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GOVT WEIGHS MINE REFORMS: CLEARANCE BEFORE AUCTIONS



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The Centre is now looking at auctioning select mineral blocks under an ‘on-tap’ arrangement with prior clearances to ensure faster development and extraction of mineral resources.

The government may look at the next set of reforms in the mining sector to ensure projects awarded in auctions start producing within the stipulated timeframe, without facing uncertainty because of delayed clearances.

According to two people aware of the development, the Centre is now looking at auctioning select mineral blocks under an ‘on-tap’ arrangement with prior clearances to ensure faster development and extraction of mineral resources.

It is also consulting on whether some support could be extended to companies after the auction to finalize the mining plan and arrange for clearances and financing to provide ease of doing business to winning bidders.

The fresh move to reform the current auction mechanism follows delays being witnessed in development of mineral blocks post their auction, with a lot of time consumed in acquiring land for mining and in taking statutory clearances, including those for the environment and forests.

As per official data, out of the 108 iron ore blocks auctioned so far, only 32 (30%) have commenced production.

For other minerals, the proportion is even lower at 10%. In the coal segment, of the 118 captive coal blocks auctioned and allotted, only 51 have begun production.

The record is even worse in the case of commercial coal mining blocks—out of 93 blocks, only four are operational. The ministry of coal has allocated 171 coal mines in total. But only 55 (32%) are currently operational, with the remainder at various stages of development.

“The appetite for taking mineral blocks, particularly coal blocks,

among captive users has fallen as most already have one and are busy developing it. The plan to bring “on-tap” mineral blocks that could be brought under production quickly is being discussed and may be considered in future rounds of auctions after finalization,” said one of the two people cited above, a senior government official, on condition of anonymity.

Queries sent to the ministry of mines remained unanswered at press time.

According to a report from ratings agency Crisil, out of about 850 blocks for iron ore, limestone and bauxite launched since the onset of the auction regime in 2015, only 300 blocks have been successfully auctioned so far.

A total of 775 coal blocks were tendered as captive and commercial coal blocks, of which 118 were successfully auctioned and allotted up to September 2023. Further, 53 blocks were allotted to state-owned companies. All these have a cumulative peak rate capacity of over 550 million tonnes.

The government has been keen to ensure that coal as well as non-coal blocks operate as per agreed time schedules, without delay. But with projects still facing delays, it is exploring new way of implementation that will make participation in mining attractive for investors. The government has already enacted amendments to key laws, such as the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act and Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Act, to introduce reforms including ushering in an auction system for allocation of mineral blocks, thus bringing transparency to the process.

Certain other coal sector reforms have also been instrumental in increasing coal production. These include allowing the private sector to mine and sell coal without end-use restrictions, allowing auctioned captive coal blocks to sell up to 50% of their output in the open market, a coal logistics policy, and the Gati Shakti plan to improve coal transportation.

Source: Live Mint

CABINET APPROVES ROYALTY RATES FOR MINING OF LITHIUM, NIOBIUM REE

To ensure consistency, the Ministry of Mines has devised a formula for calculating the ASP of these minerals, which will aid in setting bidding parameters.

The Union Cabinet has approved royalty rates for three critical and strategic minerals -- lithium, niobium and rare earth elements (REEs).

This decision follows Additional Mines Secretary Sanjay Lohiya's announcement on October 5 that the government is set to initiate the auction of critical mineral mines in the coming weeks.

The Cabinet note specifies the royalty rates as follows: 3 per cent of the London Metal Exchange price for lithium, 3 per cent of the average sale price (ASP) for niobium from both primary and secondary sources, and 1 per cent of the ASP for REEs, based on rare earth oxide.

Although the standard practice for minerals lacking a specified rate traditionally pegs the royalty at 12 per cent of the ASP under the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, the government has chosen to amend this approach. The decision stems from the acknowledgement that the existing fixed rate was considerably higher than that of other critical and strategic minerals and exceeded the rates seen in other mineral-producing nations.

The Ministry of Mines has also developed a formula for calculating the ASP of these minerals, streamlining the process of establishing bidding parameters.

According to the Cabinet statement, this approval for specifying royalty rates will mark the central government's maiden auction of lithium, niobium, and REEs blocks in India.

Beyond lithium, niobium, and REEs, the Central government is actively preparing to initiate the initial round of auctions for critical and strategic minerals, including nickel, the platinum group of elements, potash, glauconite, phosphorite, graphite, and molybdenum soon, the Cabinet note outlined.

The government's initiative to auction critical minerals coincides with India's goal of reaching net-zero emissions by 2070. Lithium is extensively used in batteries, niobium finds applications in superalloys and superconductors, and REEs are vital components in electronics and clean energy technologies.

Lithium, niobium and REEs have also emerged as strategic elements due to their usages and geopolitical scenario. "Encouraging indigenous mining would lead to a reduction in imports and setting up of related industries and infrastructure projects. The proposal is also expected to increase generation of employment in the mining sector," stated the Cabinet note.

Parliament passed the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2023, which became effective on August 17, 2023. This amendment, among its various provisions, removed six minerals, including lithium and niobium, from the list of atomic minerals. Consequently, it now permits concessions for these minerals to be granted to the private sector through auctions.

Further, the amendment provided that mining lease and composite licence of 24 critical and strategic minerals (which are listed in Part D of the First Schedule of the Act), including lithium, niobium, and REEs (not containing uranium and thorium) shall be auctioned by the central government.

Source: Live Mint



IS MINING STILL PROFITABLE AFTER AUCTIONS? EXPERT INSIGHTS

Introduction

Hello Miners.

If you have been associated with the mining industry prior to 2015, you may have noticed significant changes that occurred before and after that year. From a financial perspective, the industry has undergone a substantial transformation. Both capital expenditure (capex) and operational expenditure (opex) have exhibited considerable fluctuations, impacting the pursuit of profitability in an increasingly competitive landscape.

So, what happened in the year 2015?

In India, substantial changes occurred between 2014 and 2015. These changes encompassed not only the BJP securing a majority after an extended period but also the noteworthy alterations made to various legislations by the newly elected party. As a miner, I would like to highlight the amendment to the MMDR Act, which had a profound impact on the mining industry, ushering in a new era of Mining.

What did the Great Amendment bring with it?

The Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act of 2015 (MMDR Amendment Act) brought several reforms to the mineral sector. The amendments included:

- Replaced the first-come-first-served process for granting mineral resources with a transparent and competitive auction process.
- Established the District Mineral Foundation and National Mineral Exploration Trust.
- Created a new category of mining license, the prospecting license-cum-mining lease.
- Established stringent penalties for illegal mining.
- Deemed all mining leases granted before the commencement of the MMDR Amendment Act to have been granted for a period of fifty years.

