Blast in China mine kills 21, traps 16

Explosion at a mine in central China on Saturday killed 21 miners. Rescuers have located 16 trapped miners but must clear tons of coal dust from the mine shaft to reach them. The blast at the mine in Yuzhou unleashed 2.500 tons of coal dust, an engineer for one of the mine’s parent firms, Du Bo, said. AP
Canadian miner for JV in India

CHENNAI, 16 OCT: With India planning to acquire uranium mines abroad, Canadian uranium mining major Cameco has expressed interest in partnering with the Uranium Corp of India Ltd (UCIL) or Nuclear Power Corp of India Ltd (NPCIL) within or outside the country. The $2.3-billion company, having interests in uranium exploration, mining and nuclear power generation, has also shown interest in supplying uranium to power the growing number of Indian reactors. ians
Jairam Ramesh has a tough act on his hands — straddling economic pragmatism and green concerns

A green crusader finds it's not easy

By Sowmya Aji

He has been variously dubbed “the Great Crusader” and “futile development” in the same breath, but one thing is certain: Nobody in the current UPA government is as many eyebrows or indeed space as the maverick environment minister Jairam Ramesh.

Whether it is his starstruck style of political opinion giving, spouting detailed information from a remarkable memory or his unabashed rudeness suspected as the son of the 45-year-old IT Bom Bombay, Carnegie Mellon and Massachusetts Institute of Technology alumnus has distinguished himself in the present crop of politicians. He is certainly political, but is part of the new brigade of tech-savvy and polished rhetors who replace the charm of the grassroots with economic intelligence and media savvy.

Ramesh is variously vilified and loved, depending on which side of the environmental divide one is on. Often there is no method to his decision making — and he routinely is criticised as “politically motivated” or “whitewash” through the minister prides himself on being legally correct with all his moves.

It is not just his detractors; even green activists are often confused about his motives and the processes that he uses to achieve his ends. Most of his decisions have considered him a hurdle and a man who rubs up against the conventional decisions, without much thought given to possible economic consequences.

Jairam, for all his environmental activism, has often displayed a political prism which is often at odds with the nation and the concerned environmentalists. He has started a fresh line of thought on the country’s development, bringing in the environmental conscious as a major factor while considering him as a support of project.

The whole issue of classifying forest lands under “go” and “no-go” areas for coal mining is as grabbing as the classic example of the pragmatism.

Ramesh saves the coal ministry and the industry from applying for coal blocks in areas that have been declared as “no-go” areas and instead points them to the already declared “go” areas, which would stand a chance of getting clearance.

The issue has been seen as cramping industry and the government have been seen as thwarting the process of transparency and accountability in order to save the industry and the mining sector. The move has been seen as a step further and put up all the forestry maps of the regions he

Jairam Ramesh has brought a lot of integrity to the top levels. He has given the ministry back its regulatory role. But he is sometimes very impulsive.

Dr Ullas Karanth, tiger conservationist


green

THE BALANCING ACT

Recent challenges will not be the last, but the minister has been called a “green crusader” and “futile development” in the same breath. They are...

THE SPECTRE OF VEDANTA

In the aftermath of the Niyamgiri decision, other projects such as POSCO and Polavaram are in trouble, as activists cite similar violations of the rules of tribals and forest dwellers. Ramesh is left with the delicate situation of how to deal with the projects with huge political implications and still uphold the law used in Niyamgiri.

SAYING THE NATIONAL ANIMAL

Tiger reserves are on a collision course with highway expansion. The NHA is on an expansion spree, but Ramesh has put a halt to such projects so far. At Karcangare and Pench tiger reserves, tiger conservationists have pressed such work halted and the minister has to balance both interests.

THE DAIMS OF DISCONTENT

Many states are demanding dams for power supply. Ramesh faces this problem in Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh — environmentalists demand a halt on dams and the state governments are determined on pushing them through. Ramesh is left to deal with the political implications.

PUTTING AN END TO POACHING

Ramesh has been paying personal attention to various instances of poaching and tiger deaths and is going all out in making efforts to increase awareness in the issue of poaching. Unfortunately, state governments are not giving the issues the kind of priority they want.

