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Maintain Existing Explorers' License pre 2015 in New Law: Mining Industry

The mining industry has once again sought the government's intervention to prevent denial of mining rights to existing explorers under the new reform initiative that seeks to establish a seamless Composite Exploration-cum-Mining-cum-Production License (CEMPL) regime by amending the MMDR Act, 1957.

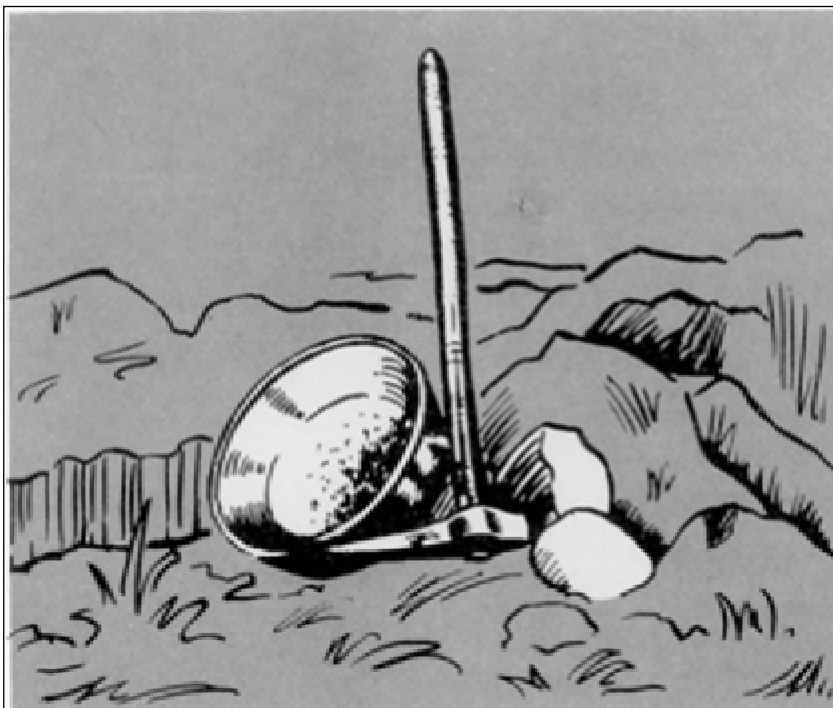
In its submission to the Mines Ministry as part of the stakeholders' consultation process on the proposed reforms in the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, the mining industry has said that policy certainty and security of existing vested rights under Section 10A(2)(b) of the MMDR Act should be maintained in the new law as it would go

a long way in restoring the investors' confidence in the Indian mineral sector.

Under the 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat package' by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in May, the government proposed the CEMPL for mining sector. This raised fear that under the new law, rights of existing mineral explorers would be taken away as seamless transfer of licence would be permitted prospectively under the new composite scheme and not otherwise.

"We request the Ministry of Mines to ensure/protect the rights of existing concessionaires by not removing

or tweaking Section 10A(2)(b) and in fact bring in provisions where existing concessionaires covered under Section 10A(2)(b) are immediately granted mining rights seamlessly," industry chambers and associations such as FICCI, Assocham, and FIMI have said.



As part of the Rs 20 lakh crore economic package announced by the Finance Minister, she had also announced a structural reform initiative for the mineral sector that allows offering composite mineral exploration licences to bidders. About 500 mineral blocks would be offered to companies under this regime.

The industry has said that while the reform initiative for the mineral sector was welcome, it should not come at the cost of existing investors and explorers who have have invested huge resources and long years to undertake risky exploration

activities and have helped India to discover valuable mineral deposits.

"Hundreds of PL and RPs have been issued to mineral companies in India. The 2015 amendment to the MMDR Act gave them hope of getting mining leases of mineral bearing

areas that have been explored and prospected by them. But, if changes in the legislation makes every thing available prospectively without benefit being extended to existing license holders," an earlier letter written by the Federation of Indian Mineral Industries (FIMI) to the Prime Minister had said.

The government proposes to finalise the changes in the MMDR over next

few days before the amendment bill is put before the Cabinet for approval. Sources said considering the urgency of reforms, an ordinance may be promulgated to to change the mining laws.

The ministry has also sought bringing in provisions on deemed lease rights to help companies to go ahead with mineral extraction if lease grant is delayed by the government.

Further, the period of 2 years provided under Section 10A(2)(c) may be increased if delay is for reasons beyond applicant's control, the industry has sought.