All of these aspects are connected, either directly or indirectly, to our profit-

ability analysis. However, delving into each of these points in detail would require more time than you might anticipate. Therefore, let's concentrate on the most pertinent point among them and take a closer look at the first two.

What made these changes remarkable?

“Replaced the first-come-first-served process for granting mineral resources with a transparent and competitive auction process.”

Prior to the 2015 amendment, Mining leases/concessions were allocated on a 'first come, first served' basis. As a result, most of these leases were obtained by the Mine Owners who were the pioneers/early-movers in this industry. Their dominance made it exceedingly challenging for new entrants to establish themselves. Many of these leaseholders ranked among the wealthiest individuals in their respective states and employed strategies such as registering multiple companies under different names to circumvent limitations on maximum area allocations.

Consequently, the newly elected government opted to enhance transparency in the allocation process through competitive auctions. Nevertheless, some experts argue that this move aimed to attract major capitalists who were dominant in the steel industry and seeking entry into the mining sector. While I recognize that this topic can be a subject of debate and my perspective may not align with yours. Well, one undeniable fact is that the new allocation system represented a significant improvement in transparency.

Another noteworthy point is the government's revenue from mining royalties was quite meager/less before 2015, leading to a substantial margin of profits for mine owners. But unlike earlier, this time the government was ready with its well-structured policies aiming a maximum revenue from mining concessions.

“Established the District Mineral Foundation and National Mineral Exploration Trust.”

When I mention that the government was well-prepared with policies to maximize revenue, I'm referring to the newly introduced levies, which include the auction premium, District Mineral Foundation (DMF), and National Mineral Exploration Trust (NMET).

The auction premium is calculated as a percentage of the average sale price for mines which is settled during the auctions.

For newly auctioned mines, the DMF levy amounts to ten percent of their royalty. Similarly, mines are subjected to a two percent levy of their royalty as NMET charges. Now, let's examine the implications of these recently introduced levies on the mining industry

Profitability:

When assessing the profitability of mines before and after the introduction of auctions, our primary focus should be on understanding the operating expenses (opex), as the initial capital expenditure (capex) can vary due to changes in different governing Acts. In this discussion, we will concentrate on opex to provide a more comprehensive and accessible comparison.

If your interest lies in delving deeper into the differences in initial capital expenditure, we invite you to stay connected as we will explore this topic more conceptually in a forthcoming article. However, for a broader understanding of profitability comparisons, it is crucial to grasp the components of operating expenses.

The operating expenditure encompasses various elements, including production costs (inclusive of overheads), royalties, premiums, District Mineral Foundation (DMF) contributions, National Mineral Exploration Trust (NMET) payments, surface rent, dead rent, cess, GST, water tax, and more.

However, this amendment only impacts royalties, premiums, DMF contributions, and NMET payments. Therefore, for our analysis, we will assume that all other components remain consistent for both auctioned and non-auctioned mines. To gauge the differences in profitability, we will examine the variations in these four specific components.

Now, let's delve into how these four elements influence profitability in the mining sector.

Levies for Non-Auctioned Mines:

To facilitate easy comparison, let's express all costs as a percentage of the Average Sale Price (ASP).

- Royalty: 15% of ASP
- District Mineral Foundation (DMF): 30% of Royalty, which is equivalent to 4.5% of ASP
- National Mineral Exploration Trust (NMET): 2% of Royalty, or 0.3% of ASP
- Premium: Not Applicable
- Production Cost: Approximately 12% of ASP (Note: This cost remains consistent for both auctioned and non-auctioned mines)
- GST: 5% of Sale Price, which translates to 6% of ASP (assuming the sale price is a maximum of 120% of ASP, This cost remains consistent for both auctioned and non-auctioned mines)
- Other Levies: Approximately 3% of ASP (Note: This cost remains consistent for both auctioned and non-auctioned mines)

Total Expenditure: The sum of Royalty, DMF, NMET, Premium (if applicable), GST, Other Levies, and Production Cost amounts to $(15 + 4.5 + 0.3 + 0 + 6 + 3 + 12)\%$ of ASP, which equals 40.8% of ASP.

Levies for Auctioned Mines:

To facilitate easy comparison, let's express all costs as a percentage of the Average Sale Price (ASP).

- Royalty: 15% of ASP
- District Mineral Foundation (DMF): 10% of Royalty, which is equivalent to 1.5% of ASP
- National Mineral Exploration Trust (NMET): 2% of Royalty, or 0.3% of ASP
- Premium: 110% of ASP (Considering the prevailing auction trend where most mines are auctioned with a premium higher than 110%)
- Production Cost: Approximately 12% of ASP (Note: This cost remains consis-

tent for both auctioned and non-auctioned mines)

- GST: 5% of Sale Price, which translates to 6% of ASP (assuming the sale price is a maximum of 120% of ASP, This cost remains consistent for both auctioned and non-auctioned mines)
- Other Levies: Approximately 3% of ASP (Note: This cost remains consistent for both auctioned and non-auctioned mines)

Total Expenditure: The sum of Royalty, DMF, NMET, Premium, GST, Other Levies, and Production Cost amounts to $(15 + 1.5 + 0.3 + 110 + 6 + 3 + 12)\%$ of ASP, which equals 147.8% of ASP.

Let's compare the Profitability:

Allow me to simplify the aforementioned computations for your convenience. We will conduct a comparative analysis of the overall expenditures and sales prices in both scenarios: the auctioned and non-auctioned contexts.

For Non-auctioned Mines:

Total Expenditure- 40.8% of ASP

Sales Price- 120% of ASP (as assumed)

Net Profit- $(120-40.8)/120= 66\%$

For Auctioned Mines:

Total Expenditure- 147.8% of ASP

Sales Price- 120% of ASP (as assumed)

Net Profit- $(120-147.8)/120= -23\%$ (Loss)

Comparison:

Therefore, based on the aforementioned comparison, it becomes evident that non-auctioned mines exhibit a significant level of profitability with substantial profit margins. Conversely, the situation for auctioned mines presents a stark contrast. These mines not only fail to generate profits but also operate at a substantial loss. It is important to note that this outcome is a result of their deliberate choice to participate in the auction process, where they willingly accepted a substantial premium for their mining rights.

But is it the case for all the Auction Mines?

Certainly, Not.

After carefully reviewing these comparisons, you may have observed that for most of the Auctioned Mines, we've used an auction premium of 110% for our analysis. It's important to emphasize the phrase "most of the Auctioned mines" in this context because there are a few exceptions where mines have been auctioned for less than 100%. To be precise, I can recall only 3 to 4 mines in Odisha that were auctioned below the 100% mark. Let's consider an example from one of these mines as well.

The inaugural iron ore mines auction in Odisha commenced with the Sagasahi Iron Ore Mine, fetching a premium of 44.35%. When evaluating its financial viability using our established methodology, the net profitability stands at an impressive 42.65%, indicative of a robust profit margin.

