NOT FOR SALE
February 2022

Geonesis

Indian Mining & Exploration Updates

www.geonesis.in

North-East States of Assam & Arunachal Sets Prices of Coal on Fire with Aggressive Bids of 288.75 & 344.75% placed by State Mining Corporations

The Blocks in North-Eastern states of Arunachal Pradesh & Assam saw aggressive bidding by State Mining Corporations with Assam Mineral Development Corporation Limited placing the highest bid of 288.75% for Garampani Block in Dima-Hasaoin, Assam while Arunachal Block saw the Biggest Bid and setting new record of 344.75% for Namchik-Namphuk coalfield in Changlang district by Platinum Alloys Private Limited.

BS Ispat Ltd emerged as the highest bidder for Majra mine in Maharashtra, Assam Mineral Development Corporation bagged Garampani coal block in Assam.

The second and third days of auction of coal blocks for commercial use saw Jindal Steel and Power bagging Utkal-C coal mine in Odisha, while Hindalco Industries made the highest bid for Meenakshi mine in the eastern state of Odisha. While BS Ispat Ltd emerged as the highest bidder for Majra mine in Maharashtra,

The government has put on sale 10 coal mines in the third round of commercial coal mining.

"On the 2nd and 3rd day of the e-auction (February 9-10), cumulative five coal mines were put up for auction," the statement said.

The five coal mines are fully explored and have total geological reserves of 528.051 million tonne.

The cumulative peak rated capacity (PRC) for these coal mines is 16.07 million tonne per annum (MTPA).

On the first day of auction on February 8, five blocks were sold.

Dalmia Cement Bharat Ltd had emerged as the highest bidder for two coal blocks in Jharkhand.

While Mahanadi Mines and Minerals emerged as the highest bidder for a coal block in Odisha, Yazdani Steel And Power was the highest bidder for another coal mine in Odisha, coal ministry had said in a statement on Tuesday.

SI NO	NAME OF THE MINE	STATE	PRC (MTPA)	GEOLOGICAL RESERVES (MT)	CLOSING BID SUBMITTED BY	RESERVE PRICE(%)	FINAL OFFER (%)
1	Bankhui	Odisha	NA	800.00	Yazdani Steel And Power Limited/ 274545	4.00	18.00
2	Bijahan	Odisha	5.26	327.05	Mahanadi Mines And Minerals Private Limited/ 237318	4.00	14.00
3 & 4	Brinda & Sasai	Jharkhand	0.68	61.05	Dalmia Cement Bharat Limited/ 65013	4.00	8.00
5	Koiajan	Assam	0.004	0.06	Assam Mineral Development Corporation Limited/265144	4.00	81.50
6	Meenakshi	Odisha	12.00	285.23	Hindalco Industries Limited/64856	4.00	10.25
7	Garamapani	Assam	0.02	0.468	Assam Mineral Development Corporation Limited/265144	4.00	288.25
8	Majra	Maharash-tra	0.48	31.036	BS Ispat Limited/64979	4.00	18.25
9	Utkal-c	Odisha	3.37	196.347	Jindal Steel And Power Limited/64898	4.00	45.00
10	Namchik Namphuk	Arunachal Pradesh	0.20	14.970	Winner Name Awaited	4.00	344.75

Centre firm on auctioning of Singareni coal mine blocks

The Union minister said the decision to auction the four coal blocks of Singareni had been taken in pursuance of the recommendations of a high-level committee

Despite repeated appeals by the Telangana government, the Centre is firm on the auction of four blocks of coal mines being operated by to state-run Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL) in northern Telangana.

Union minister for parliamentary affairs, coal and mines Prahlad Joshi made this clear in a written reply to a question raised by to Telangana Congress MP N Uttam Kumar Reddy in Lok Sabha on Wednesday.

The four coal mines of Singareni Collieries – KalyanKhani block-6, Koyagudem block-3, Sathupalli block-6 and Shravanapalli – are put up for sale under the fourth tranche of auction as per the provisions of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957.

The SCCL is a public sector undertaking and a joint venture of Telangana government and the Centre with an equity of 51 and 49 percent respectively. The coal mines are spread over Adilabad, Karimnagar, Khammam, and Warangal districts.

The Union minister said the decision to auction the four coal blocks of Singareni had been taken in pursuance of the recommendations of a high-level committee, constituted under the Chairmanship of Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog on coal sector in June, 2019.

He said it was decided that the ministry of coal shall gradually shift towards allocation of coal blocks through auction only. “After one year, the direct allotment route shall be closed except under exceptional circumstances to be determined by the ministry,” Joshi said.