MAIN HIGHLIGHTS

Development

The latest problem is the issue of the Navi Mumbai airport where Ramesh is attempting to save mangroves, two rivers and a hill that will get flattened, if the airport comes up there. The need for a second airport in Mumbai is evident, but Jairam is still trying to cut his environmental losses.
At least 21 workers were killed and 16 others trapped underground when a gas explosion hit a coal mine in China's central Henan province on Saturday, the latest in a series of mishaps that have rocked the country's mining sector considered the most dangerous in the world.

The blast occurred in the mine situated in Yuzhou city of the province at 6 am local time, the Xinhua news agency reported, quoting rescue headquarters officials.
TRADERS BOOK PROFIT IN PRECIOUS METALS

Aggregate open interest declines on MCX

DILIP KUMAR JHA & ASHOK DIVASE
Mumbai, 16 October

ullion traders are taking divergent paths in local and global markets when it comes to holding positions in the futures market. Local traders have been booking profits and covering short sales since last three weeks.

Gold positions fell over 14 per cent, while silver positions declined over 23 per cent. A falling dollar leads to higher bullion prices in overseas markets, while a rising rupee caps returns from higher bullion prices, which leads to profit-making by Indian traders. Retail investors, however, have increased their open interest in futures.

In the last three weeks, open interest, the number of open or unsettled futures positions and an indicator of price movement in the coming months, in precious metals declined significantly on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX) due to active profit-taking by traders.

In case of gold, the aggregate open interest for all live contracts declined 14.13 per cent from its recent high on September 10. Although the open position continued to rise in the Comex division of NYSE, it declined in Indian commodity bourses, which indicates that local traders turned more cautious than their global peers.

On MCX, gold's aggregate open interest plunged to 23,952 lots on October 14 from its recent high of 27,927 on September 10. During the period, gold prices were up by a mere 5.75 per cent on MCX. Similarly, open interest in the silver segment nosedived a staggering 23.52 per cent from its lifetime high on September 16. Silver prices went up 12.73 per cent during the period.

Big traders trade in gold contracts, while retail investors trade in mini gold contracts (of 100 gram), where open interest has been consistently rising. In the last one month, it has increased 7.06 per cent to 50,960 contracts.

"The decline in open interest reflects that bullion prices have achieved their target and any further upward movement is minimal. Therefore, traders prefer to book profit on highs before any price correction begins," an analyst said. Similarly, the selling spree pulled down traders' sentiment in bullion street in the silver quarter also. A trader from Kedia commodities said since silver prices were very volatile, in many cases of short selling, stop loss was triggered, resulting in a decline in open interest.

In gold, the price movement was less volatile compared to gold. Hence, there was some short-covering with profit-booking.

Traders were lured to an extent by higher global prices of precious metals. Gold for near-month delivery on MCX jumped to $1,919.98 per 10 gram on October 14. Silver followed suit to trade at $36,460 per kg for near-month delivery on India's largest futures exchange, compared to $33,199 about three weeks ago.

Amid fears that a further appreciation of the rupee against the dollar might yield lower return, many bullion traders sold some holdings, said a Mumbai-based trader. If rupee strengthens while global bullion prices also correct, then the fall in the Indian market could be steeper, traders fear.

In contrast, global traders remained bullish on gold. Analysts said higher open interest indicated increasing public appetite for gold. It is a bullish sign, although a large number of speculative positions also mean the potential for a correction is low if some traders sell to capture profits.

They continued fresh booking on forward contracts on the Comex. As a consequence, the aggregate open position in gold hit an all-time high of 638,283 contracts on October 14, compared to its previous high of 617,188 contracts on September 29. During the period, gold for near-month delivery in Comex surged to $1,377.6 per oz from $1310.3 per oz. Gold benefited as an alternate reserve currency, as countries tried to adopt easier monetary policy and appreciate their own currencies to boost growth. But all traders were not bullish on silver, as the gray precious metal achieved analysts' next year's target of $24 an oz in October only. Experts, at a recently-held precious metals seminar in London, had forecast that gold and silver would hit $1,540 an oz and $24 an oz, respectively, next year.
Gold set to cross $1,400 in coming weeks

GOLD OUTLOOK

B G SHIRSAT

The gold for December delivery set an all-time intra-day high of $1,388.10 on Thursday, but closed at $1,372 a troy ounce on Friday on the Comex division of the New York Mercantile Exchange. We had indicated in this column last Sunday that a market picture chart with time-price opportunity (TPO) and volume data points at the price level of $1,383.50 for the coming weeks.