This implies that the auction method itself does not pose a profitability concern; rather, the challenge lies in the aggressive nature of the bidding. If the bids remain below approximately 60%, the mines can still achieve profitability even with all existing levies. Therefore, it is not the government that has rendered the mining business unprofitable; rather, it is the steel capitalists who have strategically shifted the balance in their favor by undermining the profitability of mining. This calculated move allows them to solidify their presence in the mining industry while concurrently boosting their profit margins in steel production to offset any losses incurred in mining operations.

WRITTEN BY **PRUTHWIRAJ**

Source: **gyaniminer.com**

MADHYA PRADESH AUCTIONS 22 MINERAL BLOCKS, TO EARN RS 38,100 CRORE

Out of the 51 mineral blocks offered for auction by Madhya Pradesh's Mining Department, 22 have been successfully auctioned, including four blocks of critical minerals. According to the department estimates, these auctions will generate a revenue of Rs 38,100 crore.

This latest round brings the total number of blocks auctioned in the state to 68, the highest in the country.

State Mineral Resources Minister Brijendra Pratap Singh said to Business Standard, "As per the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, we can ensure that the mineral resources of the state and the revenue earned from them will be used for the betterment of the general public."

He added that these steps would contribute to making Madhya Pradesh self-sufficient in the mineral sector.

The Mining Ministry posted on X (formerly known as Twitter), "After this latest round of auction of mineral blocks by the Madhya Pradesh government, the total number of auctioned mineral blocks in the country has increased to 324. Of these, a maximum 68 blocks have been auctioned by Madhya Pradesh".

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan stated that these mining reforms are not only augmenting state revenue but also advancing the Prime Minister's vision of self-reliance in the mineral sector.

Last July, the state offered a record 51 blocks, which featured 14 critical minerals, including bauxite, iron, limestone, manganese, graphite, vanadium, and platinum group minerals.

Source: Business Standard

INDIAN MINING TYCOON HARPAL RANDHAWA KILLED IN PLANE CRASH IN ZIMBABWE

Harpal Randhawa, an Indian mining tycoon and his son were among six who were killed in a private plane crash near a diamond mine in Zimbabwe. Media reports said the plane crashed in southwestern part of the country after a technical fault.

Harpal Randhawa was the owner of RioZim, a diversified mining company that produced gold and coal and also refined nickel and copper. According to media reports in Zimbabwe, the plane crashed in Zvamahande area of Mashava.

The plane was a Cessna 206 aircraft owned by RioZim. It was travelling from Harare to the Murowa diamond mine when the accident occurred. The Murowa diamond mine, near which the plane crashed, is partly owned by RioZim. All passengers and crew on board lost their lives in the accident.

State-owned daily newspaper The Herald reported citing police that four of the victims were foreigners and the other two were Zimbabweans.

The Zimbabwe Republic Police said that the crash occurred on September 29 be-

tween 7:30 am and 8 am, said a Press Trust of India report. The aircraft left Harare at 6 am for the mine. It crashed about 6 km from Mashava.

RioZim confirmed the crash and said it was working with relevant authorities to gather more information.

Names of the deceased are yet to be released by police but journalist and filmmaker Hopewell Chinono, who was a friend of Randhawa, confirmed his death.

"I am deeply saddened by the passing of Harpal Randhawa, the owner of RioZim who died today in a plane crash in Zvishavane. Five other people including his son, who was also a pilot but a passenger on this flight, also died in the crash," wrote Chinono on X.

"My thoughts are with his wife, family, friends and the RioZim community."

RioZim has said that a full statement will be issued "as soon as possible

Randhawa was the founder of USD 4 billion private equity firm GEM holdings.

Source: The Indian Express



GLOBAL COAL INDUSTRY EXPECTED TO LAYOFF OVER 400,000 MINERS BY 2035: REPORT

China and India are expected to be the hardest hit. China's Shanxi province would witness the largest number of job losses globally -- 241,900 by 2050

The coal industry is expected to shed more than four hundred thousand mining jobs, equivalent to nearly 100 workers per day, by 2035, even without climate pledges or policies to phase out coal, with China and India likely to be the hardest hit, according to a new report.

The primary reason will be the market shift toward cheaper wind and solar power generation and a lack of planning to manage a transition to a post-coal economy, said the report compiled by Global Energy Monitor, a US-based NGO that analyses the evolving international energy landscape.

The report suggests that 990,200 coal-mining jobs will cease to exist at operating mines given the foreseeable closures of coal facilities, potentially laying off more than one-third (37 per cent) of the existing workforce.

China and India are expected to be the hardest hit. China's Shanxi province would witness the largest number of job losses globally -- 241,900 by 2050 -- while Coal India is the producer facing the largest potential job cuts of 73,800 by the mid-century.

The report highlights that data shows 4,300 active and proposed coal mines and projects around the world are cumulatively responsible for more than 90 per cent of global coal production.

Climate commitments to phase out coal power generation could accelerate ongoing trends in coal-mining job losses, even as employment in renewable energy and construction now exceeds 50 per cent of total energy employment.

Coal-mining jobs play a significant role in remote coal regions, acting as anchors of economic activity and sustaining ancillary workforces and employment in local consumer and information economies.

The vast majority of these workers are in Asia, with 2.2 million jobs in the region, and China and India are expected to bear the brunt of the coal-mine closures.

China has more than 1.5 million coal miners who produce over 85 per cent of its coal, accounting for half of the world's output. Meanwhile, the northern provinces of Shanxi, Henan and Inner Mongolia mine more than a quarter of the world's coal and employ 32 per cent of the global mining workforce, approximately 870,400 people.

India, the world's second-largest coal producer, has a workforce approximately half the size of Shanxi. The country officially employs approximately 337,400 miners at its operating mines, although some studies suggest that the local mining sector has four "informal" employees for every one direct employee.

State-owned Coal India faces the most potential layoffs of 73,800 direct workers by 2050, emphasising the importance of governments being involved in planning for coal

worker transitions.

If countries and companies were to pursue plans to phase down coal to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, the report suggests that only 252,200 miners would be necessary to maintain global coal production, given the current global average labour productivity of 337 workers for every 1 million tonnes of coal produced.

Global Energy Monitor finds that most mines expected to close in the coming decades have no planning underway to extend the life of those operations or manage a transition into a post-coal economy.