The minister admitted that the Centre had received requests from the SCCL management for the outright allocation of these coal blocks to the company. “However, the coal ministry has decided that there is no need for such reservation of coal blocks to the SCCL, as it will become a precedent for others,” he said, adding that the application of the SCCL had been disposed of.

Joshi said an attempt was made to auction the four coal blocks of SCCL in December 2021 after following the due process initiated in August. The auction was held by a nominated authority on December 15, 2021.

However, the authority informed the ministry that no bid was received for Sattupalli Block-III, Shravanapalli and KalyanKhani Block-6 and the auction was annulled. One bid was received for Koyagudem block-III, but it was also annulled, as according to the policy, single bids are not accepted in the first attempt.

“These coal mines will be put up for auction again in the next tranche. The SCCL also can bid for the same by participating in the auction along with others,” the Union minister said.

The Telangana RashtraSamithi government has been strongly opposing the auctioning of the coal blocks of Singareni Collieries. The Telangana Boggu Gani Karmika Sangham (TBGKS), affiliated to the TRS and the recognised trade union of the Singareni Collieries, held a three-day strike from December 9, in protest against the privatisation move.

Other major unions like Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) and Hindustan MazdoorSangh (HMS) also took part on the agitation. “About 43,000 employees took part in the agitation and stalled the production in all the coal mines demanding that the Centre withdraw the privatisation move,” Miryal Reddy, TBGKS general secretary, said.

Source: Hindustan Times

4 coal conversion projects to help achieve gasification by 2030: Joshi

Coal Minister Pralhad Joshi on Tuesday said that four projects for conversion of coal to clean energy will help in achieving the target of 100 million tonnes (MT) coal gasification by 2030.

Coal Minister Pralhad Joshi on Tuesday said that four projects for conversion of coal to clean energy with private sector capital investment of Rs 30,130 crore will help in achieving the target of 100 million tonnes (MT) coal gasification by 2030.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her budget speech 2022-23 announced setting up of four pilot projects for coal gasification.

Gasification of coal is a process in which coal is partially oxidated by air, oxygen, steam or carbon dioxide under controlled conditions to produce a fuel gas.

"Thank you PM @narendramodiji, FM @nsitharamanji for envisioning a green economy & encouraging generation of clean energy in the #AatmaNirbharBharatKaBudget. 4 projects for conversion of coal to clean energy have been announced at pvt sector capital investment of Rs 30,130 crore," Joshi said in a tweet.

"These projects will help us achieve the target of 100 MT coal gasification projects by 2030. Not only will this initiative adopt clean coal technology but also help generate employment for population in eastern part of India. #AatmanirbharBharatKaBudget," he tweeted.

These projects will boost domestic production of methanol, dimethyl ether and ammonia, thereby reducing India's import dependency, he said adding that adoption of clean coal technology will help harness this vital natural resource for energy and chemical needs of the nation.

"Boosting Ease of Living, AatmaNirbharBharatKaBudget # will further India's entrepreneurial spirit and lead to enhanced opportunities," he tweeted.

"#AatmaNirbharBharatKaBudget is fueling a billion aspirations," he said.

"Under PM @narendramodiji, #AatmaNirbharBharatKaBudget has been presented by FM @nsitharamanji. The #Budget2022 is balanced, dedicated to realise the aspirations of people and build a New India," he tweeted.

While presenting the 2022-23 Budget in the Lok Sabha, Sitharaman said that "four pilot projects for coal gasification and conversion of coal into chemicals required for the industry will be set up for technical and financial viability".

Joshi had earlier said that India's target to gasify 100 million tonnes of coal by 2030 will entail an investment of over Rs 4 lakh crore.

This 100 MT coal gasification will happen in three phases. In the first phase from 2020-2024 -- four million tonnes (MT) of coal will be gasified and around Rs 20,000 crore will be invested for the same.

In the second phase -- from 2020-2026 -- 6 MT of coal will be gasified which will involve an investment of Rs 30,000 crore.

In the third phase -- from 2022-2030 -- 90 MT of coal will be gasified and Rs 3.6 lakh crore will be invested for the same.

Source: Busniess Standard

Privatisation is the way forward to regulate coal industry hit by price hike, shortages, say experts

Opening up the coal industry to the private sector will help regulate the segment while also making the country self-sufficient in terms of its domestic fuel requirement.

With a rise in coal prices and shortage of supply in the wake of disruptions from Indonesia, the private sector seems like a viable option for the country to emerge from an impending crisis, experts and industry leaders say. “The participation from the private sector is always welcome, as a larger number of participants would not only enhance supply but would also infuse competition,” Vinaya Varma, MD, mjunction Services Ltd, said.