Impact of Commercial Coal Block Auctions:

Abhinav Sengupta

On 18th of June 2020 Govt. of India had announced first ever commercial coal mining auctioning process. In total 38 coal blocks were put under the hammer covering 5 different states Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Odisha and Chhattisgarh. After 145 days from its announcement date, on 09th November 2020, Ministry of Coal (MoC) has successfully completed India's 1st ever commercial coal block auctions. Following are the major highlights of the entire commercial coal auction process

Before e-Auction (During Bid Submission Stage):

1. In total 38 No. of coal blocks were put up on commercial coal auctions spanning around 5 states Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Maharashtra & Jharkhand
2. Overall, 278 tenders were purchased amongst all the coal blocks offered
3. Finally, 42 companies participated in the commercial coal block auctions and 76 no. of bids submitted in total
4. Only 22 blocks out of 38 has witnessed participation i.e. (~60% success factor) with average no. of bids in participated coal blocks is ~3.30 (approximately)

5. Chhattisgarh has seen the tepid response with only 2 blocks out of 7 got bids while Maharashtra's 2 blocks got 100% response
6. Only 50% of partially explored coal blocks has got responses
7. Approx. 71% of bidders has shown interest towards OC blocks while 21% has shown towards UG blocks and remaining 8% towards OC & UG Blocks

After e-Auction:

- a. In total 42 bidders had participated in the 2nd round of e-auctions for the 13 OC coal blocks & 6 UG coal blocks
- b. Out of 19 coal blocks 16 coal blocks are non-coking (i.e. grade ranging from G7, G8, G10, G11, G12 & G13)
- c. There are 3 number of coking coal blocks (i.e. Steel grade – I (one coal block) & Washery grade – III (two coal blocks each))
- d. In total 17 coal blocks are fully explored while 2 coal blocks are partially explored
- e. 17 companies have won coal blocks out of 42 participated in India's 1st Commercial coal block auctions

- f. 11 coal blocks out of 19 (~58%) were having mine capacity less than 1.50 MTPA (with 0.15 MTPA lowest & 10 MTPA is the highest)
- g. Aggressive bidding has been witnessed for 8 coal blocks (i.e. Marki Mangli II, Radhikapur West, Brahmadia, Sahapur West, Sahapur East, Gare Pelma IV/7 and Goitoria (East & West))
- h. The lowest FPO (%) discovered for a block was 9.50% (i.e. Urtan North) and highest FPO (%) was 66.75% (i.e. Gare Pelma IV/7)
- i. The bidding pattern showed the high FPO (%) for the coal blocks with lower mine capacity & higher coal quality
- j. Amongst 14 winning bidders out of 42 participated are Mining players, MDOs, Coal traders, State PSUs and Power Players
- k. Govt is going to get more than ~2000 crore of annual revenue sharing through the auctions apart from Royalty, DMF & NMET

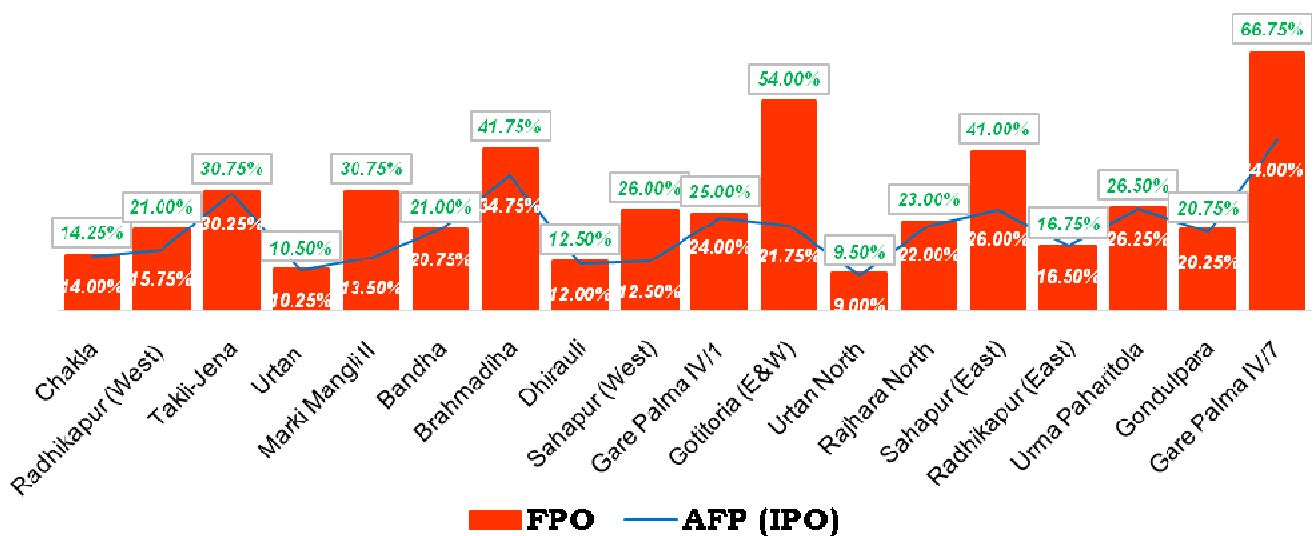
Winning Bid = $f(\text{Mine Capacity, Coal Grade, End User Utilisation, Market for Sale, Stripping Ratio, Strategic Advantage})$

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(Strategic Advantage includes lower transportation cost to nearest EUP, prior allottee, owning adjacent mine, life of mine etc.)