Dorothy Mei, project manager for the Global Coal Mine Tracker, stressed the importance of viable transition planning. "Coal mine closures are inevitable, but economic hardship and social strife for workers is not. Viable transition planning is happening, like in Spain, where the country regularly reviews the ongoing impacts of decarbonisation. Governments should draw inspiration from its success in planning their own just energy transition strategies." Ryan Driskell Tate, coal programme director, Global Energy Monitor, emphasised the need to prioritise workers. "We need to put workers first on the agenda if we want to make sure that just transition is not just talk. With technologies and markets primed for an energy transition, we have to be proactive about the unique concerns of coal miners and their communities." Tiffany Means, researcher, noted the significance of government involvement. "The coal industry has a long list of mines that will close in the near term -- many of them state-owned enterprises with a government stake. Governments need to shoulder their share of the burden to ensure a managed transition for those workers and communities as we move into a clean-energy economy." According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), the electricity sector emitted 12.3 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide in 2020, which is more than any other sector (36 per cent of all energy-related emissions).

Coal remains the largest single source of electricity worldwide and is by far the largest source of electricity sector emissions, contributing just more than one-third of electricity supply but responsible for nearly three-quarters of electricity sector CO2 emissions.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), global coal use needs to fall by 75 per cent by 2030, relative to the 2019 levels, to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius compared to the pre-industrial era (1850-1900).

At the UN climate talks in Glasgow in 2021, countries agreed to a phase-down of coal power and a phase-out of "inefficient" fossil fuel subsidies -- two key issues that had never been explicitly mentioned in the decisions of the UN climate talks before, despite coal, oil and gas being the main drivers of global warming.

Source: Business Standard

UNION ENVIRONMENT MINISTRY DEFERS DECISION ON VEDANTA'S GOA MINING PROPOSAL

Bicholim Mineral Block-Block 1, which has an area of 478.5206 hectares, is spread across the villages of Bicholim, Bordem, Lamgao, Mulgoa, Mayem and Sirigao in North Goa's Bicholim Taluka.

The Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) of the Union Ministry for Environment, Forest and Climate Change has deferred its decision on a proposal to grant environmental clearance to M/S Vedanta Limited for the resumption of iron ore mining at Bicholim mineral block in Goa.

In a recent meeting, the EAC for environmental appraisal of non-coal mining projects directed the project proponent to submit a letter from the Goa government's Directorate of Mines and Geology, clarifying "whether any illegal mining within the mine lease area has been carried out or not and whether the same has been carried out by M/s Vedanta Limited or not".

Bicholim Mineral Block-Block 1, which has an area of 478.5206 hectares, is spread across the villages of Bicholim, Bordem, Lamgao, Mulgoa, Mayem and Sirigao in North Goa's Bicholim Taluka. It has a proposed production capacity of 3 million tonnes per annum (MPTA). Vedanta was the successful bidder for the first block of iron ore leases auctioned in December 2022.

Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant had said in the Monsoon Session of the legislative Assembly that the iron ore mining operations, which had been stopped since 2018 in the state, would start by November 2023.

According to the minutes of the 20th EAC meeting held on September 21-22, the EAC said that there was no clarity regarding the involvement of forest land within the mine lease area as contradictory information was given by the project proponent. The EAC observed that since the mine lease area shared a common boundary with Mayem Forest, the project proponent needed to submit a letter from the state forest department regarding the involvement of forest land in the mine lease area

"The EAC was of the view that the pollution potential will be more in handling of waste. The EAC is not convinced with the plan for backfilling and with the design

of settling ponds as the annual rainfall is projected as 3500 mm/year," the committee observed. The EAC further opined that the project proponent needs to revisit the plan for backfilling and clearly indicate the void area and the capacity required for backfilling.

Observing that the mines had not been in operation in Goa since 2018 and that the instant proposal was the first case for grant of environmental clearance under auction after five years, the EAC noted that there is a need to ascertain the present scenario and ground reality with regards to the handling of waste; settling ponds; the location of waste dumps with respect to habitation, schools and river; other surface features such as forest, temples, caves and fort; mineral transportation route; and traffic congestion.

The EAC observed that the instant mine is located in dense vegetation area ... the mine lease area is located close to the proximity of habitations, school, forest (Mayem common boundary), river, temples, caves and fort. The EAC also observed that the project proponent has not properly worked out the traffic load. Many litigations were received against the public hearing/project ...," the EAC said in its observations and recommendations.

The EAC noted that a public hearing for the grant of environmental clearance was held in Bicholim on August 11. In the hearing, 4,708 written objections were submitted against the project, while 5,183 letters were received in support of the project. The committee asked the project proponent to submit a video recording of the public meeting.

The EAC said that a site visit needs to be conducted by a sub-committee comprising EAC members and officers from the Union ministry.

A spokesperson for Vedanta Sesa Goa said the clarifications sought by the EAC were part of the Environmental Impact Assessment process. "Vedanta Sesa Goa is committed to adherence to regulations and to resumption of mining in Goa in a responsible and transparent manner," the spokesperson said.

Source: Business Standard



A RACE FOR ODISHA'S BAUXITE TREASURE

The last rains of the monsoon have added layers of green to the rolling hills of the Eastern Ghats. The meandering roads make the drive into Kashipur, the block headquarters town, a seamlessly easy one. There on, as the vehicle veers towards villages located on the foothills of Sijimali, the ease of travel slowly gives way to edginess as watchful eyes follow you everywhere. Small groups of youths, parked on bikes by the road, pull out their mobile phones and put them to swift use at the very sight of a stranger. They even tail the vehicle quietly. They are what the natives of Kantamaal and Aliguna call 'agents of the company'. At some points of entry and exit to the villages, men in camouflage do appear. Then, there are the occasional checks by policemen out on 'patrol.'

Up ahead, Sijimali is a flat-topped hill that runs as part of the East Coast Bauxite belt, one of India's richest repositories of the primary ore of aluminium which is attracting investors in droves to a state keen to make its mark as the country's top industrial destination. It is in this region the undercurrent of unease is palpable and there is a history to it too.

Vedanta Ltd which was declared the preferred bidder for Sijimali bauxite block in February would know, for it brings a sense of déjà vu. It has been 10 years since the aluminium giant's search for bauxite through state PSU Odisha Mining Corporation (OMC) lost out to the power of the gram sabha in a famous legal battle that recognised the particularly vulnerable tribal group Dongria Kondh's religious rights under Forest Rights Act at Niyamgiri hills.

India's biggest aluminium producer is back again and ready for its second coming as it braces up for the mandatory public hearing for environment clearance in Rayagada on October 16. The Sijimali block is crucial for Vedanta which has a 2 million (mn) tonne per annum alumina refinery at Lanjigarh and two smelting plants at Jharsuguda and Korba (in neighbouring Chhattisgarh) with a combined capacity of 2.2 mn tonne.

Vedanta's stakes are high. After its Niyamgiri mining project plans did not work out, the company had to source bauxite through a long term linkage plan with OMC besides depending on imports. Sijimali, bid with a 112 per cent premium price, has a 311 mn tonne reserve which could easily serve it for 30 years.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

But it is not the only corporate giant with bauxite interests in the state. The future outlook of aluminium driving the demand for the metal grade ore found abundantly in this part of the country is drawing others too. Engineering sector, electronics, infrastructure, automotive, transportation, packaging industry,

aviation, aerospace as well as defence sectors are sending the country's aluminium demand upwards.