However, at present, private sector participation can only be in the form of increased production from the captive blocks. “It will take some time for the commercial miners to kick-start production from the allotted blocks. As a matter of fact, captive coal production has already shown a healthy growth of over 32 percent year-on-year to around 62 million tons till December 2021,” Vinaya Varma told Financial Express Online.

Coal shortage eases a bit, for now

The shortage of coal that the country’s power plants faced during September-October 2021 has eased to some extent, primarily due to decreased power demand in winter, and increased coal production. Coal stock at the power plants has increased to 23 million tonnes as of December 27, 2021, from 9 million tonnes as of October 26, 2021, according to the Central Electricity Authority of India (CEA). But the Ministry of Coal will have to strategise on increasing the production in the country itself before the demand peaks again.

Earlier, in 2020, Prime Minister Narendra Modi opened up the coal industry to the private sector after removing restrictions on the end use of coal by promulgating Mineral Laws (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020. This was aimed at meeting the demand of dry-fuel in downstream sectors by enabling wider participation in the auction of coal mines. PM Modi had said that India has the world’s fourth largest coal reserves, and the country should become a net exporter of coal.

In order to attract investments in coal mining, the government has also reduced upfront payments, relaxed payment schedules and offered rebates in revenue shared with the government for early production. India will spend Rs 500 billion for creating infrastructures around coal mining and the country is targeting gasification of 100 million tonnes of coal by 2030.

Why privatisation?

Coal from Indonesia accounts for nearly half of India’s annual coal imports, and with the country imposing a month-long ban on January 1 on coal exports, India witnessed a sudden surge in prices as also shortage in supply. Even as Indonesia started easing restrictions by January 20 with 139 companies being allowed to ship the fuel overseas, it already has had an impact on the prices and the volatility in the market has created uncertainty for Indian buyers. Also, due to this, the shortage will most likely continue in January and February as it will take time for Indonesia's shipments to return to its usual levels.

According to consultancy firm Argus Media the prices of the popular GAR 4,200 kcal/kg (NAR 3,800 kcal/kg) grade of coal was at a historical high of $154.21/t on 22 October 2021 after a historical low of $22.40/t on 11 September 2020. The market was last assessed at $60.41/t fob Kalimantan on 31 December 2021.

The Indonesian ban on coal exports has had industry players and experts rethink India's dependence on imports and opening up of the sector to private players is one promising step in this direction. However, this will take time to show results. Madan Sabnavis, Chief Economist, Bank of Baroda, said, "Private participation will help but that would take time for output to materialize.

There has been interest shown by private players which should help to augment supply. However, the economic viability in the long run for use of coal as fuel is the main issue. Also given the change in focus to renewables, the interest may be limited as potential investors will weigh options."

Even when the private entities are allowed to enter the industry now, a lot of regulatory work stalls the process, a private sector executive who wishes to remain anonymous, told Financial Express Online.

Also, privatisation will further give a boost to competitiveness in the segment. "While in the short run, Coal India will run the show since it sets price benchmark, going forward, prices will be more competitive," said Madan Sabnavis.

Source: Financial Express

Tata Steel arm to buy govt stake in NeelachalIspat for Rs 12,100 crore

This is the first time a public sector steel manufacturing company has been privatised in India.

In its second acquisition of a public sector undertaking (PSU) within a week, the Tata group has bagged a majority stake in NeelachalIspat Nigam (NINL), giving a strong push to the government's privatisation drive, showcasing the interest of marquee private sector investors in the Centre's assets.

The Alternate Mechanism, comprising Union Ministers Nitin Gadkari, Nirmala Sitharaman, and PiyushGoyal, approved the divestment of the 93.7 per cent stake held in NINL by four central PSUs and two companies of the Odisha government, to Tata Steel Long Products (TSLP) at an enterprise value of Rs 12,100 crore.

The reserve price for the PSU was set at Rs 5,616.97 crore, and approved by the Cabinet Secretary-headed Core Group of Secretaries on Divestment. The Tata Group arm beat bids submitted by two other bidders, including a consortium of Jindal Steel & Power and Nalwa Steel and Power, and JSW Steel.

As the Centre does not directly own any stake in NINL, the sale will not lead to any divestment receipts for the exchequer.

Tata Steel owns a 74.91 per cent stake in Tata Steel Long Products. The buyer will pay 10 per cent of the bid amount which will be deposited in an escrow account. Based on the bidders' demand, the government amended the earlier clause of depositing 100 per cent of the bid amount on the date of execution.