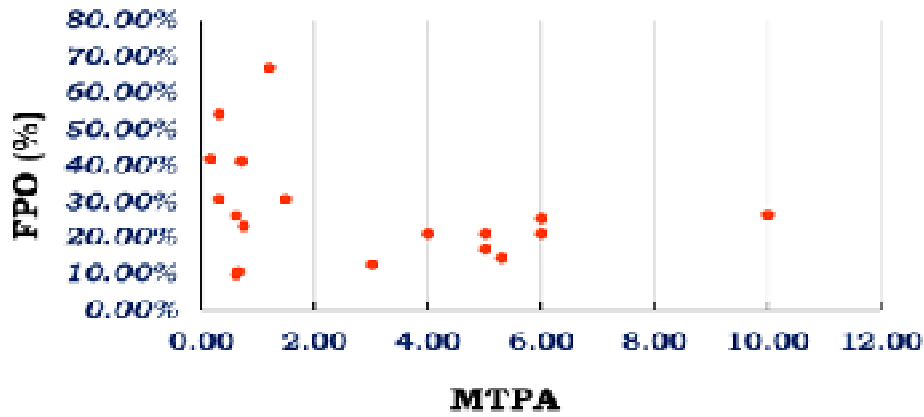
No	Bidder Type	Impact
1	Mine Owner /	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher FPO (%) will lower the operating margins for the coal mines. Thereby coal blocks with higher stripping ratio & poor grade will not be sustainable for future mining.
	MDO Player	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For Underground coal blocks high revenue sharing % and lower mine capacity will bring down the overall viability of the coal project and might become difficult to operationalize. On the other hand, commercially, mined coal needs to be competitive to coal mined by CIL/ SCCL.
2	Coal Trader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coal traders participating in the coal blocks are bringing in the strong market for sales of coal and its utilization. High FPO (%) will lower the EBIDTA for coal traders.
3	End User	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usage of coal is mostly as a feedstock for source of fuel or as a reducing agent. End users have secured the coal blocks for raw material security with specified end user requirement.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For power producers with high FPO (%) will increase the energy charge and hence the overall power tariff. The higher power tariff will be pass on to the consumer.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For steel producers higher FPO (%) will increase the input cost for steel making and thus the cost of semi-finished and finished steel.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For Aluminium players power cost consists of 30% to 40% for Aluminium refining. Higher FPO (%) will increase the raw material cost for Aluminium refining and thereby the cost of finished Aluminium.

Commercial Coal Blocks IPO & FPO

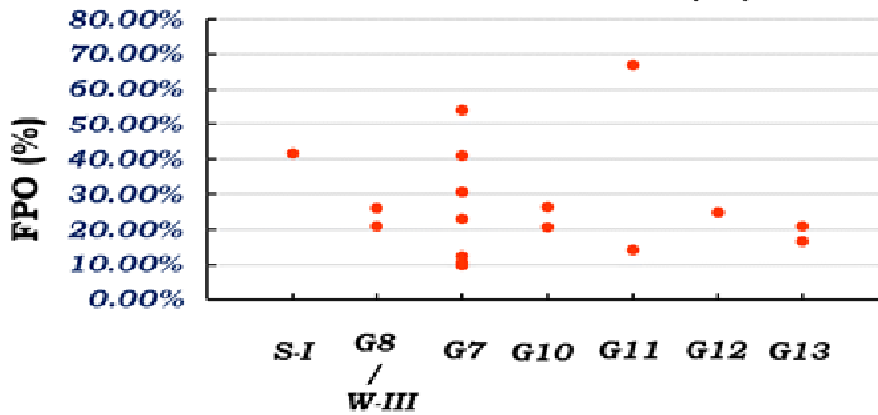




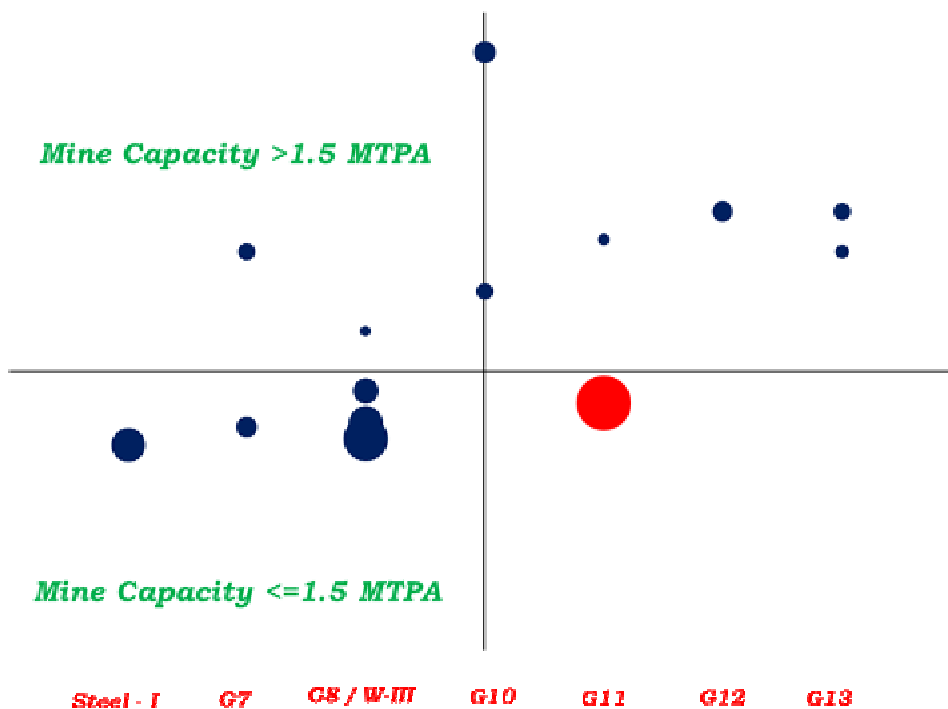
Mine Capacity V/s FPO (%)