The gold surged to new high of $1,388 but slipped to 1,372 on Friday on profit-booking and strengthening of the US dollar. The trading pattern in the December delivery on Thursday and Friday suggests a new high for gold around $1,385.25 next week.

The market picture for five trading sessions of the last week is hinting at a price level of $1,418.50 for December futures based on TPOs. The volume-based resistance is expected around $1,404.50. The trading pattern in call options for December series is hinting at buy trades in the $1,375-1,380-strike calls at a premium of $30-35 per contract.

The traders also bought the $1,400-strike call options at a premium of $20 per contract. There was no significant trading in December series puts, which suggests the gold may not move down substantially in the near future.

The 21 days moving average data indicate resistance for gold at $1,400 and strong support at $1,341. The 21 days relative strength index moved up to 79 from 77 last week. Nevertheless, an overbought position in gold futures continues. On the Multi Commodity Exchange, gold futures for December delivery is expected to move up around ₹20,065 per 10 grams with strong volume-based support at ₹19,155. On a weekly market picture chart, the gold is poised for a new high of ₹20,235.

Gold, trading near a record, may decline this year before resuming an advance to $1,550 an ounce in 12 months, LGT Capital Management says. The metal might decline to $1,300 in three months, before rising to $1,450 in six months, LGT analyst Bayram Dincer in Pfaffikon, Switzerland, said in a report today. “We see more upside potential if major central banks continue expansive monetary policy in the course of 2011 and postpone their exit strategy,” Dincer said. Gold, up 26 per cent this year, is heading for a 10th annual gain, the longest winning streak since at least 1920.
कर्नाटक विवाद बनाम खनन कारोबार

कर्नाटक के बिकांद ने भाजपा में एक लोगों की खुप दी है कि खनन कारोबार के क्रमों से भाजपा का निकाला जायें। भाजपा के अध्यक्ष नहीं चाहते कि कोई करोड़ों रुपये खो दें। इसलिए पुलिस में कर्नाटक में एक करोड़ों की एक दर्जन से ज्या टैक्स कही भाजपा अपना आधार पर दे दी गई कि वह फिर खरीदना नहीं करेंगे। यह भाजपा में उन गिरजों पर कोरोड़ों के खर्च करेंगे। इसलिए भाजपा के आधार पर दे दी गई कि वह फिर खरीदना नहीं करेंगे। यह भाजपा में उन गिरजों पर कोरोड़ों के खर्च करेंगे। इसलिए भाजपा के आधार पर दे दी गई कि वह फिर खरीदना नहीं करेंगे। यह भाजपा में उन गिरजों पर कोरोड़ों के खर्च करेंगे। इसलिए भाजपा के आधार पर दे दी गई कि वह फिर खरीदना नहीं करेंगे। यह भाजपा में उन गिरजों पर कोरोड़ों के खर्च करेंगे। इसलिए भाजपा के आधार पर दे दी गई कि वह फिर खरीदना नहीं करेंगे। यह भाजपा में उन गिरजों पर कोरोड़ों के खर्च करेंगे। इसलिए भाजपा के आधार पर दे दी गई कि वह फिर खरीदना नहीं करेंगे। यह भाजपा में उन गिरजों पर कोरोड़ों के खर्च करेंगे। इसलिए भाजपा के आधार पर दे दी गई कि वह फिर खरीदना नहीं करेंगे। यह भाजपा में उन गिरजों पर कोरोड़ों के खर्च करेंगे।
दीन में खादन हादसा

