and threatening tribals. Based on the complaint filed by locals, the commission has initiated an inquiry against the district administration. “...the commission has decided to investigate/inquire into the matter in pursuance of the powers conferred upon it... You are hereby requested to submit the facts and information on the action taken on the allegations/matters to the undersigned within 15 days,” the commission wrote to the Kalahandi District Collector on December 26. However, so far, no action has been taken by the commission.

Mongabay India approached the Divisional Forest Officer Kalahandi North and the District Collector Kalahandi for comments but is yet to hear back. Under Forest Rights Act (FRA), the village’s Community Forest Resource (CFR) right was recognised in 2010. The act recognises the community’s ownership over the forest they have been traditionally dependent on and gives them the right to manage the forest.

The people of Lamer village, predominantly tribal, are dependent on seasonal forest produce such as bamboo and tendu leaves for their livelihood. Prospecting for graphite and the possibility of a mine in the forest signals a threat to this. “Every year, the money generated from the sale of tendu and bamboo is distributed among the villagers who participate in the collection. Additionally, it is used by the Gram Sabha for village development work and providing assistance to those in need. We have also improved the forest cover; now you cannot see the ground underneath; it’s all covered with trees,” Prafulla Kumar Majhi, the president of the Lamer Community Forest Resource Management Committee, a village-level body created under FRA, said.

Critical mineral mining and community benefits

The conflict in Lamer raises concerns about India’s transition to a low-carbon economy and the minerals required to undertake that transition. In June 2023, the Ministry of Mines (MoM) identified 30 “critical minerals” crucial for India’s clean energy transition. These minerals are essential in manufacturing solar panels, semiconductors, wind turbines and ad-

vanced batteries for storage and transportation. Graphite is one of them. Of these 30, only 16 minerals are available in India.

“Critical minerals are important because there will be no energy transition without them. The scale we need to move at to transition to clean energy sources requires rapid scaling up of mining of these critical minerals, anywhere between 6 to 72 times the current global production year-on-year. Every country will mine more, and it’s a matter of national importance, but the question is how do you do it responsibly?” Sandeep Pai, research director at Swaniti Global Initiative, a climate policy think tank working on energy transition, told Mongabay India.

Given the importance of these minerals, global investments in them have picked up momentum. According to the International Energy Agency’s Critical Minerals Market Review 2023, the market size of these minerals doubled between 2018 and 2022, reaching \$320 billion.

Most of them are being mined in a few countries, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Indonesia and China. Since 2015, with the creation of the National Mineral Exploration Trust, the Indian government has increased efforts to explore critical minerals. Between 2015-16 and 2022-23, the Geological Survey of India (GSI) has taken up 616 exploration projects for critical minerals and has initiated 127 mineral exploration projects in 2023-24. The mining ministry auctioned 20 critical mineral blocks as part of Phase 1, with results expected in mid-April and another 18 mines were put on auction on February 29.

“One of the things required at the national level in India is the framework of community benefit agreements. We should come up with that framework soon as India is already prospecting for new mines and auctions are happening. It cannot be an afterthought. And this is the direction that every country is moving in; some are more advanced in their thinking, and others are not,” Pai said.

Models of community benefit agreements from Peru, Canada, and South Africa were discussed at the 19th Annual General Meeting of the Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals, and Sustainable Development in November last year. The forum is a voluntary partnership involving 80 countries to achieve sustainable development goals through effective laws, policies, and regulations for the mining sector. India joined the forum in June 2023.

Community Forest Rights and land acquisition

The conflict in Lamer also points to policy gaps in facilitating for-

est land acquisition. The FRA recognises the community's ownership over their traditionally used forest and their right to manage it. The central legislation dealing with land acquisition in the country, Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013, in its sections 41 and 42, has forest land recognised under FRA, under its ambit, but there are no specific guidelines to operationalise it. The Act, for example, does not have specifics about the compensation amount – there is ambiguity on whether factors such as land value, seasonal forest produce value, cultural significance and ecosystem services value are considered in the compensation amount and if considered, there is ambiguity on how they should be quantified.

“Because there are no central guidelines, the state authorities are acquiring these lands as they see fit. They are mostly focused on Individual Forest Rights lands and there have been a few cases of acquisition of CFR land, but it wasn't done in any comprehensive manner without any basis for arriving at the compensation amount. For instance, there is a comprehensive method to derive the Net Present Value of forest land for diversion, but

there is no such thing when it comes to CFR lands,” said Tushar Dash, an independent researcher working on issues related to the Forest Rights Act.

CFR lands have been acquired in a few villages in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district for a transmission line from Wardha to Raipur and in Lippa village in Himachal Pradesh's Kinnaur district for a hydropower plant.

“In both cases, the amount was arbitrarily decided. In the case of Gadchiroli, the compensation was set at 20 times the income based on seasonal forest produce from the CFR land, whereas in the case of Lippa, the compensation was determined by valuing the income from the apple orchards. There's an urgent need to evolve a framework to assess the value of CFR areas when community members volunteer to give consent for non-forest purposes,” Geetanjoy Sahu, a faculty member at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, told Mongabay India.

Source: Mongabay India



ECHOES OF A DARKENED HEART UNVEILING THE SHADOWS WITHIN:

Our heart may become hard:

Sometimes if we have to do something unaccustomed with our hands, the skin is irritated and we have pain; but if we repeat the action often enough the skin becomes hardened and we can do what once hurt us without any trouble. It is so with the heart. The first time we do a wrong thing we do it with tremor and sometimes with a sore heart. Each time we repeat it the tremor grows less, until in the end we can do it without any doubt, fear or worry. There is a terrible hardening power in any unfair, unethical deed. No man ever took the first step to a wrong deed without the warnings sounding in his/her heart; but if the wrongful deeds are repeated often enough, the time comes when he/she ceases to care. What we were once reluctant to do becomes a habit. We have nobody but ourselves to blame for reaching

that stage.

Our hearts may become dull:

It is tragically easy to accept things. In the beginning our hearts may be sore at the sight of the world's suffering but in the end most people become so used to it that they accept it and feel nothing at all. The light of the body depends on the eyes; if the eye is healthy the body receives all the light it needs; if the eye is diseased the light turns into darkness. Just so, the light of life depends on the heart; if the heart is right the whole world is illuminated with light; if the heart is wrong all life is darkened. We need to check the inner lamp is always burning.

Universe save us from darkened heart.

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