On the closure date of the transaction, shares will be transferred to the new buyer and the balance will be utilised in accordance with the waterfall agreement signed among the selling shareholders. Part-sale proceeds would be infused into the company to the extent of the liabilities, which will be set-off and the balance in the escrow account will be given to selling shareholders proportional to their shareholding.

According to the preliminary information memorandum, the amount paid by the bidder would be used towards settling labour dues, operational creditors, commercial lender debt, promoter debt and purchasing of 93.7% of shareholding of NINL.

According to a statement, the Letter of Intent (LoI) is being issued to Tata Steel Long Products, inviting it to sign the share purchase agreement.

"NINL represents a critical and strategic acquisition for TSLP with around one million tonne (mt) per annum of steelmaking capacity, 2,500 acres of land for future growth and iron ore reserves of around 100 mt. Tata Steel lost no time in outlining an expansion plan. The acquisition of NINL provides a significant opportunity for Tata

Steel to not only restart the 1 mt per annum steel plant expeditiously but also begin work immediately to build a 4.5 mt per annum state-of-the-art long products complex in the next few years, and further expand it to 10 million tonne by around 2030," the company said.

Tata Steel said that the total consideration of Rs 12,100 crore reflects the enterprise value (including all recorded liabilities) as part of the acquisition of 93.7 per cent equity stake in NINL.

The company said that the acquisition was being financed through a combination of internal accruals and bridge loans which were expected to be paid down through internal generation of Tata Steel over the next few quarters.

"The transaction is scheduled for closure within the next couple of months as per the process timelines announced by DIPAM and Government of India," Tata Steel further said.

"The biggest advantage of privatisation will be to the local economy as the strategic buyer will be able to revive a closed plant, bring in modern technology, best managerial practices and infuse fresh capital, which will help in augmenting the capacity of the plant," the Ministry of Finance said in a statement.

"This will help in creating new jobs by creation of ancillary industries and supplier's network," the statement added.

This is the first time a public sector steel manufacturing company has been privatised in India.

The new buyer will have to retain employees of NINL for one year.

The buyer will also be bound to follow the terms of the voluntary retirement scheme applicable for central PSUs, whenever such a decision is taken.

As reported by Business Standard earlier, the government had acceded to most demands of bidders, including reducing the lock-in period for sale of assets, excluding land and mining leases to one year from the date of completion of sale, from the earlier three years proposed by the government.

The promoter of NINL is MMTC, with the PSU owning 49.78 per cent stake in the firm State-owned National Mineral Development Corporation owns 10.10 per cent, and MECON and Bharat Heavy Electricals hold 0.68 per cent each. Odisha government-owned Industrial Promotion and Investment Corporation of Odisha (IPICOL) and Odisha Mining Corporation (OMC) own 12 per cent and 20.47 per cent stake in NINL.

The reserve price for the PSU was set at Rs 5,616.97 crore, and approved by the Cabinet Secretary-headed Core Group of Secretaries on Divestment.

The Tata Group arm beat bids submitted by two other bidders, including a consortium of Jindal Steel & Power and Nalwa Steel and Power, and JSW Steel. As the Centre does not directly own any stake in NINL, the sale will not lead to any divestment receipts for the exchequer.

Tata Steel owns a 74.91 per cent stake in Tata Steel Long Products. The buyer will pay 10 per cent of the bid amount which will be deposited in an escrow account. Based on the bidders' demand, the government amended the earlier clause of depositing 100 per cent of the bid amount on the date of execution.

On the closure date of the transaction, shares will be transferred to the new buyer and the balance will be utilised in accordance with the waterfall agreement signed among the selling shareholders. Part-sale proceeds would be infused into the company to the extent of the liabilities, which will be set-off and the balance in the escrow account will be given to selling shareholders proportional to their shareholding.

According to the preliminary information memorandum, the amount paid by the bidder would be used towards settling labour dues, operational creditors, commercial lender debt, promoter debt and purchasing of 93.7% of shareholding of NINL.

According to a statement, the Letter of Intent (LoI) is being issued to Tata Steel Long Products, inviting it to sign the share purchase agreement.

"NINL represents a critical and strategic acquisition for TSLP with around 1 mtpa of steelmaking capacity, 2,500 acres of land for future growth and iron ore reserves of around 100 mt. Tata Steel lost no time in outlining an expansion plan. The acquisition of NINL provides a significant opportunity for Tata Steel to not only restart the 1 mt per annum steel plant expeditiously but also begin work immediately to build a 4.5 mtpa state-of-the-art long products complex in the next few years, and further expand it to 10 mt by 2030," the firm said.

