Rivers bear coal mining brunt

By Our Reporter

SHILLONG: The rivers in Jaintia Hills which are considered as the lifeline for humans seem to have been left at the mercy of unregulated and illegal coal mine owners who are openly diverting the flow of the rivers to facilitate coal mining on the river beds.

The (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 Section 24 sub-section (1)(a) and (b) appears to be openly violated in the district as the rivers are being wilfully diverted for the purpose of mining coal from the river beds in the district.

The utter disregard and disrespect for the rivers seem to have reached new a flashpoint along the river Waikhyrwi, as the natural course of the river has been changed by diverting a length of the river to facilitate coal mining on the river bed.

The straight flow of the river has been side-tracked into a bend by depositing sand and stone along its natural course. A deep coal mine shaft has also been dug on the dried river bed where coal seams have been located.

The situation along the river is expected to turn worse during the rainy season when the river will gain strength and the mine shaft will act as a drain where the water will flow and could cause the mines to cave in.

It is learnt that the coal miners in the area are taking steps to divert rivers because the coal in Jaintia Hills has high sulphur content, which reacts with the water to become sulphuric acid, making the water highly acidic.

It may be mentioned that Section 43 of The Prevention and Control of (Contd on P-5)
River bears....

(Contd from P-I) Pollution) Act, 1974 states that "Whoever contravenes the provisions of section 24 shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than one year and six months but which may extend to six years and with fine."

Oscar denies rift..

(Contd from P-I) thumping majority.

Blaming the administration for the alleged Rs 1000-crore scam in Assam's North Cachar Hills District Autonomous Council, the AICC leader said these charges would not harm the party's poll prospects.

6.4 quake..

(Contd from P-I) risk zone, had experienced some of world's worst quakes.

The 1950 earthquake measuring around 8.5 which caused widespread damage in Meghalaya especially in capital Shillong and Assam is reckoned to be one of the major quakes in human history, both in terms of intensity and destruction.

The 1987 quake measuring 8.7, which occurred in the Shillong plateau, had left 1,542 people dead.

Records of the Central Seismological Observatory in Shillong also point to increasing seismic activity in the region.

Altogether 34 quakes of light and moderate intensity were felt in the region in 2009. The region had witnessed 26 earthquakes each in 2008 and 2007, while it was 23 in 2006.

Police to..

(Contd from P-I) during the time when the investigation was going on.

Reacting to a query whether Mahanta being the AAG can be influential in the probe, the official replied, "No one is above the law."

Bhattacharjee had even alleged that the "defendant" even produced one imposter of him (plaintiff) before a judicial magistrate and acted himself as the advocate for the "agreement" to transfer the land in his wife's name.

The senior advocate, however, had denied the allegations stating that plaintiff was trying to defame his image.

Force to tackle..

(Contd from P-I) with involvement of women," Dr Sangma had said in his written speech adding, "In view thereof, there is a felt need for raising of a 'Anti-riot Police Force' in the State to deal with any such emergent situation that may arise in future."

The Government wanted the new police force with two companies out of which at least 50 should be women constables specially trained for the purpose.

"This has become a necessity due to the fact that there are frequent incidents of mob-violence where women are involved," the Chief Minister had said.

Being a tribal state, Meghalaya has inherited a complex social system, which has a bearing on the internal security of the State, according to Dr Sangma.

At present Meghalaya police is using fire tender hose pipes as water cannon as and when situation warrants, the Chief Minister said. Vazra, the crowd control water cannon, and rubber bullets will be procured by the State Government in future, he said.
‘India’s mineral wealth obtained by violating tribal rights’

By Sangeeth Sebastian in New Delhi

THE ministries of environment and coal may still be bickering over the classification of ‘go’ and ‘no-go’ areas for mining, but an International Labour Organisation (ILO)-funded report on India’s indigenous population claims that more than half the country’s mineral wealth is obtained by violating the rights of tribals.

