



# GEONESIS

*Indian Mining & Exploration Updates*

Volume 10 - Issue 2



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# MORE FUEL AND MINERALS TO FUEL DREAMS OF NEW INDIA

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Stone age to bronze age to iron age to modern industrial revolution, human civilisation has evolved around economic excavation and processing of minerals and fossil fuels. India has shown consistent improvement in both mineral output as well as coal production in recent times. Last week, the mines ministry released data indicating that the country's mineral production rose by 2.5% in October compared to the year-ago period. Simultaneously, India's coal production has also registered an increase of 16% to touch the 607.97 million tonnes mark in the April-December period of the ongoing fiscal.

However, with surplus production, smart utilisation and procurement strategies are areas that require greater investment and focus in order to keep up not only with the sustainable development Goals but also with the rapidly changing and politically charged up world order. In this view, India is not leaving any stone unturned as it continues to procure oil at as much reasonable price as is practicable, despite criticism from various western regions. India's External Affairs Minister, who's on a visit to Austria, has rightly remarked – "Europe has managed to reduce its imports while doing in a manner which is comfortable for Europe. If at 60,000 euros per capita you are so concerned about your population, I have a population at \$2000.. I also need energy, I am not in a position to pay high prices, the price of oil is doubled, and what Europe is doing – it's moving into the middle East and diverting production out of middle east to Europe, raising prices. So European actions are actually putting pressure on global oil markets and on my imports as well.... If European political leadership, understandably, would like to soften the impact on their population, I think it's a privilege they should extend to other political leaders as well."

Amid deepening energy, climate and economic crisis, global attitude towards oil diplomacy and trade aspects has become quite wobbly. The first instinct is always to strive to keep things tamed and scaled-up domestically. Now, the soaring natural gas prices following the Ukraine-Russia conflict are and will continue to prop up global usage of Coal in coming years. Hence, a 16% rise

in Coal production amidst such turbulent times becomes a good development for India here. Many new measures have resulted in augmenting the coal production capacity. These include steps like putting up 141 new coal blocks for commercial mines auction, government engaging regularly with various coal companies in the country, better monitoring of production, etc.

A lot has also been made possible because of the National Mineral Policy 2019 (NMP) which aims to create a more effective, meaningful and implementable policy that brings in further transparency, better regulation and enforcement, balanced social and economic growth as well as sustainable mining practices. NMP encourages merger and acquisition of mining entities, transfer of mining leases, creation of dedicated mineral corridors to boost private sector mining areas, exploration work by private players, etc. The policy also proposes a long term export import policy for the mineral sector to provide stability and as an incentive for investing in large scale commercial mining activity.

While India is determined to provide better future to its citizens, it also needs to struggle with lack of mineral resources and fossil fuel to grow on the lines of western economies. Therefore India's innovation and fuel-efficiency are the key elements for its sustainable growth together with efficient exploitation of domestic natural resources of mineral and coal. With innovative solutions being developed (digital & otherwise) across the nation, India has vast opportunities to utilise and maximise its natural resources and substantially enhance output with better production and revenue. This will lead not only to double-digit growth but to also create millions of new manufacturing-led employment.

By Samir Kumar



# COAL MINISTER REVIEWED AUCTION PROGRESS OF MINERAL BLOCKS IN ODISHA



Union Minister of Coal and Mines Chaired a review meeting to know the progress in auction of mineral blocks in Odisha. Glad to know that with the active cooperation of Centre and State, Odisha's revenue in mining sector has increased exponentially to Rs 49,858 crore in 2021-16 from Rs 5,798 crore in 2015-16.

Currently, the tender process is going on for auction of 10 mineral blocks in the state. Discussed with state govt officials to expedite auction of blocks and emphasize mining exploration in Odisha.

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Currently, Notice Inviting Tender is in progress for auction of 10 mineral blocks in the State. Urged the State officials to expedite auctioning of blocks and undertake promotional activities to encourage mineral exploration in Odisha.

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Currently a work in progress on tender invitation information for auction of 10 mineral blocks in the state. State officials urged to accelerate blocks auction and start propaganda activities to encourage mineral exploration in Odisha.

Source: PSU Connect

## India's mineral production increases 2.5% in Oct

This is second consecutive month this fiscal when country's mineral production mineral clocked positive growth

The country's mineral production rose by 2.5% in October compared to the year-ago period, the mines ministry said on Thursday.

This is second consecutive month this fiscal when country's mineral production mineral clocked positive growth. In September, mineral production had grown by a higher 4.6%. The index of mineral production of mining and quarrying sector in October was at 112.5.

"As per the provisional statistics of Indian Bureau of Mines, the cumulative growth for the period April-October, 2022-23 over the corresponding period of previous year is 4.0 per cent," the mines ministry said in a statement.