As per a CRISIL study, strong demand will push capital expenditure in aluminium by three times over the next five years. "Solid long-term demand fundamentals and expectation of healthy operating margins will spur domestic aluminium makers to spend Rs 70,000 crore in the next five years through 2027 to expand capacity. This capital expenditure would be thrice that was incurred in the past five years," predicts the financial advisory agency.

Tapan Kumar Chand, resident director of Vedanta Ltd in Odisha and Chhattisgarh, agrees. According to him, aluminium consumption will double in the country in the next five years and the price of the white metal will remain stable going forward.

What's also being watched out for is international prices of the white metal. Aluminium price in London Metal Exchange had hit \$4,000 in 2022 after reopening of economies following Covid restrictions but has since fallen and steadied at \$2,200-2,300 which international agencies predict may stabilise. Some even predict an appreciation in the prices based on international market dynamics and geopolitics.

With the outlook looking strong and domestic consumption set for a steady growth, aluminium makers seem bullish and Odisha is at the centre of attraction and interest because of its bauxite riches. Between 2015 and October 2023, as many as 31 bauxite mines have been successfully auctioned across six states of the country, as per Union Mines Ministry data. Three of them are from Odisha. Auctioned this year, the three blocks combined together bear reserves to the tune of about 460 mn tonne. The rest 28 come nowhere near.

GEOLOGICAL ADVANTAGE

As per the Indian Minerals Yearbook 2021, Odisha accounts for 41 per cent of the bauxite resources in the country, followed by Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh (AP). Much of the reserves are found in the Eastern Ghats branching across Odisha into the AP. This East Coast Bauxite belt is where the blocks are located, almost next to each other.

The geographical distribution of the belt would show much of the resources are concentrated in Rayagada, Koraput and Kalahandi districts. This is where the big industries are willing to consolidate their position through acquisition of mines, establishing greenfield ventures and focussing on expansion.

Source: **Business Standard**

The White Metal Rush

VEDANTA LTD

Currently sourcing bauxite from Kodingamali

Preferred bidder for Sijimali

Total investment in state ₹80,000 CRORE

To add another ₹25,000 CRORE in metals and mines

HINDALCO

Has captive mine at Baphlimali

In pact for long-term linkage of bauxite from OMC's Kodingamali mines

Bauxite off-take from 2028-29 TO BE 3.6 MN TONNE

To add a second refinery at Rayagada's Kansariguda with 2mn tonne capacity

ADANI GROUP

Mundra Aluminium Ltd bags two mines at Kutrumali and Ballada

Plans Greenfield aluminium project

Sijimali mining site falls in 18 revenue villages across Rayagada's Kashipur and Kalahandi's Thuamul Rampur block

CONSOLIDATION RACE

Vedanta, whose investment exposure in the state stands around Rs 80,000 crore, had announced last year to push another Rs 25,000 crore towards capacity expansion across metals and mining sectors. The company looks to scale up its alumina refinery capacity to 6 mn tonne a year.

Aditya Birla Group's Hindalco Industries Ltd is expanding its footprints too. Having over Rs 30,000 crore investment in the state, Hindalco's Utkal Alumina International Ltd runs a 2.37 mn tonne alumina refinery in Rayagada district. It was one of the first private companies to get a captive bauxite mine in the state and had to navigate through resistance in early 2000s. The 200 mn tonne Baphlimali mine allocated to it is located over the same two adjoining districts of Kalahandi and Rayagada and the annual extraction stands at 7 mn tonne.

Earlier this month, Hindalco was engaged in a long negotiation with the state government for securing bauxite linkage from OMC's Kodingamali mines after the state government revised its Long Term Linkage Policy 2023. As per the pact, beginning 2026-27, the com-

pany would be eligible for 0.6 mn tonne per annum bauxite supply for the first two years. From 2028-29 onwards, its off-take would be substantially higher at 3.6 mn tonne per annum.

To smoothen the deal, the company has gone on to sign an MoU with the Odisha government for a second refinery in Rayagada district at Kansariguda with a proposed investment of over Rs 8,000 crore. It would add another 2 mn tonne to the company's refinery capacity along with a 150 mega watt captive power plant. The company has two smelters in Lapanga and Hirakud (both in Sambalpur) with a combined capacity of over 610,000 tonne per year apart from captive power plants. If sources are to be believed, it is planning more downstream product units in Rayagada.

Not to be left behind, the Adani Group has joined the aluminium bandwagon in the state. Its two-year-old wholly-owned subsidiary, Mundra Aluminium Ltd emerged preferred bidder in two blocks – Kutrumali and Ballada. Ballada in Koraput district comes with a smaller reserve of 22 mn tonne while Kutrumali, standing shoulder to shoulder with Sijimali in the same bauxite belt, has a deposit of 127 mn tonne, spread over 701.7 hectare. It is planning a greenfield project too.

Rich in resources, the East Coast Bauxite belt is also part of the biodiversity hotspot that Eastern Ghats happens to be. It also is home to tribal communities who share an intimate bond with their land that goes well beyond the need for natural resources. The Dongria Kondhs, one of the many particularly vulnerable tribal groups, had stood up against the Vedanta Ltd seeking religious rights over Niyam Raja.

THE CHASM

Echoes of that resistance still ring in the region because the proposed Sijimali mining site falls in 18 revenue villages across Rayagada's Kashipur and neighbouring Kalahandi's Thuamul Rampur block. Once Vedanta was issued the letter of intent for the block, there was a bevy of on-ground activities by Mythri Infrastructure and Mining India Pvt Ltd, a firm which awarded the task of operating the mines.

On the Rayagada side, there have been face-offs. On August 12, Kashipur police lodged an FIR against 93 people basing on a complaint from Mythri Infrastructure which alleged its team members along with police were stopped by some inhabitants of Kantamal, Banteji, Bundel, Aliguna and many other villages on Sijimali hill top. They were threatened with life and even held hostage, the FIR said.

Villagers say it is their resistance to loss of land, resources and livelihood which is attracting fabricated police cases. "A villager who works in Kerala for a living was booked. In one case, police came looking for a person who passed away about five years ago," alleges Gobardhan Majhi of Kantamal village.

According to Rayagada SP Vivekanand Sharma, a series of incidents such as kidnapping and law and order violations took place in Kashipur. "We had to register cases and take action to prevent the matter from escalation," he said.

Six days prior to that, an FIR was registered against nine persons after a mob gheraoed K Singhpur police station over the arrest of a person in a case related to alleged Maoist violence. Police later reviewed the matter and dropped the charges slapped under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act.