‘India and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples’, a report prepared by the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact with the ILO’s support, states that minerals found in adivasi or tribal areas are automatically assumed to be state property. The rules framed under the Mining and Minerals (Regulation and Development) Act, 1957, do not provide detailed procedures for obtaining permission from the respective state government to search for minerals, nor do they talk about the victims of such activity.

The affected community is not required to be informed or consulted before mining leases are granted. There is no mention of adivasi rights or protection in any of the procedures, the report notes.

Though a disaggregated data on the number of mines operating in the country or the number of people displaced by such projects does not officially exist as the information is deemed to be “politically sensitive,” the report estimates that an overwhelming majority of mines are located in the adivasi areas. In 1991, out of the 4,175 mines in the country, 3,500 were in tribal areas.

Another estimate states that between 1990 and 1991 at least 2,600,000 people were displaced by mining projects of which only 25 per cent received any resettlement. Among those displaced 52 per cent belonged to the Scheduled Tribes, the report notes.

In the case of private lands, proceedings under the Land Acquisition Act 1894 are initiated in order to acquire the land. The legislation also allows the government to acquire lands upon payment of cash compensation for any public purpose, including mining.

The report also stridently criticizes the new state of Jharkhand, which is “politically sensitive,” the report estimates that an overwhelming majority of mines are located in the adivasi areas. In 1991, out of the 4,175 mines in the country, 3,500 were in tribal areas.

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GOVT LIBERALISES GOLD IMPORT NORMS FOR AUTHORISED AGENCIES

Trade says it wants more, such as considerable widening of permitted entities

ANINDITA DEY & DILIP KUMAR IHA
Mumbai, 6 February

The government has liberalised norms for import of precious metals - gold, silver, platinum and palladium - by select nominated agencies.

In a notification issued this week and taking effect right away, the Director General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) has done away with the mandatory requirement of sale of 15 per cent of imported precious metals to exporters. Besides, it has also relaxed the earlier norms, wherein a nominated agency had to file periodic returns for the imports done.

Explaining the move, an official source said, “The import procedure has been relaxed, as the government’s only concern is the payment of import duty. The authorities will keep a track of imports from periodic filings by these agencies. We will check the disclosure and declaration made during the imports. The nominated agency can sell it to whoever it likes.”

Now, jewellery exporters will have to buy the entire raw material from the open market, which, consequently, takes away a part of the price advantage these importers had in procuring gold/silver.

The source said India was emerging as the main market for gold consumption. The first priority should be to make the metal available to the domestic market at a reasonable price.

Under the monitoring mechanism, nominated agencies other than the designated banks and public sector undertakings had to renew their status certificate every year. They had to file monthly returns to DGFT through the Gems and Jewellery Export Promotion Council, indicating quantities for domestic consumption as well as sale to exporters.

’More needed’

“This is just a part-relaxation. We had recommended to the government to allow gold imports by all gems and jewellery manufacturers and traders that have an annual turnover of ₹50-100 crore,” said Vinod Havyagri, chairman of All India Gems & Jewellery Trade Federation.

Currently, nominated agencies do not have delivery points everywhere. For example, Punjab National Bank has identified only one delivery centre in Bangalore. Nova Scotia Bank, one of the largest importers of gold, is not spread across the country. Therefore, jewellers suffer a lot due to unavailability of gold, especially during the high demand season.

“Since the government has taken the first step, we hope the rest of the demands will also be met by the annual Budget,” said Havyagri.