Coal production stood at 662 lakh tonnes in October this year while Lignite production was at 35 lakh tonnes. Natural gas (utilized) production stood at 2829 million cu. m., petroleum (crude) 25 lakh tonnes, bauxite 2069 thousand tonnes, chromite 133,000 tonnes, copper concentrate 10,000 tonnes, gold 98 kg, iron ore 207 lakh tonnes, lead concentrate 31,000 tonnes.

Accordingly, production of manganese ore stood at 167,000 tonnes, limestone 317 lakh tonnes, phosphorite 153,000 tonnes, magnesite 9,000 tonnes, and diamond 114 carat.

According to the mines ministry, important minerals showing positive growth during October, 2022 over October, 2021 include: diamond (375%), phosphorite (21%), bauxite (15.1%) iron ore (8.7%), coal (3.5%) and chromite (1.9%).

But certain minerals also registered negative growth. The ministry said that some important minerals showing negative growth include: Limestone (-0.8%), Petroleum (-2.2%), Natural Gas (U) (-4.2%), Zinc conc (-5.1%), Lignite (-6.1%), Lead conc (-6.7%), Magnesite (-7.9%), Copper concentrate (-8.5%), Gold (-10.1%) and Manganese Ore (-19.0%).

The expectation as that mineral production would remain slow due to the impact of the emerging signals of a global recession. However, with domestic industry remaining bullish, the production of minerals is expected to follow a growth path but may make slow progress.

Source: pib.gov.in

# THE MINOR COAL MINERS OF MEGHALAYA

**R**at-hole mining has been banned for the last eight years. But the practice is still rampant in Meghalaya owing to a dystopian nexus between the local politicians, bureaucrats and the deadly coal barons.

When the sun sets early in Meghalaya's Jaintia hills, the scenic beauty resembles a Monet painting. In this picturesque surreal beauty lay the dark, ugly truth of minor coal miners and the harsh reality of human trafficking. The sordid tales of bonded slavery and exploitation remain the unheard voices of the neglected Eastern part of India.

In the biting cold of Meghalaya where the hilly roads are covered in rain, most part of the year, one can find the innumerable coal-blackened faces of children who are employed to do the coal mining in those areas. The children are preferably employed in this business as mining in these areas requires manual recovery of coal.

The coal can only be obscured from the deepest recesses of the Earth, through tunnel-like passages. These are dangerously narrow and can be traversed by children only. Since this process of coal mining resembles the scurrying of rats, it is also known as rat-hole mining.

Since the 1980s, rat-hole mining has been the practised mining technique in Meghalaya. In this process of mining, deep vertical shafts of narrow horizontal tunnels of 3 to 4 feet in diameter are dug, and the miners are sent down to extract coal 100 to 150-metre depth down below. In some cases, it is even deeper. Children, because of their small bodies, can access these spaces easier than an adult. Since the coal seams are very thin in Meghalaya, rat-hole mining is considered to be an economically better method of coal extraction rather than the removal of rocks from the hilly terrains of the area.

Most of these children who are employed for the rat hole mining are those who have found themselves in Meghalaya through the borders and have been smuggled or bought into the place via an agent. Many of the trafficked children are from poor families and from the neighbouring states of Bihar, Tripura, Nagaland and countries like Nepal and Bangladesh.

Rat-hole mining has been banned for the last eight years. But the practice, which has been termed unsafe and unscientific, is still rampant in Meghalaya owing to a dystopian nexus between the local politicians, bureaucrats and the deadly coal barons.

One must note that it has been difficult to ban this process as the revenue generated from it amounts to crores of rupees. The moneyed coal barons own land and properties across Meghalaya and, in turn, work hand in hand with the authorities.

This dangerous form of mining has so far trapped and killed many miners. The deadly incidents remain a horrific reminder of the loss of humanity. It also proves how the government has not been successful in eradicating this practice to date.

Suleman, who found his way into Bangalore after escaping from the clutches of the mining employer said, "I decided to flee the day my friend, with whom I had joined the mining group, fell and broke his leg. Another friend's head cracked into two inside the small tunnel. I didn't want the same fate of becoming invalid as I don't have the resources to even get proper treatment. Now, I work for a grocery store and earn well. It is better and god has saved me."

On 13 December 2018, in Meghalaya, 15 miners died when an illegal rat hole's narrow tunnels were dug into the ground, as it got flooded by water from the Lytein river nearby. In the wake of the accident, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) fined the state government Rs 100 crore for illegal coal mining.

But till date, trafficked children are sent regularly into the mines for more coal and more money. The rat-hole-mined coal, that is sold, is often smeared with dark leftover traces of the blood and sweat of children who don't know the way back home.

Mohua Chinappa is an author and a podcaster of a show called The Mohua Show. Views expressed are personal.