As the public hearing dates draw close, a sense of tension prevails in the area. However, the Rayagada administration says it is committed to ensure residents of villages set to be impacted by mining get to voice their concerns in a free and fair manner. "Much of the unrest is motivated by vested interest groups because it started after the auction ended," says Rayagada collector Swadha Dev Singh. The whole process for the mining project, she says, will begin with the public hearing and would take about 24 months since environment as well as social impact would also be assessed subsequently. "The public hearing will be conducted in the most legal manner and recorded which means villagers from the impacted areas will be able to air their views freely," she assures.

Source: New Indian Express

IRON ORE MINING AGREEMENT WITH ADANI GROUP TERMINATED IN CHHATTISGARH

NMDC-CMDC Ltd said the response of Adani Enterprises to the show cause notice (issued to it earlier on July 11 for termination) was 'not satisfactory'

The NMDC-CMDC Ltd (as joint venture company NCL) has terminated the iron ore mining services agreement signed with Adani Enterprises Ltd, (AEL), saying it had not taken essential steps toward achieving the conditions and objectives specified in the contract.

The termination is related to the allocation of south Chhattisgarh's Bailadila iron ore Deposit-13 at Kirandul in Dantewada to AEL.

The competent authority of the NMDC-CMDC Ltd examined various terms and conditions of the agreement and cited the response of AEL to the show cause notice (issued to it earlier on July 11 for termination), as "Not satisfactory and didn't cover the areas that were detailed in the show cause notice", and further added that the reply didn't infuse any confidence as M/s Adani was silent on its responsibility to initiate steps.

Speaking on AEL's response to the show cause notice, NCL said the shifting of responsibilities is a lame proposition not worthy of acceptance. Reacting to the

reply of AEL, the chief executive officer of the NCL in the termination order stated: "To say that the failure lies with the NCL is not only inaccurate but also mischievous.

There is no point in continuing a non-starter any further. The iron ore mining service agreement dated December 6, 2018 stands cancelled".

The Adani Group avoided commenting on the development.

"We have diligently fulfilled all our obligations since NMDC-CMDC Ltd awarded the contract for developing and operating Deposit-13 Iron Ore Block by NCL in 2018 through a transparent and competitive bidding process. However, considering the provisions of the agreement and the current circumstances, we choose not to comment at this time," the Adani Group spokesperson told The New Indian Express. The allocation of Bailadila Deposit-13, having the mine capacity of 10 metric ton per annum, also witnessed a protest in June 2019 by tribal villagers who claimed the given deposit is the centre of their faith with deity Nandraj Dev in the region. Following this, the Chhattisgarh government then halted the project work.

Source: The Indian Express

AS THE FUTURE OF INDIA'S COAL IS DECIDED, LIFE IN A MINING DISTRICT HANGS IN THE BALANCE

Before mining came to Chhattisgarh, a landlocked state in central India, Hasdeo Arand was a remote forest with a dozen tribal hamlets. Spanning more than 650 square miles, the forest is often called the "lungs of central India" and is home to endangered elephants, sloth bears, and leopards, as well as valuable water reserves. Many of the local villagers are Adivasis, or "original inhabitants" hailing from the Gond tribe, who cultivate crops in their backyards and sell woven grass baskets at the market. For them, this land is sacred.

This is how Umeshwar Singh Armo remembers growing up in Jampani, a small hamlet crowned with guava trees. This is where his ancestors were buried, and where he hopes future generations of his tribe will thrive. Today, the 43-year-old is the village chief of the local district of Paturiadand, home to around 900 villagers.

The area's nearly 250 plant and bird species aren't the forest's only resources. Armo remembers when, as a schoolboy, he learned about another one: a shiny substance called "coal." But it wasn't until 2007 that surveyors sent by the state

government began roaming the forest, using satellite cameras and laser scans to look for the stuff.

"We would all gather around to watch them survey the land. We were curious, even excited, about what it all meant," Armo recalls. "But we could not imagine they would dig the ground out like this."

What the surveyors found was a miner's jackpot: more than 5 billion tons of coal sitting under the pristine forest. In 2013, Chhattisgarh's government marked out coal blocks, or designated areas for mining, and gave approval to Rajasthan, another state government, to extract the fuel. The Rajasthan government contracted the mining operations to Adani Power, India's largest private operator and developer of coal mines and coal-fired power plants. Shortly after, a chunk of the forest roughly the size of five football fields was torn out to establish the Parsa-East Kanta Basan (PEKB) mine, named after two hamlets that once stood on the land. Today, what remains are large black craters.

Of course, the problems with coal don't end with extraction. As a major consumer



of it, India is also the third-largest emitter of greenhouse gasses (though its per capita emissions are around seven times lower than that of the U.S.). Most developed nations are winding down coal capacity to meet climate targets, but India and China continue to account for about 80% of all active coal projects. And while the U.S. and the E.U. have set goals of reaching net zero emissions by 2050, India says it will get there by 2070—another decade behind China’s goal of 2060.

In light of the most recent IPCC report’s stark findings, U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres stressed that all countries need to move faster to reach those targets. India, which previously argued that phasing out coal would be too detrimental to its economy, may be succumbing to global pressure. In May, during a committee meeting as part of this year’s G-20 Summit, India’s secretary for coal, Amrit Lal Meena, announced that the country will close around 30 coal mines over the next three to four years.

But as the experience of Hasdeo’s residents shows, even efforts to prevent the damage coal does in the long term can have surprising—and damaging—effects in the short run.

Reuters reported that India also plans to stop building new coal-fired power plants—apart from those already in the pipeline. Not making any new commitments to coal is good news, says Tim Buckley, the director of the think tank Climate Energy Finance, but there’s a downside for those affected by existing operations: “No new coal means you rush to complete all the mines that are already there,” he said.

“If you’re a villager in that coal mine, you’re screwed,” he added. Interviews conducted over three months in 2022 with more than 40 people—including locals who oppose the mine as well as those who support it; Adani workers at the PEKB mine; and teachers, police, and activists in the area—revealed how life in the forest has been transformed by the presence of a mining giant. For many, the transformation won’t end there.

“If we look far ahead, we all know that coal mining will only last 30 years,” Armo says. “But after that, our land will be destroyed. Then what? We have nowhere else to go.”

When coal is extracted from PEKB, its journey has just begun. The fuel itself travels north by rail and truck to Rajasthan, while the rewards of selling it are reaped by Chhattisgarh’s state capital of Raipur. There, the dizzying development of towers, malls, and hotels stands in stark contrast to life for the Adivasi forest

dwellers who work the mines, 90% of whom depend on agriculture and forest produce for their livelihoods.

It’s a pattern repeated across India, the world’s second-biggest importer, consumer, and producer of coal. By next year, amid growing demand for electricity, its government plans to have extracted over a billion tons just since 2022.