- Other bidders included consortium of Jindal Steel & Power and Nalwa Steel and Power; and JSW Steel
- Reserve price was set at Rs 5,617 crore
- NINL owes debt and liabilities of over Rs 6,600 crore
- LoI is being issued to Tata Steel Long Products
- Employee lock-in period to be one year; staff dues to be given highest priority
- As the Centre does not directly own any stake in NINL, the sale will not lead to any divestment receipts for the exchequer.

Source: The Print

Restrictions on iron ore industry hampers socio-economic growth of Karnataka

- The Karnataka Iron ore industry continues to face the brunt of a 10-year-old mechanism imposed on the local mining industry which is also restricting the socio-economic development of the state.
- Karnataka is the only state in India to impose such restrictions on the exports of iron ore from the state or sell iron ore freely to all buyers in India. This is causing sub-optimal growth of the local iron-ore industry as selective buying by consumers impacts the overall economy of the state.
- At a time, when India can benefit hugely by being competitive in the world trade as demand for iron ore surges globally commanding a price of $122 per tonne, NMDC, a government of India owned mineral producer, has cut down its iron ore price by Rs 500 per tonne (Rs 300 per tonne in Karnataka and Rs 200 per tonne in Chhattisgarh). This has reduced the iron ore price in Karnataka to Rs 3,233 per tonne for Fe 62.5 grade iron ore. At the same time, miners operating in Odisha have hiked their iron ore price by Rs 250 per tonne owing to the market condition and are selling their ore at Rs 7,183 per tonne.
- Mineral-rich states like Odisha are driven as per the market conditions as it has open trade practices that are not dominated by domestic buying patterns. This leads to fair competition and appropriate revenue to the exchequer. On the other hand, the iron ore sector in Karnataka is majorly impacted by the iron ore major NMDC's pricing pattern
- Karnataka is the only state in India that has restrictions on exports without any alternate avenues for miners to sell their iron ore. This forces them to sell the mined ore only domestically as per the pricing pattern set by the major iron ore producer NMDC which captures the largest market share with almost 14 Mt per annum. The irony of the whole thing is that the buyers in Karnataka are free to import iron ore or buy from other sources including from captive mines.
- Due to the one-sided opening of the Karnataka market, there is an inflow/import of around 3.2 Mt of iron ore in the state. This is creating an artificial oversupply and pressure on the private miners to reduce prices beyond market levels. Currently, the unsold iron ore stocks lying in Karnataka is to the tune of around 4.25 Mt.
- Karnataka, which already is losing heavily to the tune of Rs 8,000 crore per annum because of the disparities, is now staring at a further loss of Rs 700 crore per annum due to restrictions on the trade of iron ore and price reduction by NMDC. Given the demand and supply scenario of iron ore, there is no reason for such price cut by NMDC, but its actions raise questions on whether the mining major which is under the Ministry of Steel has taken such a step under the influence of the steel sector.
- The state of Karnataka has an annual demand of 37 MT of iron ore while the production in the state is 42 MT, which is already in surplus to the state demand. If NMDC keeps up with the same price, the other miners in the state will have no option but to reduce the price of iron due to a conditional restriction of the export ban imposed by the honorable Supreme Court on the state's iron ore sector almost a decade ago.
- When will the state government acknowledge this issue and take a strong step to safeguard its interest? Imagine the day when the loss incurred to the state exchequer from the iron ore industry will rise multi-fold, impacting Karnataka's vast numbers of unemployed and impoverished mining dependents; and the price of iron ore in Karnataka is 110-120 per cent lower than the international iron ore prices.

Source: Free Press Journal

Mining on the Shifty Sands of Goan Politics
After a decade of uncertainty, mining features less prominently in the electoral rhetoric of Goa's politicians

- After a decade of uncertainty, mining features less prominently in the electoral rhetoric of Goa's politicians, reflecting perhaps the waning influence of the sector.
- The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led state government faces strong anti-incumbency in the February 2022 state elections.
- The Goa government has repeatedly erred on the mining issue, according to the Supreme Court. Civil society activists say the government's latest attempt at restarting the mining sector by auctioning old dumps is another mistake.

In the run-up to the 2022 state elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader PramodSawant-led state government has made a slew of announcements towards resuming iron ore mining in the western Indian coastal state of Goa: a new state-owned corporation, mineral exploration, and its latest, a policy that would facilitate the auction of low-grade iron ore sitting in little hillocks created from unmarketable ore piled over decades.