Source: News 18

# KIOCL SIGNS MINING LEASE FOR DEVADARI RANGE IN KARNATAKA

KIOCL announced that the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (Forest Conservation Division), Government of India vide its Letter dated 16 December 2022 intimated that the Central Government has accorded Final approval/Stage - II approval under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 for the diversion of 401.5761 hectare (388.00 ha for mining + 13.5761 ha. for approach road=401.5761 ha.) of forest land in Swamimalai Block Forest, Sandur Taluk, Ballari District, Karnataka state for Iron Ore and Manganese Ore Mining in Devadari Hill Range in favour of KIOCL, subject to the conditions mentioned in aforesaid letter.

Already ravaged by mining, Ballari district may see more excavators digging into its resources as companies have zeroed in on 1,000 acres of its forests to prospect for minerals. This comes four months after the Supreme Court raised the ceiling for the amount of minerals to be extracted from Ballari from 28 million tonnes to 35 million tonnes per annum following a request by the government and a recommendation by the Central Empowered Committee

Documents show that Kudremukh Iron Ore Corporation Ltd (KIOCL) has filed four requests to explore minerals on 872.60 acres of forest while GG Minerals has sought request for 108.5 acres. The total 981

acres forest land includes 450 acres of Hosapete Reserve Forest near to sensitive Daroji Bear Sanctuary

The scrub forest land is known to host a diverse fauna. The forest department has documented leopards, sloth bear, spotted deer, blackbucks, wolf, wild dog, hyenas, fox and jackal in the forest blocks which have been shrinking drastically in the last..

“The requests for mineral explorations deal with forest areas which are already broken up. However, it is true that expansion of mining area will have a direct impact on the wildlife, especially in Sandur, whose forests host a thriving population of leopards,” an official said.

Such requests, however, are a cause for concern considering that the Forest Department has been reduced to a mute spectator. The government steamrolled concerns raised by the department against another proposal by KIOCL for mining on 992 acres of virgin forests of Sandur. On December 15, the company received final clearance for a project that involves cutting of 99,330 trees.

**Source:** Capital Market

# INDIA SET TO SIGN DEALS TO SECURE FERTILISER IMPORTS

Indian fertiliser and chemical companies have also accelerated investments in several mineral rich North African nations so as to hedge against price spirals and volatility.

India is on the verge of signing long-term deals with several countries to secure fertilizer imports, critical for food security amid increasing geopolitical uncertainties, a government official said, requesting anonymity.

Union chemicals and fertilisers minister Mansukh Mandaviya is set to travel to Morocco this month to finalise a memorandum of understanding between the two countries for supply of critical raw materials at steady prices, a senior official has said.

Indian fertiliser and chemical companies have also accelerated investments in several mineral rich North African nations so as to hedge against price spirals and volatility.

A visit by the Union minister to seal a deal with Egypt is also on the cards and more agreements are expected with Senegal, Israel, Oman, Canada, Saudi Arabia and Jordan, the official added, asking not to be named.

India relies on imports to meet a third of its annual domestic demand of crop nutrients, which it gives at a discount to farmers. In 2022, prices rocketed before falling amid the Ukraine war and due to the knock-on effects of the pandemic. The country's annual fertiliser subsidy is set touch a record 2.15 lakh crore during 2022-23.

India will sign long-term pacts with Morocco and Egypt for the supply of rock phosphate, a raw material for making diammonium phosphate (DAP) and nitrogen-phosphorus-potassium (NPK).

India is moving towards self-sufficiency in urea, the official said, while the country is preparing to diversify away from countries such as

China and Russia to source non-urea DAP fertilisers, whose supplies have dwindled. "These measures will help make the country atma nirbhar (self-reliant) in fertilisers. The goals are to diversify sources of supply, have long-term contracts and get price discounts," the official said.

The Ukraine war, costlier fertilisers and drought in Europe, China and the US have aggravated a global food crisis, which will "drive millions more into extreme poverty", the World Bank said in a recent update.

Indian firms are also clinching deals with fertilizer and mining companies abroad with the help of government-to-government consultations.

On August 25, 2022, Mandaviya was in Saudi Arabia to chaperone bilateral pacts between several Indian firms and cooperatives with the Saudi Arabian Mining Company (Ma'aden). The deals will ensure 2.5 million tonnes of fertilizer supply through a three-year contract.

The pacts also included those with the state-owned Indian Potash Company for supply of phosphate products; Gujarat State Fertilisers and Chemicals for supply of ammonia; and with Krishak Bharati Cooperative Company and Coromandel International for supply of phosphate products and ammonia.

"Addressing the Bali summit last year, Prime Minister Modi had warned that a fertiliser crisis could quickly escalate into a food crisis. India's strategy for alternative suppliers and multi-year import contracts is to pre-empt price volatility, which raises the fertiliser subsidy bill, and to ensure there is no domestic crisis," said Gajendra Mahajan, an analyst with Comtrade, a commodity trading firm.

