Jairam Ramesh, the Union environment minister, is also known to be a keen China-watcher. He knows about the environmental costs China has had to pay for its rapid economic development. For all its amazing successes in economic growth, China is now a country whose big cities gasp for fresh air and which has 16 of the 20 most polluted rivers in the world. Whether it was the Posco or the Vedanta project in Orissa, the Lavasa township on a hill near Pune or the new airport in Mumbai, Mr Ramesh’s concern was to avoid the Chinese disasters in India. His ministry’s earlier objections and then its clearance to the $12 billion steel project of the South Korean firm, Posco, are part of that bigger story. Whether Posco fulfils the new conditions he has set for its project is a matter of minor significance. The big issue that Mr Ramesh has forced upon the development discourse is of far greater import. Scuttling any of the projects could not have been part of his — or the Manmohan Singh government’s — agenda. But by repeatedly raising environmental issues and subjecting the projects to close scrutiny, he has changed the game in a big way. He has irreversibly put an end to the era when governments and entrepreneurs took environmental protection laws for granted.

True, the long delays over the Posco project or the cancellation of the Vedanta group’s licence for mining iron ore dented investors’ confidence regarding doing business in India. But Mr Ramesh’s crusade may ultimately show India’s development story as both responsible and sustainable. It is impossible for development planners today to ignore issues such as proper compensation to the displaced people and their rehabilitation, or adequate protection for farmland, air and water sources. It is no easy challenge, particularly for a country with scarce land and a population of over a billion. But creating and distributing wealth has always been at the centre of economic planning. India cannot even begin to achieve this economic goal without making up for lost time in industrialization and urbanization. For far too long, India has been an agricultural economy.

However, political discourses often cloud the issues instead of clarifying them. Industrial projects are often opposed in the name of the people who would be displaced. Forests and mineral deposits need to be put to economic uses. It cannot do the tribal people living in the forests any good if primitive livelihoods keep them forever poor. If farming ceases to generate enough income, agricultural land is better used for other purposes in order to generate wealth. A new industrial agenda with its environmental safeguards is the only way forward for India.
Nalco ups price
NEW DELHI, 2 FEB: National Aluminium Company (Nalco) today said it had increased price of the metal by nearly five per cent or Rs 6,000 to around Rs 1,21,000 a ton in sync with the firming up of the global prices. Nalco has also decided to go for capital restructuring by splitting a share of Rs 10 into two shares of Rs 5 each, a senior company official said today. pti
Nalco ups price
NEW DELHI, 2 FEB: National Aluminium Company (Nalco) today said it had increased price of the metal by nearly five per cent or Rs 6,000 to around Rs 1,21,000 a ton in sync with the firming up of the global prices. Nalco has also decided to go for capital restructuring by splitting a share of Rs 10 into two shares of Rs 5 each, a senior company official said today. pti
Sharma differs on iron exports ban

MILAN, 2 FEB: Union commerce and industry minister Mr Anand Sharma today said his ministry was not in agreement with the steel ministry on banning export of iron ore. Any move to prohibit exports of iron ore would lead to large-scale displacement and unemployment, he said. “We don’t accept this view of steel ministry...we export mainly fines. You cannot stop mining because that will lead to large number of poor labourers without wages,” he said. PTI
Turning a paler shade of green

Jairam Ramesh's decision on Posco shows there are different rules for different violators

A business magazine recently called environment and forests minister Jairam Ramesh a Kung Fu master because of the ease with which he tackles opposing camps in the environment versus development debate. But now after the judgement on the Pohang Iron and Steel Company (Posco)'s plant in Orissa, he could probably be called a trapeze master, swinging from one bar to another but settling where his bosses want him to. On Monday, the minister cleared the ₹54,000 crore steel project with 60 conditions that the company needs to follow. Recently, facing criticism that his ministry was blocking development, Mr Ramesh said he did not want to be known as 'Dr No'. Post-Posco, he should harbour no such fear.