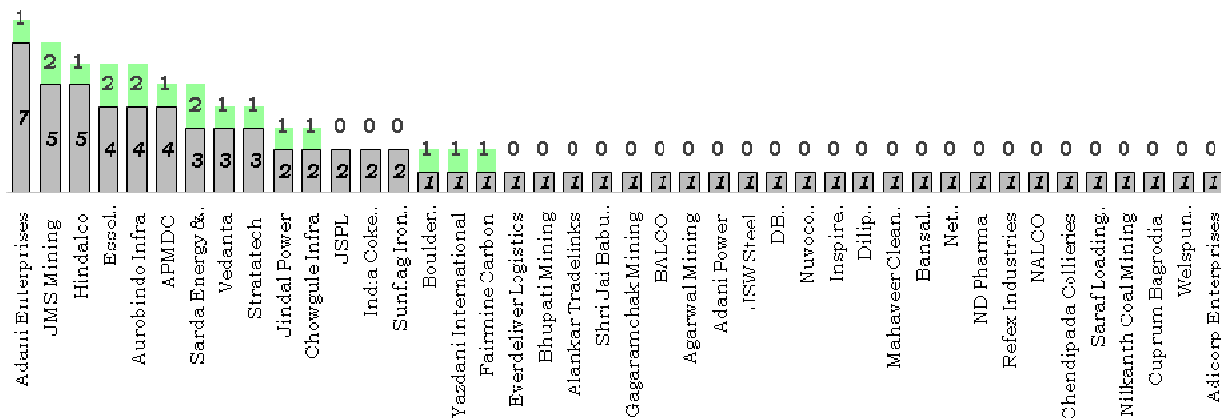
Coal Grade V/s FPO (%)



Mine Capacity V/s Grade of Coal V/s FPO (%)



BIDDERS INTERESTED IN COAL BLOCKS V/S COAL BLOCKS WON



Commercial Coal Block Auctions Results

No	Coal Blocks	State	Exploration	Capacity (MTPA)	S.R	Grade	Mine Type	Bidders	TQB	IPO	FPO	No. of Quotes	Winner
			Status		(Cum/T)								
1	Chakla	Jharkhand	Fully	5.3	4.46	G11	OC	3	3	14.00%	14.25%	1	Hindalco
2	Radhikapur (West)	Odisha	Fully	6	4.19	G13	OC	4	4	15.75%	21.00%	21	Vedanta
3	Takli-Jena	Maharashtra	Fully	1.5	NA	G8	UG	2	2	30.25%	30.75%	2	Aurobindo Infra
4	Urtan	Madhya Pradesh	Fully	0.65	NA	W-III	UG	2	2	10.25%	10.50%	1	JMS Mining
5	Marki Mangli II	Maharashtra	Fully	0.3	7.4	G8	OC	3	3	13.50%	30.75%	69	Yazdani Int.
6	Bandha	Madhya Pradesh	Partially	5	NA	G7	UG	3	3	20.75%	21.00%	1	Essel Mining
7	Brahmadiha	Jharkhand	Fully	0.15	10.43	S-I	OC	6	6	34.75%	41.75%	28	APMDC
8	Dhirauli	Madhya Pradesh	Fully	3	NA	G8	OC	2	2	12.00%	12.50%	2	Stratatech Mineral
9	Sahapur (West)	Madhya Pradesh	Fully	0.6	NA	G7	UG	4	4	12.50%	26.00%	54	Sarda Energy
10	Gare Palma IV/1	Chattisgarh	Fully	6	3.4	G12	OC	3	3	24.00%	25.00%	4	Jindal Power
11&12	Gotitoria (E&W)	Madhya Pradesh	Fully	0.3	8	G8	OC	8	8	21.75%	54.00%	129	Boulder Stone Mart
13	Urtan North	Madhya Pradesh	Fully	0.6	NA	W-III	UG	3	3	9.00%	9.50%	1	JMS Mining
14	Rajhara North	Jharkhand	Fully	0.75	2.56	G8	OC	4	4	22.00%	23.00%	4	Fairmine Carbon Pvt
15	Sahapur (East)	Madhya Pradesh	Fully	0.7	NA	G8	UG	4	4	26.00%	41.00%	60	Chowgule &Co
16	Radhikapur (East)	Odisha	Fully	5	3.61	G13	OC	4	4	16.50%	16.75%	1	Essel Mining
17	Urma Paharitola	Jharkhand	Partially	10	NA	G10	OC	6	6	26.25%	26.50%	1	Aurobindo Infra
18	Gondulpara	Jharkhand	Fully	4	1.77	G10	OC	4	4	20.25%	20.75%	2	Adani Enterprise
19	Gare Palma IV/7	Chattisgarh	Fully	1.2	3.36	G11	OC	8	8	44.00%	66.75%	91	Sarda Energy

Source: MSTC E-Commerce

Disclaimer: The views expressed by the author are personal and data taken are from the open sources.