The chief minister who hails from the mining belt hoped this would see the state through the next few years.

"Of all the state government's short-lived plans, this has to be the shortest," said Claude Alvares of Goa Foundation in a press conference on 31 December 2021, responding to the government's latest plan.

The environmental group has led a decade-long battle against illegal mining that climaxed in the landmark 2014 Supreme Court judgment. The extraction and exports of iron ore, both bane and boon for this small coastal state, had already been stopped in 2012, resumed briefly in 2015, only to be stopped again in 2018.

The environmental activists say that the new policy was "unconstitutional and illegal" and in possible contempt of a high court order which, on 27 November 2021, had stayed dispatch from any dumps.

"The so-called dump mining policy has been announced solely to salvage the reputation of the BJP government which is approaching Assembly elections without any clue on how mining may restart in the state, after almost four years since it was halted by Supreme Court's orders."

Claude Alvares of Goa Foundation

Alvares added that the policy is ill-timed too, since it would lapse as soon as the code of conduct came into force, which it did a week later, on 8 January, when elections for Goa's 40-member Legislative Assembly were announced. The voting will take place on 14 February this year while the results will be declared on 10 March.

Mining History of Goa

Leading up to the historic 1967 opinion poll that voted for an independent Goa, three of the state's biggest miners joined hands to produce an 'anti-merger' Marathi newspaper. It had seen its share of highs and lows in a six-decade history. The seesaw ride of the last decade, however, has been particularly trying for the industry, Goa's last three governments, and four chief ministers.

In 2012, the late Manohar Parrikar, playing the anti-corruption crusader, led the BJP to its first majority in Goa. Driven by China's insatiable appetite, annual exports had grown from about 16 million tonnes in 2000-2001 to 46.85 million tonnes in 2010-11, overwhelming infrastructure, regulatory mechanism, and locals, who were forced to put up with ore laden trucks, including some of their own, roaring past their homes round the clock.

Goa has banked on its natural and logistical advantages to build an iron ore industry that was its economy's mainstay until it discovered tourism, and more recently, casinos and real estate. The mining lobby has played a significant role in deciding the political fate of Goa, from before its liberation from Portuguese rule and since, in the choice of its first chief minister, its veto to a merger with Maharashtra, in the making and breaking of coalition governments.

What Had Parrikar Promised?

Parrikar had promised to regulate the sector and reduce petrol prices. As opposition leader and chair of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of Goa's Legislative Assembly, he had accused the then Congress government of turning a blind eye and being complicit in these excesses. His report held the then chief minister DigambarKamat, who was also the minister of mines, of being directly guilty in some instances.

A decade later, campaigning for his seventh consecutive term as Margao MLA (Member of Legislative Assembly), Kamat waives his vindication – a letter from the state's mines and geology department he's got through RTI (Right to Information Act) that says, "There is no PAC report, as the draft report was not adopted by the committee and hence was not presented to the House." The document which had prompted the department to file police complaints, resulting in charges framed against the former chief minister, doesn't officially exist.

"This is a fraud on the legislature, a fraud on the people of Goa," Kamat told Mongabay-India.

Why Doesn't the Report Exist?

The reason this report, drafted after 27 meetings of seven legislators from across parties, "does not exist" is because the then Congress speaker, Pratap Singh Rane (also indicted in this draft report) would not allow it to be tabled on grounds that four of the members had not signed on it. Media reports from that time claim Rane's successor, BJP leader RajendraArlekar (now governor of Himachal Pradesh) had accepted and forwarded this report to the government, which at the time was led by Parrikar.

"I have no idea about this (Arlekar accepting the report). That the PAC (report) did not exist was what the Legislature Secretariat told us in response to the former CM Kamat's RTI request." Vivek H P, the IAS officer who heads the state's Directorate of Mines and Geology department.

The Politics of Mining

Five-time CM and 11-time legislator from Poriem, Pratap Singh Rane is being persuaded to bring an end to his 50-year career and ceding control of his constituency by his son ViswajitRane, Valpoi legislator and minister in the BJP government. Father and son were both in Congress when Goa police's special investigation team decided to investigate a bribery allegation from a miner in 2014. The case was closed for lack of evidence three years later. By then, junior Rane had dumped the Congress and returned after a bypoll as Parrikar's health minister. Over the next two years, the BJP, which had only won 13 of 40 assembly seats, would welcome 12 Congress legislators into the party.