Source: News 18

## 8 COAL MINES AUCTIONED OUT OF 99 IN 4TH ROUND OF COMMERCIAL COAL MINE AUCTION

The fourth round of commercial auctions was launched on December 16, 2021 and 99 coal mines were offered. The mines were from Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Telangana and West Bengal states. Out of these 99 coal mines, total of 8 coal mines were successfully auctioned. Development of new mines are required towards Atmanirbhar Bharat to reduce import dependence. Coal demand of 1500 MTPA is projected by various agencies by the year 2030. Further, several steps have been taken to reduce emission from coal mining like First Mile Connectivity, massive afforestation and RE projects, etc., said Minister of Coal, Mines and Parliamentary Affairs Shri Pralhad Joshi in Lok Sabha

Out of 99 coal mines offered for auction in fourth round of auction, only 8 mines have been successfully auctioned. Resettlement & Rehabilitation of project affected families will be done as per prevailing norms of State Govt.

Coal mines are operated as per the approved mining plan and coal production is monitored against the level given in the mining plan for that particular year especially in pre-PRC attainment stage and during tapering-before closing. Coal mines are running on average at optimal capacity as per mining plans. Considering last 5 years average, CIL's overall system capacity utilization is near about 80%.

The capacity utilization of SCCL has been near about 82-90% and capacity utilization of NLCIL has been near about 85%-100% as per mine plan. Prematurely comparing the production of a mine with PRC while the mine is still in pre-PRC stage misleads one to believe that the capacity is underutilized.

Source: Economic Times



# BLOOD DIAMONDS: FEAR OF VIOLENCE STALLS MINING OPERATIONS IN MP

Firms have been unable to operationalise the Buxwaha mine due to tensions whipped up over issues like human displacement, environmental damage, loss of livelihood, and more.

With a potential haul of about 34 million carats of rough diamonds valued at a whopping Rs 55,000 crore, the Bunder diamond block could be among Asia's largest mines. (Photo: Elia Pellegrini via Unsplash)

Essel Mining and Industries Limited (EMIL), a subsidiary of the Aditya Birla group, has been unable to operationalise a big diamond project in Madhya Pradesh. The Aditya Birla group has a presence in over 36 countries and revenues worth \$46 billion.

The mine is inside a forest in Buxwaha, located 200 kms from Sanchi, a sleepy town synonymous with stupas — hemispherical structures containing relics of the Buddha.

With a potential haul of about 34 million carats of rough diamonds valued at a whopping Rs 55,000 crore, the Bunder diamond block could be among Asia's largest mines. It has the potential to make India among the world's top ten rough diamond producers.

In India, Andhra Pradesh (AP), Chhattisgarh, and Madhya Pradesh (MP) are the three states that produce diamonds. Among them, MP accounts for about 90 percent of the country's diamond resources.

EMIL has flagged its concerns to the MP government, expressing its apprehension about the "violent atmosphere" in the Buxwaha forest and

"serious disruptions" caused by a section of the locals under the garb of "environment protection."

"It is virtually impossible to work in Buxwaha. It is very tough, there are disruptions all around. The atmosphere is not at all conducive," a top source at Essel Mining told MoneyControl. "A handful of people are vitiating the atmosphere and creating nuisance, whereas the majority of the villagers want mining to happen," he said.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in the state has not been able to resolve the crisis.

The Madhya Pradesh government had given the lease to the Mumbai-based company following an open bidding process.

Prior to EMIL, the mining zone was explored for five years and eventually handed over to Rio Tinto of Australia in 2012. The global mining giant secured the requisite project approvals from the Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM) in August 2013. Rio Tinto also got an environmental clearance in August 2015. Yet, it could not mine the diamonds (possibly because the atmosphere then was very volatile due to protests by activists), handed back the project to the state government, and left.

The state government, which had allocated a whopping 954 hectares to Rio Tinto for mining, reduced the area to 364 hectares, almost a 60 percent reduction, aimed at conserving the overall environment.

The block was auctioned again. Quoting a revenue share of 30.05 percent to the state government, EMIL won the block on December 19, 2019. The MP government was to get Rs



275 crore for granting the lease and earn a whopping Rs 28,000 crore over the lifetime of the project.

But activists still opposed the mine. These included Narmada activist Medha Patkar, Yogendra Yadav of Swaraj India, and Ishwar Chandra Tripathi, who calls himself Vindhyaachal Lion. Some of the other activists belong to the Left parties, and the radical students' body AISA (All India Students Association).

The local administration at Sagar, the administrative division under which Buxwaha forest falls, claimed that none of the activists had visited the area to be mined. Nor had they asked the villagers whether they wanted the mine, or whether they wanted the forests instead.