Abhinav Sengupta MBA in Energy & Infrastructure and B.Tech in Mining having more than 8 Years of experience in Energy & Infrastructure sector in various capacities.

How has the world mining industry responded to COVID-19?

- The COVID-19 pandemic has had a big impact on the mining industry.
- The sector has responded swiftly and collaboratively.
- From health and safety to building better relationships with local communities, here's how the sector is building back better.

The COVID-19 pandemic is undoubtedly the defining global health crisis of our time, with governments and health services alike racing to slow the spread of the virus. But beyond the impact on global health, COVID-19 has shown its potential to create devastating social, economic and political challenges that will have lasting repercussions.

The mining industry's response has been swift and aligned, and has been driven by two key priorities. Firstly, protecting the health and safety of employees and local communities; and secondly, laying the groundwork to support the longer-term economic recovery which includes supporting livelihoods, protecting severely disrupted supply chains, and helping to build long-term community resilience to any future crises. What this response has made immediately clear is that companies, governments and communities must work in collaboration to aid recovery efforts. Working independently will only hinder the ability to recover and rebuild.

Collaboration has been the cornerstone of the International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM) members' response to the pandemic. In practice this has meant regularly convening ICMM's 27 member companies and 35 national and commodity association members to

share guidance and information to accelerate learning. Through these conversations we have seen key themes emerge; health and safety as a fundamental shared value, the importance of communicating mining's role and the shared commitment all companies have to build forward better.

Health and safety – a fundamental shared value

Some criticism has been levelled at the mining industry for being focused on keeping operations open in some countries, despite the perceived risk to the health and safety of communities and workers. Health and safety is a fundamental shared value for the mining industry, and one which is at the centre of every responsible mining company's business strategy. This has meant ICMM members are well placed to draw on their existing breath of expertise in managing other health crises – for example ebola, TB and malaria. They also have the knowledge to efficiently and effectively implement the vital protocols and measures needed to continue to operate safely. These measures include temperature screening at site, COVID-19 testing and increased hygiene measures such as social distancing and reduced shift sizes. Companies have placed restrictions on work-related travel and have set up hotlines operating 24/7 that provide medical and wellbeing advice, including signposted access to mental health services, for employees and those in the local community.

ICMM companies operate in more than 50 countries. Each country has responded differently to the pandemic and in many countries the

response differs across states and regions. Our members are therefore working closely with health authorities to ensure all sites are adhering to national and local guidance. Continuing to share learnings from different responses and knowledge of specific health protocols will be critical in order to help flatten the curve and ensure workers and communities are kept safe.

Communicating mining's role

A key insight that has arisen from ICMM's conversations is the importance for communities, NGOs and civil society to have a greater understanding of the mining sector and the critical role it plays in socio-economic development. Not only do local mining operations provide jobs and security to communities, they also support livelihoods by supplying the vital goods and services needed in some of the most remote regions on earth.

Due to the complex nature of mining operations and the remote locations in which they are often located, the mining industry has a relationship with and special commitment to local communities that is like no other sector. The teams at site are therefore in a unique position to listen to concerns and adapt quickly where needed. This has been shown by companies providing for example food parcels, medical assistance, medical supplies (ventilators, PPE and medicine), educational materials, basic infrastructure (sanitation facilities, drinking water and roads) and information about COVID-19. In some cases where local government is at full

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capacity, this support has been invaluable.

While the sector may not have got it right every time, COVID-19 has undoubtedly led to the refocusing and reframing of relationships with local community groups. This is one positive to emerge from the crisis, and something we must learn from and continue to encourage as we move from the response to the recovery phase.

A shared commitment

This has been a steep learning curve for all of us – governments, business,

and individuals – and I think the mining industry has shown adaptability, resilience and compassion through its response to the pandemic.

ICMM was founded on a fundamental set of principles that promote sustainable economic growth, the building of resilient and inclusive communities and developing the innovations needed to urgently address climate change. These shared commitments give me optimism that the mining industry can and will support long-term recovery, helping communities to recover and

rebuild.

There will be continued demand for the metals and minerals needed to support a greener and more sustainable future. As our members continue to meet that demand, we will also continue to help protect workers and safeguard livelihoods, and help communities recover and build resilience towards a better future.

Reforms in mining are a first step in ushering a green, tech-driven future

To create a low-carbon tech-driven economy of the future running on clean energy — India would require access to key minerals.

As the world struggles to make its way through the COVID-19 pandemic, sustainability of economies and the planet is back in focus where a return to “business as usual” is clearly a suboptimal option. India faces a twofold challenge — ensuring sustainable high growth driven primarily by technology and innovation while also securing a greener future for its population. This requires a rethink of the country’s economic priorities and the way it plans to secure a future that is richer in material and environmental wealth. Perhaps a good way to start is to plan how best to use the country’s abundant mineral resources and integrate them into a tech-driven green value chain. And that’s

where long-term planning and progressive reforms in mining are crucial.