Poriem and Valpoi are part of the western stretch that starts from the Bicholim in the north, runs through Mayem, CM Pramod-Sawant's constituency Sanqulim, Sanguem, Curchorem, Sanvordem and then to Canco-na, rural constituencies whose significant population, including its politicians, are dependent on iron ore mining. As port towns, Vasco and Mormugao would also count. However, exempting Ranes, who are influential landlords of their areas, neither 2012 nor 2017 suggests that mining impacted individual election outcomes here and 2022 may be no different.

Source: MONGABAY

State looks to mine diamonds at Upparapalli in Kadapa district

The State government has decided to grant a composite licence through competitive bidding to explore diamond mines at Upparapalli, a nondescript village in Kadapa district.

The Mines and Geology Department will invite tenders by the end of this month.

The decision comes after a preliminary survey by the Geological Survey of India (GSI) has hinted at the presence of diamonds at Upparapalli. The GSI has already conducted G-4 studies (Reconnaissance Survey).

"The government has given its nod to invite the tenders. A composite lease will be given to the successful bidder, who will take up the survey to pinpoint the regions where diamonds are present in abundance," says V.G. Venkat Reddy, Vice Chairman and Managing Director, Mines and Geology Department.

The successful bidder has to take up G-3 (Preliminary Exploration), G-2 (General Exploration), and G-1 (Detailed Exploration) surveys. These will help in assessing the level at which the ores are available in those blocks.

The successful bidder will have to bear the expenses of the surveys. The bidder will be given two to five years to complete the surveys.

The G-4 studies have shown that diamonds are available in the area. As per the estimates, diamonds are available within a radius of 37.65 sq km in the Upparapalle area. The river basins of the Penna and the Krishna are said to have once harboured large diamond mines.

Act amended

There was a ban on issuing licence for diamonds exploration based on the G-4 surveys. However, the Union government had recently amended the Mines and Minerals, Development and Regulation (MNDR) Act to allow leasing of mines as per the G-4 survey to increase revenue.

Following the amendment, the State government has turned its attention to explore diamond and gold reserves.

"As the surveys involve huge investment, the Centre thought of roping private agencies, and to facilitate this, the Centre has amended the Act. A six-member high-power committee has sanctioned permission for the survey at Upparapalli," according to the officials.

Source: The Hindu

Saudi Arabia to auction up to three mining licences in 2022 - minister

Saudi Arabia is planning to auction up to three mining licences in 2022, including Khnaiguiyah mines where zinc and copper deposits are estimated at around 26 million tonnes, the kingdom's mining minister said on Wednesday.

The licences will be awarded under a new mining law that came into effect in January 2021 and which aims to accelerate foreign investment in the sector as part of efforts to diversify the economy away from hydrocarbons.

"Khnaiguiyah will be first," Bandar Alkhorayef, Saudi Arabia's Mining and Industry Minister said, adding that the bidding process would start by the end of this quarter, or beginning of the second quarter.

The minister, who was speaking in an interview with Reuters on the sideline of an international mining conference held in Riyadh, said the bidding, including the prequalification phase, would take around six months.

He added that another two locations would be auctioned depending on technical validation, saying they were aiming for "three... more or less, but yes, this requires some technical validation."

Riyadh's efforts to build an economy that does not largely rely on oil and state subsidies involves a shift towards mining vast untapped reserves of bauxite, the main source of aluminium, as well as phosphate, gold, copper and uranium.

The government estimates the kingdom's unused mineral resources to be valued at 5 trillion riyal ($1.33 trillion).

The kingdom's energy minister told the same conference on Wednesday that Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest exporter of crude oil, is planning to use its vast uranium resources to develop a nuclear power programme. Riyadh has said it aims to create more than 200,000 direct and indirect jobs in the mining sector by 2030.

There will be a designed legal framework for those licences, the minister said. "So there will be certain activities that will be offered by the bidder and that's how we will evaluate the bids."

Bidders may focus either on technology, a contribution to the local community or other criteria, he said. It's a complicated formula but it allows the government to evaluate the different bids on multiple elements and KPIs (key performance indicator), he said.

Source: Gulf News

No quarrying in Gidhmuri-Paturia, Madanpur South coal blocks: Baghel to Centre

Gidhmuri-Paturia and Madanpur South coal blocks in Chhattisgarh come under Lemru Elephant Reserve area.

RAIPUR: Chhattisgarh chief minister BhupeshBaghel in a virtual meeting with union coal and mines minister Prahlad Joshi on Friday said Gidhmuri-Paturia and Madanpur South coal blocks will not be considered for auction and quarrying as both of them come under Lemru Elephant Reserve area

“Gidhmuri-Paturia coal block and Madanpur South coal block would not be considered for auction and quarrying as both the coal blocks come under Lemru Elephant Reserve area”, said Chief Minister during the meeting.