There are no doubts that the upcoming plant is not in tune with the stringent green norms. Two panels set up by the ministry had said so. Civil society reports like the Iron and Steel: The POSCO-India Story also concluded that there was 'wild exaggeration' of benefits and a 'deliberate' overlooking of infrastructural and ecological costs. It seems that the plant's only selling point, and the government has been harping on it relentlessly, is that it is the largest foreign direct investment (FDI) in India and any refusal would hurt investor confidence. Is that a good enough reason? Well, many would argue not. Orissa's MoU with Posco proposes an annual export of 400 million tonnes of iron ore to its plants in South Korea. It will pay the government ₹27 per tonne when the prices in the international market is between ₹3,000 to ₹7,000 a tonne. Isn't it but natural that the 'largest FDI' tag will be questioned in the face of such figures? Recently, Mr Ramesh cleared controversial projects like the Jaitapur nuclear power project, Lavasa Hill City Project and the Navi Mumbai airport with conditions but stopped Vedanta's bauxite mining project and asked for the demolition of the Adarsh Housing Society because they violated green laws. So how were they more wrong than the others? By introducing an element of subjectivity, the minister is only weakening the ministry and its preeminent position in such matters. He also seems to have excessive confidence in the states for keeping an eye on violators. Going by experience, it is too much to expect from them. And minus strict monitoring, safeguards/conditions will have no meaning.

The minister is known as someone who engages with civil society often. There's no doubt that his tenure has put the environment back on the government agenda, yet it is very wrong if he cites different rules for different violators. Even this will send out the wrong signals to the investors and also leave the impression that the green stick is being used to settle political scores more than anything else. If violations can be offset by 'conditions', then why deny other violators the go-ahead with their projects? After all, a couple of 'conditions' can set a wrong right.
COPPER SURGES CLOSE TO $10,000

Copper surged to record highs on Wednesday to within a whisker of the key $10,000-level, as investors scrambled to buy on worries of supply shortages and market deficits. Benchmark copper on the London Metal Exchange hit an all-time high of $9,988.25 a tonne, up from $9,945 on Tuesday.
Nalco board okays stock split, bonus issue

State-run National Aluminium Company Ltd (Nalco) has decided to go for capital restructuring by splitting a share of ₹10 into two shares of ₹5 each. The company board also approved a proposal to issue one bonus share for each share held. The moves mean a person holding a Nalco share of ₹10 will own four shares of ₹5 each.

BS REPORTER
महंगा हुआ एल्युमीनियम

नई दिल्ली। नेशनल एल्युमीनियम कंपनी (NCL) ने कहा कि उसके एल्युमीनियम के दाम लगभग पांच प्रतिशत या 6,000 रुपए बढ़कर 1,21,000 रुपए प्रति टन बन गए हैं।

कंपनी ने केंद्रीय कमांडो में भर्ती की कीमतों को वर्षाको बढ़े या कम उड़ान है। नाम्नो के लिए निदेशक बीएएल भारत के बाहर, हमने एक परस्पर से दाम 6,000 रुपए टन बढ़ाए हैं।
Orissa HC to hear Vedanta plea in Feb.

AGE CORRESPONDENT

Bhubaneswar

Feb 2: The Orissa High Court on Wednesday admitted an appeal of Vedanta Aluminium Limited (VAL) challenging the Union government’s decision to reject its application for regularising its expansion works at Lanjigarh in Kalahandi districts.

The two-member bench comprising chief justice V. Gopalagowda and justice H.S. Bhalla, while admitting the application, posted the date of hearing for February 21. "The court has allowed VAL’s amendment application and posted the date of hearing for February 21," VAL counsel Mr Manoj Mishra said.

VAL had filed a petition challenging the decision of the Union ministry of environment and forests (MoEF) to halt the expansion of its alumina refinery and captive power plant in Orissa citing violation of environment laws.

The HC bench also directed the parties to file all affidavits, including amended writs, within one week.

Vedanta had filed a petition in the court on November 12, 2010, praying to quash MoEF’s order and allow the expansion plan. The company had cited in its petition that MoEF had denied the expansion mainly on the ground that public hearing for the project was held after the work started.

However, according to VAL sources, the main expansion work had started only after the public hearing.