To the casual reader, the need to focus on mining while healing the environment may appear conflicting given the detrimental impact of extractive industries on the planet. Yet, to create a low-carbon tech-driven economy of the future running on clean energy, countries such as India would require access to key minerals. The production of minerals such as graphite, lithium, and cobalt may rise by as much as 500% by 2050 to meet the world’s growing demand for clean energy (World Bank, May 2020). So, the question facing India is: Will current levels of exploration with no changes in existing mining policies be enough to help the country achieve ambitious goals for large-scale adoption of clean technologies, renewable energy, energy storage, and electric

vehicles? The current exploration policy does not provide an incentive for scientific exploration.

India’s mining — a success story in waiting for decades

As per Indian Bureau of Mines, India currently produces about 95 different mineral commodities (Brookings India, April 2020). The Geological Survey of India has identified 0.52 million km² area as the Obvious Geological Potential area for mineralisation. Brookings note also highlights that India has excellent but unexplored or underexplored mineralisation potential for many tech commodities, which are likely to be highly in demand in the future as India’s large land mass has one of the finest geologies, mineralisation, and exploration potentials for both bulk and non-bulk commodities.

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Compared with other resource-rich countries like Canada and Australia, India's exploration expenditure is insignificant even though India's prospective geology is broadly like that of Western Australia.

India's exploration expenditure is estimated at around US\$17 per sq. km (ORF, March 2018). Compared with other resource-rich countries like Canada and Australia, India's exploration expenditure is insignificant even though India's prospective geology is broadly like that of Western Australia. In year 2019, Canada and Australia accounted for 50% of the US\$ 9.3 billion global exploration expenditure in non-ferrous metals (S&P Global, March 2020). Given current level of exploration and nature of policy, India is far away from ensuring a steady supply of minerals for technology-related products, demand for which is only going to rise over the medium to long-term.

Do proposed reforms go the distance?

There is a need to consider a long-time horizon in mining-related planning, whether it is from the perspective of the mine, the community or government. A policy direction towards solving short-term bottlenecks always needs to be compatible with a long-term vision. Since 2015, there has been significant dynamism in the resource sector in terms of progress towards a concrete policy direction. But in the path of unlocking the mineral potential of the country, exploration remains a less understood step in the overall mining development chain.

Amendments to the Mines and Mineral Development Regulations (MMDR) Act in 2015 may have brought in transparency in allocation but have failed to deliver on the promise of extensive exploration. And inviting foreign investors too has not paid off handsomely — the sector attracted only 0.7% (US\$ 2.2 billion) of total Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) worth US\$ 299.4 billion in the country in last decade despite allowing 100% FDI in the mining sector.

The proposed reforms fall short of conceptualising an entire value chain of commodities — exploration, discovery, extraction, and product development — that unlocks India's mineral resource potential.

In such a scenario, even a simple rethink on mining policy appears to be a fresh breath of air. For example, the government has proposed to rationalise stamp duty payable at the time of award of mining leases and to remove the distinction between captive and non-captive mines. It also intends to amend the MMDR Act of 2015 to free up mines for auction and to bring in clarity in the definition of illegal mining.

The question is, do these measures go the distance, especially considering India's long-term economic and environmental goals? Unfortunately, not. The proposed reforms fall short of conceptualising an entire value chain of commodities — exploration, discovery, extraction, and product development — that unlocks India's mineral resource potential.

Clarity, collaboration, and competition should be the core of mining reforms

- For mining to flourish, the policy environment should offer security of tenure; a predictable, competitive, and sustainable tax regime; pre-set timeline for approvals and one-stop-shops; and freedom to market the mined product either locally or globally. For example — most of the mining jurisdictions have first-come first-serve (FCFS) methodology for allotting bulk mineral resources. (McKinsey, December 2014). Therefore, Exclusive Reconnaissance Permit (RP) as an instrument of exploration cannot be ruled out.

- As mineral exploration is highly specialised with technologies varying across commodities, the key for India is to strengthen its mining links with commodity powerhouses such as Australia and Canada. This will bring in much-needed innovation and technological knowhow in the sector.

- Encouraging private investment in exploration may be a good step, but much more needs to be done to ensure that such investments materialise. For that, measures that enable companies to gain from any discovery and the associated intellectual capital are critical. Such reforms will be a major boost for private risk capital likes of junior explorers (prospecting companies only involved in the early stages of mining development), who were responsible for 63% of all discoveries in last decade (MinEx Consulting, October 2019).

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Mining is a long-term business, fraught with risks and costs in the short-term with potential gains only filtering in after many years. So, the lack of a conducive mining policy today not only hinders the current functioning

of the sector, but also prevents maximising potential over the long-term. And if India truly aims to usher in a tech-driven low-carbon economy, then it is imperative that the country takes the first step for success — en

sureing the availability of mineral resources for the economy. For that, resource sector needs policy environment that offers consistency and stability and complete overhaul of incentive structure for scientific exploration.

Explained: How Kong Spelity became the face of Meghalaya's anti-uranium movement

Meghalaya's Spelity Lyngdoh Langrin died on Wednesday at age 95. Who was she and why is she considered an icon in Meghalaya?

On Thursday, Meghalaya woke up to the news of loss. Spelity Lyngdoh Langrin — the face of the decades-long anti-uranium mining movement in Meghalaya — had passed away at her home in Domiasiat area of South West Khasi Hills district the night before. She was 95.