The Adani Group is key to these ambitions. Founded in 1988 as a commodity trading business by Gautam Adani, now India’s second-richest billionaire, it has become one of the country’s largest conglomerates, operating ports, airports, and thermal power production plants. Currently, the group also has government contracts to produce and sell more than 29 million tons of coal in India every year, claiming 50% of the country’s market share in coal trading. In June 2022, when the government issued 22 million tons’ worth of coal import orders to overcome domestic shortages, 19 million went to Adani.

Adani is no stranger to controversy. In 2010, the company announced that, to meet India’s rising energy needs, it would develop a new mine in the Galilee Basin in Australia. The backlash was so massive that Adani struggled to finance and insure the mine; he eventually self-funded it with \$2 billion from other Adani entities. By last November, it had produced 18 million tons of coal, less than a third of its capacity. During an interview with *The Financial Times* last year, Adani hinted the mine might have been a mistake. And earlier this year, a damning report published by Hindenburg, a U.S. short-selling firm, accused the Adani Group of “pulling the largest con in corporate history” through stock manipulation, accounting fraud, and other malfeasance. The Adani Group issued a 413-page reply calling the allegations “stale, baseless, and discredited,” but the report nevertheless amplified the scrutiny around Adani mining operations, which experts say contributed to the company’s decision in February to halt an \$847 million acquisition of another coal-fired power plant.

Yet the appeal of the coal business is clear. After Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s BJP party came into power in 2014, it introduced a new law to enable what’s known as the Mine Developer and Operator (MDO) model, a process that allows government-owned coal blocks to be contracted out to private companies that take responsibility for land acquisition; resettlement and rehabilitation; and mine operation—all at undisclosed rates under confidential agreements. The Adani Group is India’s biggest coal MDO. An Adani spokesperson told *TIME* that all of its nine MDO contracts were acquired through “a highly competitive and transparent bidding process with a number of contenders.”

Critics say Adani’s dominance is thanks in part to his close ties with Indian Prime

Minister Narendra Modi. And the BJP isn't the only political party that has boosted Adani's coal empire. In 2015, Rahul Gandhi, then the leader of India's main opposition party, Congress, made assurances to villagers in Chhattisgarh that their land would not be given away for mining. After Congress was voted into power in the state in 2018, however, it contracted the Adani Group to operate coal blocks in the Korba district the following year. Four villages—including Madanpur, which Gandhi visited to make those promises—face the threat of displacement if mining continues.

The Adani spokesperson emphasized to TIME that, under the MDO process, the company is simply a government contractor. In PEKB's case, the spokesperson said, this meant the state of Rajasthan was responsible for any concerns raised by villagers. But Adani Group owns 74% of the shares in RRUVNL, the government company that issues the contract—meaning Adani Group itself is the majority stakeholder over PEKB's coal.

It's not that coal faces no resistance in India: In fact, PEKB is one of the country's most controversial land-rights cases ever. The mine is vehemently opposed by those who see it as the force behind the destruction of their land, homes, and livelihoods. In 2010, India's coal and environment ministries conducted a joint study that found the forest should be a "no-go area" for coal mining because of its rich biodiversity.

PEKB workers take their breaks sitting at the edge of the mine, where they gaze at the split between the open-cast pit and what remains of the Hasdeo forest.

The area's tribal villagers know what mining can do. "Right now, our livelihoods are flourishing because of the forest," said Mudhram Markam, a 41-year-old from the nearby Tara village who has been involved in the local resistance efforts since 2015. "But tomorrow when they dig out our land for coal, we will get sick and have trouble breathing, our water reserves will dry up, and things will just get more difficult. And most of all, the forest will be destroyed."

In many ways, Adani's promise of progress in exchange for coal is a familiar one. In America's Gilded Age, mining giants powered the nation—and even today, U.S. coal companies are struggling to meet their cleanup obligations for the waste and pollution created by more than 50,000 mine openings as communities grapple with the legacies of the industry.

That waste is only just beginning to accumulate in Hasdeo, but in Adani's official telling of the PEKB story, that trade-off was worthwhile. The company, which also told TIME it was dedicated to being part of India's commitment on climate change, said it has created over 15,000 jobs and built a colony of homes and toilet facilities in a neighboring village. It added that, through its corporate social responsibility wing, the Adani Foundation, it has been "continuously working" towards improving the quality of life in and around the peripheral villages of PEKB.

Most notably, the foundation set up the Adani Vidya Mandir, a school that offers free education in English for 800 students. For local Adivasi families who belong to the lowest rungs of India's oppressive caste system, the school offered children a gateway to opportunity. But many parents who enrolled their children say the quality of education has worsened since the school first opened in 2013. One villager who teaches at a neighboring public school said that almost half his class last year came to him as new students after they unenrolled from Adani's school.

Meanwhile, the mines are already taking a toll on the health of those working in and living near them. "Every step in the generation of electricity by coal-fired

thermal power plants ... [carries] serious risks on the health of miners, plant workers and residents in the vicinity of mines and power plant," stated a 2017 study from New York University, which looked at the health and environmental impact of mining in Chhattisgarh. A 2020 study by the Indian Council of Medical Research found that the tribal population in villages near the city of Raigarh, who live in a similar set-up to the villages of Hasdeo, saw increased health risks like acute respiratory infections and tuberculosis, as well as increased exposure to man-made harms such as road accidents after the coal mine opened.

Several PEKB workers who spoke with TIME expressed frustration that when land collectors convinced them to sell their homes and work for the mine, they were promised around 12,000 rupees (\$144) a month. Instead, they say, they earn less than half that sum, well below the recommended average income from trade unions in India. And while the Forest Rights Act of 2006 requires that all tribal villagers must give permission for commercial use of their land, multiple people who spoke to TIME allege that, when tribal leaders held meetings to gather their consent, villagers' signatures were either forged or taken after they were given bribes by land collectors working for Adani.

The Adani Group has denied the allegation of deceiving council members, and fiercely contests what many villagers told TIME. While the company did not comment specifically on the salary discrepancy or educational outcomes at its school, in a statement to TIME the group said compensation was determined after "a detailed consultation process with the local community." It added that "responsible mining practices" made PEKB "a model mine that's frequently visited by representatives of other energy companies and academic institutions."

Some villagers do support the Adani Group's operations. Those who sold their land did so because they saw it as an opportunity to access not only previously unimaginable sums of money but also upward mobility through a job for the Adani corporation.

Those promises haven't always panned out. One Adivasi mine worker, whose name has been withheld to protect his job, resides in the village of Salhi and has been with the PEKB mine since 2013. Six days a week, he works eight-hour shifts counting blocks of coal. He, like a dozen other mine workers who also spoke with TIME, says the working conditions are dismal. "We are not happy here, but we need to keep working out of necessity," he said.