"It will be sad if Essel backs out. There will be no development of the region. Essel should have spoken to the villagers and developed the mines," Avinash Chanchal, a respected social worker in Sagar, told MoneyControl. "The locals want development, which Rio Tinto had started. These activists came and ruined the plot," said Chanchal, adding: "It is the loss of Sagar, the loss of the villagers. Even the state government is falling for this vicious propaganda."

The controversies surrounding the Bunder project have a striking similarity with the coal mine next door in Chhattisgarh. There, the Adani group is being pilloried for mining coal as a contractor for the Rajasthan government, which needs coal for its power stations.

The activists in Sagar argue without any rationale, scientific or otherwise. Tripathi, one of the most strident voices against the Bunder diamond project, told MoneyControl that he believed the entire forest cover of Buxwaha would be destroyed due to mining.

"India's top diamond merchants have brought shame to the nation. We do not want diamonds, everything will be destroyed in Buxwaha," Tripathi told this reporter.

"Diamonds are products for the rich. The masses do not need diamonds, they need jobs, food, homes, argues Tripathi. He says a huge tribal population would be displaced if the mine starts operations," he added.

Photographs of activists hugging trees in the jungle that would purportedly be mined have spread through social media. They present a narrative about the rich snatching resources from the poor, who only have the forests for their livelihood.

"But this is not the reality," said Ramesh Singh, a veteran politician in Sagar. Singh told MoneyControl that the mining issue had snowballed into a needless war of words. "The state government has sanctioned the mine, the villagers want the mine, but the activists are creating needless trouble." So what is the reality?

The images of activists hugging the trees are from a location that is more than 15 kilometres away from the site of the mine, he says.

Sankalp Jain, an activist, said in a telephonic interview that hugging the trees was a symbolic act. Asked if the site actually has loads of fruit-bearing trees that the tribals / villagers live off, he said he was unaware if a census had been done regarding the same.

Manish Jain, a local shopkeeper of Sagar, said the furore over trees being felled for the project is misplaced.

Essel has not said that it will fell 2.15 lakh trees, the process will be phased over a decade and half. This is per the agreement signed with the state government. Scientific practices will ensure optimal use of land, and an estimated 383,000 trees will be planted. Which is 1.8 times the trees currently in place. The plantation drive will start ahead of the proposed mining operations in 2023.

The first tree will be felled for the mine in 2024, followed by the phased felling over 15 years.

On the issue of human displacement, Manish Jain said, "There are no villages within the lease area. The nearest, Sagoria village, is more than two kilometres away. So, no one is being impacted. The demand of the activists for rehabilitation and resettlement is unreasonable. It is a way to fleece cash from corporations."

Residents of Sagoria village told this reporter that they had benefitted when Rio Tinto was involved in the mining project. "The Australian company had set up 10 borewells near the forests, including in our village. It was of great help. Then they left one day and all development work stopped," says Atma Ram, a villager.

Though Rio Tinto did not specify a reason for their exit from the project, a team of researchers analysed the likely reasons in a study published in May 2021. "Rio might have left because the diamond business was falling around the world, and is predicted to fall further as more diamonds are mined in African countries and Russia," said Kuntala Lahiri Dutt, one of the authors of the study, and Professor at the Resource, Environment and Development (RE&D) programme of the Crawford School of Public Policy in the Australian National University, Canberra.

Villagers say they are aware that the project will generate over 4,000 jobs for locals. "We have been told we would be stakeholders in the project," says Ashok, another villager.

Ashok says that villagers do go inside the forest to collect firewood, but not from the area of the proposed mine as it is far from where they live.

"Activists claim that 7,000 tribals will be displaced, but there are only 1,000 tribals around the area. The number was authenticated by the state government last year," Ashok added.

Sagar, a highly-parched region, is badly in need of development. "A large number of people in Sagar are anaemic and need help. We need more hospitals," says Dr Raviraj Mahariya, a physician at Sagar's only government hospital that is bursting at the seams with hundreds of patients.

"We cannot expect the government to do everything. Rio Tinto took charge of 15 villages and helped people with medical support, water resources, and schools. We need such work in and around Buxwaha," adds Dr Mahariya.

What about the medicinal plants that the activists claim will be severely impacted because of the mining?

Sagar's leading ayurvedic physician, Dasharat Lal, says he sources medicinal plants from Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, and Bengal. "The only fruit we source locally is Baheda (*Terminalia bellirica*)." Interestingly, the fruits are collected mostly from the state's Malwa region. Ayurvedic practitioners consider the astringent fruit a laxative. The Hindus of north



India avoid this tree as they feel it is inhabited by demons. The Buxwaha forest also has the Indian gooseberry, or Amla, and Mahua flowers, used for medicines and country liquor, respectively. The trees also produce edible, almond-flavoured seeds known as Chironji, used in ayurveda and unani medicine. Earlier, the tribals would be exploited and offered salt for the seeds. But now the state government has formed a forest management team and each family has a designated area of collection, and trades their pickings in the local markets.