While not many know of Langrin in the rest of India, she was considered an icon in Meghalaya for turning down a multi-crore offer from the Uranium Corporation of India Limited (UCIL), a Public Sector enterprise that wanted to mine her land. "Money cannot buy me freedom," Langrin had famously said, rejecting the offer.

Kong Spelity: The face of Meghalaya's anti-uranium movement

In the early 1980s, Atomic Minerals Directorate for Exploration and Research (AMD) — a government body which identifies and evaluates uranium resources in the country — began exploratory drilling in various uranium-rich villages of Meghalaya. "She lived in a land which has India's largest deposits of uranium," said TarunBhartiya, a Shillong-

based filmmaker, who has met Langrin several times. "She initially allowed AMD to start prospecting — basically search for uranium deposits — when they reached her village in the early 1980s."

Soon, however, Langrin started noticing the hazardous impact the activity caused around her. "[Impact] on the health of her family, on her cattle — most of which died," said Bhartiya, "Since then, she made it clear that they [the mining company] were not welcome and asked them to leave."

In the early 2000s, when the UCIL arrived looking for ways to lease land from the villagers (most of Meghalaya is under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution and any commercial activity — like mining — requires consent of local tribal councils), Langrin refused point-blank. "Money cannot buy me freedom" she told them and went on to install signboards around her home that read: "Private Property", "Do Not Trespass" etc.

"She was very courageous," said ND Syiem, Langrin's son-in-law, "She refused to surrender her land. She was the only daughter in her family." Since the Khasis are a matrilineal society, Langrin was the owner of the land.

"Even around her, as UCIL managed to convince [other] villages, Kong Spelity remained resolute and held her ground," said Bhartiya, "And that is how she became the face of Meghalaya's anti-uranium movement."

Meghalaya's resistance to uranium mining

The country's largest and richest uranium deposits are located in Domiasiat and Wahkyn areas of Meghalaya. As per the AMD website, "Exploration for atomic minerals in this part of the country began way back in the 1950's; initially, in Meghalaya and later extended to other states of Northeast India."

The Domiasiat uranium deposit, also known as "Kyelleng-Pyndengsohiong-Mawtahbah" region, was discovered in 1984 and has approximately 9.22 million tonnes of high-grade uranium ore deposits.

However, mining ambitions of the government have been met with stiff local resistance ever since the AMD arrived in the 1980s. The Khasi Students' Union (KSU), Meghalaya's influential student body, has been in the forefront of this opposition, citing environ-

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mental and health concerns.

“There was exploratory mining of uranium in the region in the 1990s but SpelityLyngdohLangrin, KSU, late HopingstoneLyngdoh (MLA of Nongstoin) and the people of that area were able to stop it after seeing the impact first hand,” said ForwardmanNongrem, South West Khasi Hills District’s KSU president, “The KSU’s stance is simple: ‘no’ to uranium mining and exploratory drilling of uranium. We will not compromise on our position, come what may.”

Over the years there have been several attempts by the government to push exploratory mining in the state. In 2007, a private Kolkata company was given permission by the AMD to carry out exploratory drilling in the Nongjri region. However, in June 2011, the company was compelled to surrender its license. In 2009, UCIL had been granted 422 hectares of land in Mawthabah area. Again, stiff opposition led the government to revoke its decision in 2016.

“There is no uranium drilling or

mining activity in the region now,” said KSU’s Nongrem, “The last drilling activity in Kyelleng-Pyndengsohiong-Mawtahbah was in the summer of 2018 but was stopped by the KSU.”

Last month, after a crack was noticed in one of the concrete uranium effluent tanks built by the AMD in 1993 in the NongbahJynrin area, and locals alleged that there was a leak, the Meghalaya government constituted an expert agency to probe it.

The legend of Kong Spelity

Over the years, Langrin’s name has become synonymous to the anti-uranium mining movement — her face often plastered over banners during anti-uranium protests in the state. “While the movement has a wide coalition of people (students’ groups, women’s groups), she is the undisputed face,” said Bhartiya, “It is also because of who she was: an old lady, a mother... who had the courage to refuse such an offer. It got people thinking, if she can do it,



so can others.”

According to environmental economist Dr Bremley WB Lyngdoh, Langrin inspired an entire generation. “Without her pushing, there would be full scale mining right now; for her, land was the most precious. She did not want to sell her land and everyone to suffer in her name,” he said.

Agnes Kharshiing, renowned social activist known for her battle against illegal coal mining in Meghalaya, described Langrin as a “legend.” “I admire her strength to protect her land. She lived a full life, and so should her children,” said Kharshiing, “I express my condolences to the bereaved family, and will stick by them to ensure that their land is always protected.”

FAC to decide if coal mines can start mining before obtaining forest clearance

Two other policy issues that were discussed at the committee’s meeting are: if a zoo can be considered a “forestry activity” and the definition of “permanent structures” under ecotourism facilities which will attract provisions of the forest conservation act.

The Environment Ministry’s Forest Advisory Committee (FAC) is dealing with three contentious policy issues which could have far reaching impacts on forest management. One of them is whether coal mines involving both forest and non-forest land can start mining in the latter before obtaining a forest

clearance.