The various nominated agencies are designated banks, Minerals and Metals Trading Corporation, State Trading Corporation, Projects and Equipments Corporation, Handicraft and Handloom Export Corporation, jewellery and jewellery units in export-oriented schemes and in special economic zones (for captive consumption), STCL, MSTC, Diamond India Ltd, Gems and Jewellery Export Promotion Council, premier trading houses and star trading houses.
हीरा भंडारों की खोज

नई दिल्ली। निजी शेष भी सरकार कंपनी रिश्वद्वारा पूर्व के राजस्थान और ओडिशा में हेल्टेक्स द्वारा हीरा और तोते के भंडारों की खोज कर रही है। सरकार खाना विभाग के माध्यम से सुचना देकर बताया है कि रिश्वद्वारा एक सरकारी कंपनी ने हेल्टेक्स के माध्यम से हीरा और तोते के भंडारों की खोज कर रही है।
Mines Bill to be placed before GoM

The proposed new mines legislation that envisages 26 per cent profit sharing by miners with project-affected people, among other things, is likely to be placed again before a Group of Ministers (GoM). “We have sought a date from Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee. One more meeting of GoM is required before finalising the draft,” said Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Mines Dinsha Patel. PTI
‘हरित भारत मिशन’ से वन क्षेत्रों की गुणवत्ता में सुधार होगा : रमेश

उन्होंने कहा कि ग्राम समा, महीना स्वयं स्वायत्त समूह और प्रगति शीर्षक मन्त्री राय द्वारा में वन विभाग की तकनीकी मंड़ी के साथ परियोजना को लागू करें। रमेश ने प्रतिवर्षीय स्वायत्त पात्र के संरक्षण के लिए भी नीति बनाने पर जोर दिया नये कि इन पाठ में विकास मान्यताओं के क्षेत्र में दर्शाया जा सके।

परियोजना और रमेश ने कहा कि इस "हरित भारत मिशन" की 22 फरवरी को हिंदी में प्रधानमंत्री मानमोहन सिंह की अध्यक्षता में होने वाली बैठक में मंजूरी मिलेगी। रमेश ने विभाग भारत के वन मंत्री के योग्य समूह का उपाध्यक्ष कराने का उपचार कर्तव्य कहा कि ‘हरित भारत मिशन’ परियोजना का सफलता पेस्ट के 50 लाख हेक्टेयर वन आवश्यकता क्षेत्र को बढ़ाना और इसके बोले के संरक्षण करना कर्तव्य करता है।
Copper extends rally to record high

NEW YORK: Copper extended a rally to a record high on mounting concerns that the global economic recovery will boost consumption of the metal used in cars, homes and appliances while mining companies struggle to increase output. Freeport McMoRan Copper & Gold, the world’s largest publicly traded producer, said the market will be “tight in 2011, and for the foreseeable future.” The metal has more than tripled since the end of 2008 on rising demand from China, the world’s largest buyer. In the US, the second-biggest user, unemployment fell in January to the lowest level since April 2009, the US labour department said on Sunday. “Demand for copper continues to be robust and growing,” said James Dailey, who manages $185 million at TEAM Financial Asset Management in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. “Bringing copper production online is very costly and protracted, so it may be some time before production levels are able to grow fast enough to offset the growth in demand.” The global supply deficit will reach 822,000 metric tonnes in 2011, more than double of last year’s shortfall, Barclays Capital said on January 20.
PMO favours joint mining by NTPC, RPower in Jharkhand

Sarita C Singh
NEW DELHI

The prime minister's office has recommended that NTPC and Reliance Power should jointly mine adjacent coal blocks in Jharkhand to help them extract about 200 million tonnes of additional coal that would have been lost if the mines were delineated and drilled independently, government and company officials said. The proposal also has the backing of Parliament's standing committee on coal.

NTPC chairman and managing director Arup Roy Choudhury told ET that the company has found merit in the proposal. "It is a good proposal. But we have to examine it closely since we would start production much ahead of them. These evaluations would take some time," he said.

As per statutory norms, companies owning different blocks are required to maintain a "safety angle" between the blocks, reducing the amount of coal they can extract.

A Reliance Power spokesperson confirmed the development and said: "This is the optimum way to mine coal for promoting coal conservation. We look forward to discussing with NTPC on how to co-ordinate mining operations."