Manish Jain says the noise over the 30,000-year-old rock paintings is entirely motivated. "It is half of a painting on one big rock, located 15 kms from the site of the mine. How can the activists say the mine will destroy the painting?"

In Bhopal, Pradyumna Singh, the BJP legislator from Bada Malhera, 45 kms from Sagar, said the state government will ensure that EMIL follows every environmental norm. He added that EMIL and the state government are mandated to plant 15 trees for each one that is cut. "Why would

the state government allow Essel to violate norms?"

Singh said he has studied the wildlife in the Buxwaha region, which has a sparse population of chinkara, sambar, and chital deer, and a few black panthers. "The mines are located far from the region inhabited by these animals. Nor is it a tiger reserve or an elephant corridor," Singh explained. Singh said his observation is based on a government survey conducted in the region as recently as 2020.

"Mining must start, the economy of Madhya Pradesh must grow," added Singh.

An official of the Madhya Pradesh Industrial Development Corporation (MPIDC) said, "EMIL has not walked out of the project. There is a stalemate, and that has gone on for long." He added that a meeting to discuss the project is slated for next month, and was hopeful that the deadlock would be resolved shortly.

SHANTANU GUHA RAY is a senior journalist based in New Delhi.

**Source: Money Control**

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# Youth From Gadchiroli Not Joining Naxal Movement Anymore: Maharashtra DyCM Fadnavis

In response to the concerns raised by the opposition, Fadnavis said the Surjagarh project is such that it can change the face of Gadchiroli district. People from the Naxal movement are misleading locals by saying that Surjagarh deity will be impacted. The project is far away from Surjagarh, Fadnavis said.

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Monday said youth from the Naxalism-affected Gadchiroli district in Vidarbha are not joining the outlawed movement anymore and the new recruits are brought from Odisha and Chhattisgarh.

Speaking in the Maharashtra Assembly, Fadnavis, who is also the state home minister, said his stand remains the same as was of former home minister R R Patil, who acted tough against the Left Wing Extremism. "Today, the youth of Gadchiroli are not joining the Naxal dalams. They have to bring recruits from Chhattisgarh and Odisha," Fadnavis said.

He was replying to queries raised by opposition members over Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) MLA Dharamrao Atram getting threats from Naxalites demanding stopping of the Surjagarh mining project in Gadchiroli district. Leader of Opposition in the Assembly and NCP MLA Ajit Pawar demanded that Atram's security be enhanced in view of the threat.

NCP leader Dilip Walse Patil said Naxalites have started activities to stop the mining project and steps should be taken to ensure nothing of that sort happens. He said the project gives employment to over 4,000 people. However, Congress MLA Nana Patole took a contrary stand. He said the Naxal movement was gaining strength due to the Surjagarh mining project.

"Don't take this lightly. I want to keep it on record. The iron content in the ore is 65 per cent. The deposit could last for 300 years," Patole said. In response to the concerns raised by the opposition, Fadnavis said the Surjagarh project is such that it can change the face of Gadchiroli district. People from the Naxal movement are misleading locals by saying that Surjagarh deity will be impacted. The project is far away from Surjagarh, Fadnavis said.

The mining at the site began five years ago and the first phase of the steel plant at Konsari will start in June. With the initial success, the company (engaged in mining) has announced it will further invest Rs 20,000 crore in the project which could change the face of the district, he said. Even people are supporting them since locals are being employed, he added

**Source: The Hindu**

# GOVERNMENT INITIATES PROCESS TO RECOVER RESIDUAL GOLD FROM PROCESSED ORE IN KOLAR GOLD FIELDS

**T**he case against liquidation of Bharath Gold Mines Ltd., closed in 2001, is in the Karnataka High Court

Amidst the ongoing case against the liquidation of the Bharath Gold Mines Ltd. (BGML) in Karnataka High Court, the Union government has initiated tender process to extract residual gold from tail dumps (processed ore), mounds of which are lying in the Kolar Gold Fields.

The move comes over two decades after the Centre closed BGML, citing lack of financial viability in operating the old mines. The Centre has floated a global tender, inviting bids from 'transaction advisors' or those who can advise the sale of tail dumps, and the matter has been referred to the High Court that has been hearing the liquidation case.

When the operations ceased in 2001, mining was being conducted at the depth of 3.2 km with about 1,400 km length of tunnel network. An estimated 50 million tonnes of ore yielded officially about 800 tonnes of gold. In its peak, the yield of gold in KGF was as high as 45 gram per tonne of ore in the 1880s, and when it was closed it had come down to less than 3 gram.