Two other policy issues that were discussed at the September 21 meeting are: if a zoo can be considered a “forestry activity” and the definition of “permanent structures” under ecotourism facilities which will attract provisions of the forest conservation act.

The FAC hasn’t taken a decision on these policy issues yet. “FAC considered the policy issues and decided that Forest Conservation division of the ministry of environment, forest and climate change (MoEFCC) may have some

more deliberation on the issues involving concerned divisions of the ministry, after which same may be placed before FAC with appropriate recommendation for analysis and decision,” the minutes of the meeting state.

“We don’t know what will be the impact of starting mining in non-forest land on the adjoining forest land. Personally, I think taking a general or blanket decision on all such coal mines is not recommended. It should be decided on a case by case basis depending on how much forest area is involved,” said

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a senior environment ministry official on condition of anonymity. He added that no decisions had been taken yet on whether a zoo can be considered a forestry activity and definition of permanent structures in forests. No permanent structures are allowed to be raised in forest areas under the forest conservation act.

The process of auctioning 38 coal blocks is underway, out of which many mines involve large tracts of forest areas. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had launched the auction of 41 mines for commercial mining on June 18. He had said the market for coal is open now and that the auction will help turn the Covid-19 crisis into an opportunity.

But the list of 41 mines had suggested

several of them are located in biodiversity rich forest areas in central India, including a few in one of the largest contiguous stretches of dense forests called HasdeoArand spanning 170,000 ha. Following opposition from Chhattisgarh government, the ministry of mines had agreed in August that it will exclude five mines in HasdeoArand region from the auction.

The description of mines up for auction on MSTC website shows several do not have required forest clearance and are in the midst of protected forests. There are several coal blocks in biodiversity rich forest land in Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh that are still up for auction. For example, Chakla block has 55% forest cover and acts as drainage for major rivers like Damodar and Bakri.

Jharkhand's ChoritandTilaya also has forests in 50% of the area; Seregarha block is 40% forest. Madhya Pradesh's Gotitoria East coal block is 80% forest and acts as drainage for Sitarewa river.

"Any change in the procedure for forest clearances, including that of prior approvals will require a legal amendment through the Parliament. The FAC is only an advisory body. However, the bigger concern this throws up is that such a possibility is even being considered. Initiating mining operations without ascertaining impacts, viability and ensuring recognition of existing rights is not just legally flawed but does not have social or environmental legitimacy," said Kanchi Kohli, legal researcher, Centre for Policy Research.

KIOCL on cusp of having its own captive mines in Karnataka

KIOCL Ltd is in the cusp of having its own captive mines in Karnataka. This follows a move by the state government to recommend allotting an iron ore block in Devadari range in Ballari, union minister of state for steel Fagga Singh Kulaste said. KIOCL Ltd can commence mining there as soon as the state government gives statutory clearance for the project and it should expeditiously do so, Kulaste said. Reviewing performance of the mini-ratna at its corporate office in Bengaluru on Sunday, the minister stated that after the statutory clearance and the operation of

Devadari mines, KIOCL is planning to set up 2.0 MTPA beneficiation and 2.0 MTPA pelletization plant. This project will give more employment opportunities for the local community, development of the surrounding area and also will bring good revenue to the government, he said. KIOCL has done pioneering work in the field of iron-ore mining and beneficiation of magnetite ore in Karnataka. It has been a leader in India for Pelletization. The union government is giving emphasis on increased utilization of pellets as a raw material in the blast furnaces and sponge iron industry in the

country. KIOCL can contribute immensely in utilizing these resources in the national interest, the junior steel minister said. Appreciating efforts put in by KIOCL in entering the field of renewable solar energy, Kulaste said the company will set up a 5-mW solar power plant in Tumakuru district during the current fiscal. The proposed project will support the national solar mission programme of the union government, he said. Subba Rao, CMD, KIOCL sought cooperation of the minister for expeditious clearance of proposals from the government for its forthcoming projects.

Mineral corporation begins exploration of BGML land

Mineral Exploration Corporation Ltd. has commenced exploration of natural minerals on the land belonging to the defunct Bharat Gold Mines Ltd. (BGML) in Kolar.

The drilling was started on BGML lands to identify non-mineral areas and hand them over for development as an industrial park by the State government.

"Happy to convey that exploratory drilling at Betrayaswamy block of Kolar Gold Field commenced today.

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This will help in resolving the BGML issue which has been pending for the last 16 years," tweeted Union Coals and Mines Minister Pralhad Joshi on Tuesday.

After a meeting with Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on August 28, Mr. Joshi said the Mineral Exploration Corporation Ltd. would identify

areas that have not been explored for natural minerals within six months. If after the survey the land parcel does not possess any minerals, it will be handed over to the Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board to set up the industrial park.

The land is strategically located, at

90 km from Bengaluru airport, 260 km from Chennai port, and 314 km from Krishnapatnam port.

During the survey, if any gold, palladium or tungsten minerals are found, the State government will auction them off and get royalty, Mr. Joshi had said at the meeting in August.

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Your suggestions and feedback is awaited at :-

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