VAL told the court that it had applied for regularising the expansion project, but the Central government did not reply to its application. Besides Vedanta, eight tribal organisations of Lanjigarh had also filed a joint public interest litigation (PIL) in the HC opposing the Centre’s decision to halt the expansion of the refinery. VAL had proposed to scale up the capacity of its alumina refinery from one-million-tonne per annum (mtpa) to six mtpa which was quashed by the MoEF on October 22, 2010.
Mittal ups stake in Baffinland

ARCELORMITTAL AND Nunavut Iron Ore Acquisition Inc., which are now the joint owners of Canada’s iron ore-rich Baffinland Iron Mines Corporation on Tuesday announced taking up an additional 4,773,400 common shares of Baffinland at their outstanding offer of $1.50 per share. Abandoning their rivalry to take over Baffinland, ArcelorMittal and Nunavut made a joint bid for the Toronto-based iron-ore giant on January 14 at $1.50 per share. With their successful $590 million bid last week, the two became joint owners of Baffinland, with ArcelorMittal controlling the larger stake of 70 per cent, with Nunavut holding the remaining 30 per cent.
Nalco plans stock split

BHUBANESWAR: The National Aluminium Company (Nalco) has decided to go for capital restructuring by splitting a share of ₹10 into two shares of ₹5 each, a senior company official said on Wednesday. The company, for the first time, approved a 1:1 bonus, while taking into account the Q3 results in its Board Meeting held on January 31. “By enhancing the number of shares and reducing the price for each share, the float and liquidity of the share shall be enhanced in stock exchanges,” said BL Bagra, director (finance). “This is also expected to increase the market capitalisation and value to the shareholders,” he said. Nalco’s paid-up capital of ₹644.31 crore would stand enhanced to ₹1,388.62 crore, without any cash consideration, once the Board’s resolution is endorsed by shareholders in a meeting likely to be convened in March 2011. By amending the Article of Association, Nalco has created a provision for ESOP (Employee Stock Ownership Plan) for its executives as part payment of performance-related payment (PRP) dues.
Gold declines as recovery signs curb investment

Bloomberg

Feb. 3

Gold declined in New York as signs of an economic recovery and higher equities curb investment demand for the metal. Gold futures for April delivery lost $2.90, or 0.2 per cent, to $1,337.40 an ounce at 7:55 a.m. on the COMEX in New York. The metal for immediate delivery in London was 0.1 per cent lower at $1,336.57.

Silver for March delivery in New York lost 0.6 per cent to $28.355 an ounce. Palladium for March delivery fell 0.5 per cent to $819.80 an ounce, and platinum for April delivery was 0.1 per cent lower at $1,831.40 an ounce.

Bullion rates

Mumbai: Silver spot (999 fineness): Rs 44,045; standard gold (99.5 Purity): Rs 19,885; Pure gold (99.9 purity): Rs 19,990.

Chennai: Bar silver: Rs 43,845; retail silver: Rs 46.90; standard gold: Rs 20,000; retail ornament gold (22 carat a gm): Rs 1,860.
Copper hits record near $10,000/t

Reuters

London, Feb. 2

Copper surged to record highs on Wednesday, within a whisker of the key psychological $10,000 level as investors scrambled to buy the metal ahead of expected supply shortages and market deficits.

Benchmark copper on the London Metal Exchange hit an all-time high of $9,988.25 a tonne on Wednesday, up from $9,948 on Tuesday.

Also in the spotlight was tin, which hit a record high of $30,790 a tonne. Nickel was at $28,100, aluminium was $2,550.25. Lead rose to $2,538 and zinc at $2,490 compared with $2,472.
Nalco board okays bonus, stock split

Press Trust of India
Bhubaneswar, Feb. 2

National Aluminium Company Ltd (Nalco) has decided to go for capital restructuring by splitting a share of Rs 10 into two shares of Rs 5 each, company sources said.

The company, for the first time, approved 1:1 bonus, while taking into account the Q3 results in its board meeting held on January 31.

"By enhancing the number of shares and reducing the price for each share, the float and liquidity of the share shall be enhanced in stock exchange," said Mr B.L. Bagga, Director (Finance) of Nalco.

"This is also expected to increase the market capitalisation and enhance value to the shareholders," he added.