It is estimated that about 35 to 40 million tonnes of tail dumps is available and about 0.7 grams of gold could be extracted from a tonne of processed ore. It is estimated that about 20 tonnes of gold could be available from the tail dumps. The KGF has 13 mounds of cyanide dumps spread across about 300 acres, and about 60 mining shafts are now filled with water.

"The tender for transaction agent is to prepare for the tender. It is expected that international companies will participate in processing tail dumps since no Indian company has been involved in this process till now. We have no objection to the government's move because the company is not being sold. Let them identify the price and counter-offer to us as we have the first right of refusal as per the 2006 Cabinet decision, which has been upheld by the Supreme Court in 2013," said K.M. Diwakaran, who was the Chief Engineer of Mines, BGML, and president of BGML All Employees Industrial Cooperative Society that is fighting the case against the company closure in the Karnataka High Court. "Technically, the company is not closed yet as matter is in the court and the government has not implemented the High Court order. About 3,100 employees have taken partial compensation on the promise that the company will be revived as per 2006 Cabinet decision."

He said: "The government shut down the company when gold price was low and about 400 per gram besides the government had fixed administrative price for the

company leading to loss. Now, price of gold is as high as 5,000 per gram and mining operation could be viable even if we recover one gram per tonne," he said. Mr. Diwakaran said that while BGML was not allowed to sell gold in open market, Hutti gold mines in Raichur district was doing so. Mr. Diwakaran pointed out that 80 km of ore body in Kolar schist belt is yet to be exploited though it has been explored already that can yield up to 50 tonnes of gold annually.

Meanwhile, the Communist Party of India (CPI) on Wednesday demanded reopening of the Kolar gold mines in which senior CPI leaders, including CPI general secretary D. Raja and national secretary Binoy Viswam, took part. "The environment impact has to be first studied before the ore is sold. The arrears of 52 crore to former employees are yet to be settled and ownership of staff quarters as per direction of the Karnataka High Court has to be given to the employees," said Harish Bala, president of All India Youth Federation, CPI's youth wing.

## Saga of Kolar Gold Fields

Mining in KGF started by Jhon Taylor & Sons in 1880. Operated till 1956.

Total area of KGF: About 12,600 acres

Bharath Gold Mines Ltd. formed in 1972

Last wage revision of employees at BGML in 1987

Referred to BIFR in 1992

Efforts to handover some closed operations to a private company in 1994

Three companies shortlisted from among 18 companies to take over KGF in 1997

Decision to close mining operations based on BIFR recommendation in 2000

Mining at KGF comes to an end in February 2001

Liquidation case reaches Karnataka High Court in 2000 - till now

Closure order set aside by the HC in 2001

About 3,100 of 3,500 employees did not take VRS in 2001

HC order upheld the company's closure subject to payment of modified VRS as per 2001 to be offered to employees and fixed price for quarters to be handed over to employees in 2003

Tender to identify a new partner to restart the company along with the employees in 2008

With gold price going up, HC stays tender and directs for reopening in 2010

SC directs implementation of 2006 Cabinet order and hand over the company to employees in 2013

**Source: The Hindu**

# SCCL COAL BLOCK WENT TO AMR GROUP: KISHAN REDDY

**I**n the escalating war of words between them over the 'privatisation' of Singareni Collieries Company Limited, the state BJP on Saturday demanded that the TRS government immediately scrap the coal supply contract given to AMR Mining Limited to provide coal from the Tadicherla coal mine in the state.

The BJP said the TRS government, and the Kalvakuntla family which has been accusing the Centre of 'privatising' SCCL, owed an explanation why a mine allocated for SCCL was returned by the public sector coal mining major and then handed on a platter to AMR Limited.

Union minister G. Kishan Reddy and former MP G. Vivek Venkatswamy told reporters that TRS leaders and the state government which was accusing the Centre of privatising the Singareni coal mines, must explain why SCCL had 'returned' the Tadicherla mine to the Union coal ministry which was allocated to it.

Kishan Reddy dismissed any talk of privatisation of SCCL saying there was no question of any such move and that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had already made this clear.

They said the TRS government must explain why, after the Centre allocated the mine to TSGenco for coal for its Kakatiya Thermal Power Plant Stage II, gave it away to AMR Limited based on fake reports that the SCCL was forced to create about amount of coal in the mine and its quality.

Kishan Reddy said the Kalvakuntla family had exerted pressure on SCCL to reject the Tadicherla mine. Then, after it was given to TS Genco by the Centre it was allotted to AMR Limited on a 25-year contract. This forced Genco to pay between Rs 3,000 and Rs 3,500 per tonne of coal.

SCCL was forced to say only 48 million tonnes of coal was available while it has been proved that the Tadicherla mine could yield 80 million tonnes. "There was corruption in this deal," Kishan Reddy said, "and the KCR family must explain its actions."