The chief minister added that as many as 39 mines have been identified in the limits of Lemru Elephant Corridor and the question of quarrying in these mines does not arise, officials said on Saturday.

“No further activities would take place in the mines falling under this area which were found by Chhattisgarh or other states. Information regarding the same has already been sent to the Government of India, when the Lemru Elephant Reserve was published,” he said.

Sudeip Shrivastva, an environmental lawyer commenting on Baghel’s statement said the decision of Chhattisgarh government asking the Centre to withdraw GidhmuriPaturia and Madanpur South Coal Blocks from mining list is certainly a good one but they also need to answer as to why Parsa, Kete Extension, Tara and Parsa (East) and KeteBasan (PEKB) blocks have been kept out of Final Reserve Boundary.

“Except PEKB, all these blocks were part of proposed 3827 sq km Lemru Reserve. Tara has dense forest mostly and Kete Extension is 98% dense forest. Like Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan too ask for alternate block in Madhya Pradesh which will reduce transporting cost as well. But it seems private corporate are influencing decisions," Shrivastva said.

In July 2021, cabinet agreed that Lemru Elephant project will be of 1995 sq km area.

The Chhattisgarh government has been considering the extension of Lemru elephant reserve area. Activists want the entire catchment area of Hasdeo River to be included in the reserve, which are natural habitat of elephant, and migratory corridor should be kept free from mining.

The plan to set up the elephant reserve across 450 sq km was conceived by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government led by Raman Singh in 2005. In two years, it got the approval of the Union government. But the project never took off.

The BhupeshBaghel government revived the plan after the change of guard in 2018, initially proposing to set up the elephant reserve in north Chhattisgarh across 450 sq km. In 2020, the Chhattisgarh government decided to expand the proposed reserve to 1,995 sq km and later, initiated another proposal to increase the size further to 3720 sq km in mineral-rich north Chhattisgarh.

However, the activists working in Chhattisgarh raised question over the 1995 square kilometer area of Elephant Reserve.

"The 1995 sq km Lemru area map has been created in a way that most of the HasdeoArand coal blocks are out of its outer boundary. Obviously, the coal blocks like Parsa, Kete Extension, Gidhmuri and PaturiaDand are out of Reserve. The main catchment of HasdeoBango Dam is at huge risk and mining interest has prevailed over farmers and tribals," said Shrivastva.

Source: Hindustan Times

SWASTHA

A GEMCOKATI EMPLOYEES INITIATIVE

Scrolling - a new age addiction

Let us revisit a small but frequently experienced pattern among new age people. Assume that we reached our office or our workplace and have settled with our daily assignments. Just then we hear the notification on our phone .We open it to find couple of pictures and videos of a friend on vacation .We think it will just take a couple of minutes to watch those posts –but the next thing we realize is that an hour has gone by, and what we figure out later is that we have been sucked down the rabbit hole, watching video after video and picture after picture, while the assignments , sits neglected on our desk.

Recent studies have brought out the fact that 77% of employees use social media while on their job. We all are supposed to use our time efficiently and productively, especially while at work, and even though sometimes there are no assignments with any deadline, we still find spiralled into hours and hours of content consumption.

So when does scrolling become a problem?When we are entangled in the loop of mindless scrolling we need to address first the "Why" before we address "What" we are scrolling. The biggest reason is that social media changes the brain's neural activity. It has a great capability to trigger a sudden release of dopamine, and mindless scrolling helps in the uninterrupted dopamine release leading to chronic distraction, wreaking havoc our peace, our self –control and eventually our priorities. We feel that we are in connection and communication with the entire world but actually we are heading towards isolation and unhealthy comparison with people around us.

Finding a middle path with scrolling addiction. To make scrolling more difficult we need to increase the friction between us and the behaviour , like if you want to cure TV addiction unplug the TV, so that every time it's a long process whenever you feel the urge and this eliminates the likelihood of spending hours and hours before it. The same principle can be applied to unimportant social media sites. Uninstall the app and whenever you need it reinstall it and set a timer for its usage along with the re - downloading.

Reinforce a schedule where you only follow people and organizations whose posts are truly purposeful and meaningful.

Being aware is a simple way. Self realization will help you understand how often we habitually reach for our phone whenever our brain registered boredom or discontent.

Finally just find another hobby to fill time.

About Author: Dr. Majo Joseph

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