Reliance Power had sought government's approval for joint exploration of coal mines attached with Tilley ultra mega power project and NTPC's Kerandari A and Pakri Barwadih blocks. Tilley blocks - Kerandari B and Kerandari C - lie in between NTPC's Kerandari A and Pakri Barwadih blocks.

"The proposal has been recommended by PMO and the standing committee on coal. We have written to the power ministry seeking directions to NTPC for the same. The two companies should now be working towards a strategy to extract coal blocked in barriers and barriers in their respective coalfields. They will have to get the strategy approved by the government," a coal ministry official said.
Jewellers expect sales to shine in season of love

PTI

MUMBAI

NOT just love birds, jewellery manufacturers are also likely to have a sparkle in their eyes come Valentine’s Day. With the global economy on recovery path, fashion jewellery exporters and retailers predict an up to 40% jump in sales.

“This year the trend seems to be positive and we expect almost 40% growth in sales of light weight gold, coloured gems and diamond jewellery segments compared to the same period last year,” Jewellery exporter and retailer Shree Ganesh Jewellery House’s Marketing and Communication Head Rahul Singh said. He added that coloured stones and diamond encrusted trendy jewellery sell like hot cakes in the season of love. The jewellery maker, which plans to increase its domestic retail presence, has introduced a new line of light weight trendy jewellery in the range of ₹3,500-₹18,000 for Valentine’s Day, which comes on February 14 every year.

“Valentine’s Day is largely celebrated by youngsters, who prefer light weight jewellery. Keeping this in mind, we have introduced a special range of light weight jewellery and we are positive this will help in popularising our brand in the country,” Singh said.

Talking about the increase in sales this Valentine’s Day, Ashok Minawala of Danabhai Jewellers & Sons said: “With the positive economic trend, we expect over 20% growth in sales compared to last year, especially of the light weight jewellery”. Last year sales during the season were affected as people were cautious about buying jewellery due to the economic slowdown, Minawala said.

Ghanjali Group Chairman and Managing Director Mehul Choksi said every year there is about 25% growth in sales during January and February. “We usually see a growth of 20-25% during the Valentine’s Day season every year, which is expected to continue this year too,” he said, adding that the fashion jewellery segment witnesses heavy sales during the period.

Besides, Valentine’s Day fever boosts exports as well. This month it may go up by 15% in volume and 25% in value, Choksi said.

All India Gems and Jewellery Trade Federation Chairman Vinod Hayagriva, however, said the season’s popularity is yet to reach its hilt and become a major sales driver. “February is likely to generate 20-25% more business compared to the same month last year,” he said.
GoM to review mines bill

NEW DELHI: The proposed new mines legislation that envisages 26% profit sharing by miners with project-affected people, among other things, is likely to be placed again before a group of ministers (GoM). “We have sought a date from finance minister Pranab Mukherjee. One more meeting of GoM is required before finalising the draft,” minister of state (independent charge) for mines Dinsha Patel said.

The ministerial panel, headed by Mukherjee, has already met four times on the proposed Mines and Mineral Development and Regulation Act, 2010. —PTI
Geopolitical concerns push gold up; Brent crude oil at $100

G. Chandrasekhar
Mumbai, Feb. 6

Geopolitical issues that were less of a concern last year have returned to haunt the global commodities market in the last few days with turmoil in Egypt the highpoint so far. The latest political developments in Egypt quickly following those in Tunisia and elsewhere have already begun to push commodity prices up.

Crude (Brent) has already breached the psychological $100 a barrel, while gold has regained the magical $1,350 an ounce level as violence in Egypt and inflation expectations in Europe unfold. On the growth front, there is renewed confidence. Data from the US generally point to a positive macroeconomic sentiment emerging. January was another month of commodity price gains as positive demand indicators continued to boost market fundamentals and investor confidence.