Venkatswamy said the deal in reality, was a Rs 25,000-crore scam. While the average price approved by Coal India is around Rs 560 per tonne, Genco agreed to pay between Rs 3,000 and Rs 3,500 per tonne to AMR.

"These profits should have gone to SCCL and not to a private company. This scam must be investigated and the contract to AMR must be cancelled," Venkatswamy demanded.

Kishan Reddy said there was no truth in the allegations by the "Kalvakunt-

la family that coal mines were allocated in Gujarat and Rajasthan by the Centre but when it came to SCCL, the mines were being privatised. "These are blatant lies."

He said the decision to allocate five mines in Gujarat and Rajasthan were taken by the then UPA government at the Centre, and at the same time three mines were allocated to SCCL —the Naini coal block in Odisha in 2015, the Penagadapa block in 2016, and the Patrapada block in Odisha in 2019.

The Tadicherla mine was given to Genco after SCCL said it could not take it. "The SCCL returned the coal block, did not begin work at Naini but the Centre, despite provisions to levy penalties on such an action, refrained from doing so," Kishan Reddy said.

Till June 2020, state PSUs of Telangana, Odisha and Rajasthan were allocated coal blocks directly. After the change in process in June 2020 by the Centre, no direct allotment has happened to state PSUs as all need to participate in competitive bidding, Kishan Reddy explained.

The coal case

TRS Charge: Centre is forcing Singareni Collieries Company Limited to bid for coal mines, instead of allocating them to the PSU

BJP Counter-charge

- > Centre allocated SCCL four blocks including one at Tadicherla
- > SCCL rejected Tadicherla block saying it did not have sufficient coal deposits
- > Tadicherla block later allocated to TSGenco
- > Genco forced to hand over mines to AMR Group Limited
- > Genco being forced to pay Rs 3,500 per tonne to AMR, while Coal India price is Rs 560

Coal mines allocated to SCCL

- > August 13, 2015: Naini coal block in Odisha
- > August 31, 2015: Tadicherla coal block in Telangana
- > December 15, 2016: Pelagadappa coal block in Telangana
- > October 30, 2019: New Patrapara coal block in Odisha
- > SCCL returned Pelagadappa, New Patrapara coal blocks
- > SCCL never took up mining in Naini coal block

**Source: Deccan Chronicle**



# UNDERSTANDING THE GREATEST PLEASURE!

The ancient wise men did not reject worldly pleasures. They only rejected the reckless, the dangerous and the transient ones. They were not averse to joy but they found joy in a different place than most people. They understood the difference between being in a state of joy and being in a pleasure state. In olden days just like someone delights in improving his farm, and another his horse, a great philosopher liked to say “so I delight in attending to my own improvement day by day.” Delight! The word was used in the most unexpected way. Not in material things, not in satisfying five senses, but in oneself – in improving oneself. And when you think about it, isn't that a wonderful feeling? When you get better? when you realize your full potential?

These wise men took pride in self-actualization. The economy determines what you can do professionally, but no one can stop us from working on our inner selves. Nor can anyone or anything take away the pleasure we earn by getting better day by day.

On a Christmas day in 1776 while George Washington was leading his troops during the great American revolution, he was going through the lowest phase in his life. Not only the troops were freezing and hungry but were nearing a perishing stage.

How had things gotten so bad? Why are we so unlucky? Why are we undergoing so much suffering?

George Washington instead of wasting time with those questions wrote a letter to his commander in chief “it is in vain to ruminate upon, or even reflect upon the authors or causes of our present misfortunes”. Instead of looking backwards, Washington said “we should rather exert ourselves”. Focusing on how to respond, Washington launched a daring attack on the British the next day, which turned the tide of the revolutionary war and eventually won the war and a new nation.

And here 247 years later we have a chance to commit to attending to our own improvement by thinking how we are going to respond in 2023 as there are dark clouds but, like Washington, we have to focus on exertion and not rumination. The same goes with issues in our personal lives, in our marriages, and in our professional lives. Finding faults, nurturing resentments, complaints about how things will be, all of that must be put aside. What matters is how we plan to exert ourselves, how we plan to respond in 2023 and eventually experience the joy, rewards and pleasure from challenging ourselves.

Wishing a great year filled with peace, passion and prosperity.

ABOUT AUTHOR

**Dr. Majo Joseph**

Dr. Majo Joseph is an Ayurveda Consultant, & General Practitioner. He is also a Psychology And Counselling, Wellness Trainer.

**DISCLAIMER:** This is a compilation of various news appeared in different sources. In this issue we have tried to do an honest compilation. This edition is exclusively for information purpose and not for any commercial use. Your suggestions are most valuable.

Your suggestions and feedback is awaited at :-  
editor@geonesis.in