Those who accepted the Adani Group's offers feel they have nowhere else to go: "We were screwed on both ends: by the collectors who came to take our land, and by Adani, who promised us progress," said the mine worker from Salhi.

"Adani is making a fool out of us," said another.

In March, India's Supreme Court was asked to weigh in on the future of PEKB after three different pleas were filed in relation to the mining operations: An advocacy group formed by Hasdeo's villagers and an environmental lawyer both challenged the operations on the grounds, respectively, that they displaced local villagers and harmed the environment, while Rajasthan's state electricity board asked the court to approve the mining to meet its electricity needs.

The apex court—which often takes years to deliver final judgments amid a backlog of nearly 70,000 appeals and petitions—is yet to hand down a final judgment on the matter. This spring, despite the opposition of the state government, the federal government announced a new round of auctions over the unoccupied coal blocks in the forest.

These questions are part of the global puzzle that climate experts call "just transition": the idea that shifting away from fossil fuels must be done responsibly, taking into

account the needs of local communities. Just as the negative impacts of mining are often borne by marginalized people, so too are the negative impacts of achieving a sustainable future—necessary though that is. “Change is in the air: renewables are already out-competing coal, and India’s central and state governments are under increasing pressure to reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions,” writes Sandeep Pai, an expert in India’s energy transitions. But, he continues, “Developing a long-term just transition strategy for the coal sector in India will be a major undertaking.”

Last September, Umeshwar Singh Armo, the village chief, was awakened by someone knocking on his door at 4:00 in the morning. He unlatched the bolt of his thatched hut and peered outside, spotting two men in police uniforms. They asked him to accompany them to the local police station, where a senior official wanted to speak with him. “It won’t take too long,” he recalls their reassuring him. “We’ll drop you right back.”

Though alarmed, Armo had come to expect these situations. He had helped form the Hasdeo Arand Bachao Sangharsh Samiti, or the Save Hasdeo Forest Committee, which has been protesting the mine for a decade. The community’s efforts have become a force of resistance against the authorities, with marginal success as successive governments, both local and federal, stop and restart mining in the area.

Armo, who is tall and soft-spoken, described these events when he met with TIME last October at the committee’s local office. He arrived on his bicycle with a Gond tribal scarf draped around his chalk-colored shirt and quietly removed his shoes before sitting on a jute charpai, or a woven bed.

The police arrived shortly after rumors began circulating among villagers that the forest department was planning to cut more trees to clear land for a second phase of mining in the neighboring villages of Pendramar and Ghatbarra. Armo suspected the police were trying to discourage him from protesting, but he cooperated with their request. That day, they detained him, along with other members of the committee, for over 12 hours, he says.

While he was in custody, officials erected barricades to prevent villagers from passing through areas designated for clearing, while nearly 2,000 trees were felled to clear 1,138 hectares of forest.

Armo realized that he had been deceived when he was given no clear explanation about what was going on at the station. (Police told TIME Armo and others were detained “for their safety.”) Enraged, he asked the officers to write in their records, “When Hasdeo was being destroyed, we were busy tricking the villagers who tried to save the trees, so that ‘future generations would read this and tell you how wrong you were.’”

Now, Hasdeo is a surveillance zone, with young men recruited by the Adani group keeping an eye on the protesters and the police patrolling the area to ensure the mining operations continue. Villagers fear retaliation for speaking out. But Armo is undeterred. Every sunset, he gathers under a large tarpaulin tent to talk to other villagers about the latest developments in the mine and to plan future resistance efforts. For him, the fight to save Hasdeo is also a larger fight for the Adivasi existence.

“We stand to lose so much if we don’t fight: the land, the river, the animals and plants, the sanctuaries, the livelihoods,” he says. “We are fighting for all of it.”

Source: time.com



NURTURING EQUILIBRIUM IN A WORLD OF IMBALANCE

In a world often marked by turbulence and diversity, the pursuit of equilibrium becomes more critical than ever. The innate imbalances that we encounter daily, whether in our personal lives, society, or the environment, can seem overwhelming. Still, it is precisely within these imbalances that the concept of nurturing equilibrium takes root. It is important to nurture equilibrium in a world of imbalance and there are insights into how individuals and societies can work towards achieving balance and harmony.

The Imbalance Dilemma

The modern world is characterized by numerous imbalances. Social inequalities, economic disparities, environmental degradation, and personal struggles all contribute to this sense of chaos and disharmony. These imbalances can lead to frustration, conflict, pain and distress. However, embracing the idea of nurturing equilibrium provides a pathway to address these issues constructively.

Finding Balance Within Oneself

Nurturing equilibrium begins at an individual level. Before we can address imbalances in the world, we must first find balance within ourselves. This comprises of recognizing our own strengths and weaknesses, acknowledging our emotional states, and striving for inner harmony. Mindfulness practices, such as meditation and yoga, can be instrumental in achieving this equilibrium. When we are emotionally and mentally balanced, we are better equipped to navigate the challenges of an imbalanced world.

Nurturing Social Harmony

Social imbalances are deeply rooted in our societies. Discrimination, poverty, and inequality are pressing issues that require collective action to address. Nurturing equilibrium on a societal level means advocating for social justice, equal opportunities, and inclusiveness. Supporting marginalized communities, and promoting policies that reduce inequality are steps in the right direction. It also involves nurturing a culture of empathy, compassion, and respect.

Balancing Economic Growth and Sustainability

The world's economic systems often maintains an imbalance, prioritizing profit at the expense of the environment and social equality. Achieving equilibrium in economics involves moving towards sustainable practices. Businesses can nurture equilibrium by adopting ethical and environmentally friendly practices. Government must implement policies that balance economic growth with ecological conservation. Consumers can contribute by making conscious choices and supporting companies that align with their values.

Environmental Equilibrium

One of the most serious imbalances which our planet Earth is facing, is environmental degradation. Climate change, habitat destruction, and resource depletion have everlasting consequences. Nurturing equilibrium in this context means actively working to restore balance in our ecosystems by conservation efforts, sustainable resource management, as well as actions at individual levels like reducing waste and conserving energy in nurturing environmental equilibrium.

Balancing Technology and Humanity

The rapid advancement of technology has introduced new imbalances into our lives. The ever-increasing screen time, digital addiction, and privacy concerns have disrupted the equilibrium between technology and humanity. To nurture equilibrium in this context, it is essential to strike a balance between the benefits of technology and our basic need of human connections. Following digital detox practices and fostering mindful technology use can help restore this balance.

In a world rife with imbalances, the concept of finding harmony amid chaos or nurturing equilibrium provides a beacon of hope. The path to equilibrium involves self-awareness, social justice, environmental protection, and responsible technology use.

Nurturing equilibrium is not about eradicating differences or challenges; it's about finding ways to coexist harmoniously within an imbalanced world, ultimately leading to a more just, sustainable, and peaceful future.

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