NALCO's paid-up capital of Rs 644.31 crore would stand enhanced to Rs 1,288.62 crore, without any cash consideration, once the board's resolution is endorsed by the shareholders in a meeting likely to be convened in March 2011.
Nalco approves 1:1 bonus, decides on capital rejig

The board of the National Aluminium Company (Nalco), for the first time, approved 1:1 bonus, while taking into account the results for the quarter ended December. The company has decided to go for capital restructuring by splitting a share of Rs 10 into two shares of Rs 5 each. "By enhancing the number of shares and reducing the price for each share, the float and liquidity of the share shall be enhanced in stock exchanges," said B L Bagra, director, finance, at Nalco.
New Delhi, Feb 2: National Aluminium Company (Nalco) on Thursday said it has increased the price of the metal by nearly 5% or Rs 6,000 to around Rs 1,21,000 a tonne in sync with the firming up of the global prices. "We have raised the price by Rs 6,000 a tonne effective February 1. The price of aluminium has gone past $2,500 per tonne. We raised the price to keep pace with the global rate," Nalco finance director B L Bagra said. The price of aluminium crossed the $2,500 per tonne mark recently. This includes an $100 per tonne rise in the last 3-4 days as a slightly tight global demand-supply scenario."The global production of aluminium currently stands at 20.90 million tonnes per annum. The demand is also around the same level. "Meanwhile, some smelters have been closed in China in the recent past. This led to a firming up of the price," Bagra said.
Copper nears $10,000 on rise in demand

London, Feb 3: Copper rushed towards a record high on Wednesday, nearing $10,000 a tonne before losing momentum, but solid manufacturing data that pointed to higher demand for the industrial metal suggested gains further ahead.

Three-month copper on the London Metal Exchange did not trade in official rings, but was bid at $9,910.9/9,920 a tonne, compared with $9,945 at the close on Tuesday. It earlier hit a record of $9,968.25.

Copper gained more than 60% since last June when markets tumbled, fearing sovereign default in euro zone countries such as Greece. “It’s not just copper, everything else has come back as well,” said analyst Michael Widmer of Bank of America-Merrill Lynch.

He said that week-long holidays in top consumer China, which began today also drained volumes and acted as a brake on prices. But a break towards $10,000 is still on the cards near term.

The dollar clawed back some losses while the euro slipped on Wednesday after an apparent lack of consensus about a euro zone rescue fund highlighted ongoing uncertainty about how to solve the region’s debt problems.

Given the solid fundamental outlook for copper with constrained supply and a recovery in demand, consensus remains for higher prices. “The copper market is supply starved as demand rebounds strongly, even more strongly with the US recovering and the rest of the world getting stronger, reinforcing the growth trends that out of Asia, particularly the BRIC economies of China and India,” analyst Robin Bhar of Credit Agricole said. Reuters
Vedanta faces illegal mining salvo in Tamil Nadu too

By M.C. Rajan in Chennai

VEDANTA literally means the end of all knowledge. But the UK-based mining major which bears this name surely would hope it means the end of all troubles.

Months after the global mining major was banned from operating in Orissa’s Niyamgiri, a fact-finding team of environmental activists has come out with a report alleging that it is involved in “illegal mining” in the Vercadu hills of the Shevaroy range of the Eastern Ghats in Tamil Nadu.

“Vedanta has been continuing with bauxite mining despite the closure of MALCO, its aluminium plant at Mettur. Besides threatening the fragile eco-system of the Shevaroy hills, it causes huge revenue loss to the government,” the report by the Social Research and Legal Advocacy Society says.

The disclosure comes close on the heels of the major’s setback over its copper smelter unit in the state’s coastal Tuticorin. The unit was shut down because of environmental concerns last year.

Mining and post-mining activities as well as marketing by MALCO, according to the activists, is in contravention of the rights given to the company.

The report alleges that the company was transporting the mined ore to its plant at Lanjigarh in Orissa after its operations at Niyamgiri came to a halt. MALCO had been forced to close down its mining operations in the Kolli hills following a directive of the Madras High Court in 2009.

The activists claimed that mining had reduced the height of the hills by 100 ft.

The company had, since 1973, been mining in the bauxite-rich peaks of the Shevaroy range, which offers a vital link between the Eastern and Western Ghats. But the mining turned aggressive only after 1998, when Vedanta acquired the firm. “It has led to a change in the rainfall pattern. Mining was so intense that even the height of the hills had dropped by about 100 ft,” the report claimed.

Laying stress on ecological restoration, the activists, while seeking to halt Vedanta’s “illegal mining”, have urged the government to form an expert team to assess the damage caused by mining and its impact on the Malayali tribal community of the hills.

The report also demands action against officials of both the central and state governments for “colluding” with the industry.

A Vedanta spokesperson said they could respond only after going through the report.