To be sure, the latest PMI data point to continuing expansion of industrial output, something that would support base metals and steel demand in the coming months. No wonder, copper, tin and iron ore all hit all-time nominal highs. Bulk commodities showed the greatest gains with supply disruptions providing strong impetus to spot prices. Going forward, geopolitical concerns, improving macroeconomic situation, investor confidence and weather related supply disruptions are likely to combine to affect the entire commodities complex covering energy, metals and agriculture. Overall, high commodity prices are here to stay. Governments are sure to continue to fight inflation but with limited success. Ocean freight market continued to decline last week with the Baltic Capesize index falling below 1,300 for the first time since December 2008. Experts believe there is structural overcapacity in the sector.

Gold: After a sedate start to the New Year, gold regained its magical $1,350/oz level last week thanks to geopolitical concerns (violence in Egypt) and inflation expectations in Europe following announcement that the central bank will keep rates low which indicated a continued short-term upward pressure on inflation. Silver rallied to on cue and reversed its loss in January. On Friday, in London, gold climbed by as much as 2 per cent with PM Fix at $1,355/oz as compared with $1,325/oz the previous day. Silver rose even higher at 2.2 per cent on Friday AM fix of $28.91/oz versus the previous day's $28.30/oz. Earlier in the week, there were indications that gold and silver were stabilising after dipping towards two-month lows. But good physical demand is said to have materialised on price dip.

The short-term external headwinds that gold was facing may now give way, at least in the days ahead, to a more investor friendly environment under the present geopolitical circumstances. Silver prices take gold's cue but remain volatile given the weak fundamentals. When geopolitical concerns abate substantially, there would be a correction. According to technical analysts, in the short-term, the week's price movement is an encouraging upside signal. The market may be building a base over support in the 1,300 area, while momentum is bullish supportive. A close above 1,350 opens up 1,400 and the 1,432 all-time high.

Crude: The unfolding events in Egypt have injected some volatility and uncertainty in the market. Brent prices have moved beyond $100 a barrel reflecting the increasing sensitivity of the market to geopolitical developments. Coming as it does with strong demand, reduced inventory and less spare capacity, it is critical for stakeholders to stay fully focussed on geopolitical developments that can potentially impact the market.
Hind Copper

Hindustan Copper has posted a robust growth in profit at Rs 80.72 crore in the third quarter of 2010-11 against Rs 47.61 crore in the same period last year, up 69.5 per cent. However, sales were down marginally to Rs 307.17 crore during the quar-
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*Profit after tax; Figures in Rs crore

Net profit compared with Rs 223.67 crore in the corresponding period last fiscal.
रेत खनन पर लगी रोक

लक्ष्यात्मक • जिले में ग्रामीण रहते रेत के दर सह से रेत के दर सह के खनन पर रोक लगी गई है। यह रोक जिले के सभी 32 खनन स्थलों पर लगा कर रहा गई है। निगम उद्योग केंद्र के नीदर और गाइनिंग अभियान के वित्तकार ने बताया कि हाईकोड के नियंत्रण पर रहाने ने ऐसे स्थानों का चलन सुलभ कर दिया है जहां रेत निकालने के साथ इसकी प्रक्रियात्मक रूप से अलग कर हो सके। इसके लिए राज्य सरकार ने सभी एलडीएम के नेतृत्व में कमेटियों का काम करने का निर्देशन कर दिया है जो कि ऐसी नीतियों का बनाने करने का वर्तमान स्थान उत्तराखंड सरकार ने इसकी भर्तियों की शाखा में होती रही। कमेटियों ऐसे स्थानों का चलन खाली 10 घंटे तक अपनी नियंत्रण स्थान के पास रखा जाएगा। विस्तरित नीति निर्देशक ने फिर निर्देशते में हर तेजी का खनन अवैध मान जाएगा। अवैध खनन पर 25,000 रुपये तक का जुर्माना या दो साल तक की सजा हो सकती है।