21 मरे, 16 लापता

जीविंग। दीन के हेकन प्रभात में कोलेक्टर दीन एक खादन में गिरफ्तार की गई थी। 21 लोगों की मौत हो गई। दुर्गति के बाद कम से कम 16
लोग खादन में पश्चिम हुए हैं। दीन की सरकारी समाचार सेवा विभाग ने उच्च भूगर्भगति के अधिकारियों के हाथों से कहा है कि
हेकन प्रभात के मृत्यु शरीर की एक खादन में,
वाचनीय सरकारी सूचना सहित एक खादन को गिरफ्तार
किया गया। दीन की मृत्यु की समस्याओं के साथ, दीन जीवी, खादन पश्चिम
नगरी में बाहुल्य गिरफ्तार किये गए हैं। कायम
रखने 21 लोगों को प्रशिक्षण कर दिया है।
खादन में पश्चिम शरीर के कपड़े की खोज
का जा रही है। यह खादन सिपा को फैलान
है।
Jairam vows action against Maha mining

Viju B & Yogesh Naik | TNN

Mumbai: Taking cognizance of TOI’s campaign against destructive mining in Maharashtra’s Sindhudurg district, Union environment and forest minister Jairam Ramesh on Saturday promised action against the mining firms involved in it. He said their leases would be cancelled if they violate the Forest Conservation act and environmental norms.

“I’m extremely concerned about these mining proposals that have come up in this eco-sensitive region,” Ramesh told TOI. TOI on Friday reported that the state government has approved 49 mining leases for iron and bauxite ores excavation in the Sindhudurg region. Thirty two of these permits were approved in Sawantwadi-Dodamarg zone which has the highest forest cover within Sindhudurg district. This zone is part of the wildlife corridor between Radhanagari wildlife sanctuary in Maharashtra and Anshi-Dandeli tiger reserve in Karnataka.

Ramesh said the Western Ghats corridor is among the richest rich bio-diversities in the world and needed to preserved at all cost. “Since it’s an eco-fragile area, any kind of mining approval should be given after seeing that it doesn’t violate forest rules,” Ramesh said. He said he has asked the newly-formed Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel to look into new mining proposals and submit a detailed report.

Maharashtra CM Ashok Chavan while reacting to the TOI report said he is planning to set up a district-level committee under the collector to clear the proposal before the Director-General of Mining clears it. “The state government has declared Sindhudurg a tourism district and had issued a GR six months back stating that permission of tourism department is necessary before the mining licences are given,” he said. He said the situation in Maharashtra is much better than Karnataka or Goa.

The CM said that the mining issue was discussed with officials. “We’re planning to set up a committee under the collector wherein the local feelings will be considered before projects are approved,” said Chavan. Sindhudurg has the highest green cover (49%) in Maharashtra and was declared as first eco-tourism district in the country in 1997. Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel chairman Madhav Gadgil, who visited the Ghat corridor last week, said the panel has got around 1,300 representations from people in Sindhudurg and Ratangiri requesting him to save the ecological terrain.

“We’ll look into these concerns while preparing a comprehensive report for protecting western ghat,” he said. Gadgil said the panel found several loopholes in the Environment Impact Assessment Reports submitted by the mining firm in Sindhudurg. The TOI on Friday had reported that EIA report prepared by mining firms in this region were fabricated and didn’t have any mention of the rich flora and fauna in this region.
‘I have always signed Virbhadra, not Raja Virbhadra’

Virbhadra Singh has done politics for 42 years—a five-term chief minister of Himachal Pradesh—and has held various portfolios in the central government. At present, he is minister of steel. Shehba John asks if he has nerves of steel too, in the light of recent allegations of graft against him. Excerpt:

On October 23, the graft case filed against you by the Himachal Pradesh Anti Corruption Bureau will be heard by a sessions court in the state. You had wanted the case transferred to the CBI. Why? Don’t you have faith in the Himachal Pradesh authorities?

I haven’t been charged, it’s just a challenge. This case is based on an alleged conversation, which took place 21 years back where I am supposed to have discussed some money matters. What is the veracity of this CD? Who taped my conversation, who converted it into a CD? In all my years in the public eye, no one has ever pointed a finger at my honesty and integrity. This is a case of political vendetta and I will come out with flying colours. I don’t expect any justice from the state government as earlier too, 34 cases were filed against me by the present CM, Prem Kumar Dhumal. I was cleared of all charges. I want an independent agency like the CBI to probe this case. I can’t go to the UN, can I?

You were chief minister for five terms. Is it better to be focused on a state rather than be at the Centre?

Work is work, be it the Centre or the state. But my work as CM was more satisfying as the buck stopped with me. The scope for doing good is more. As steel minister, I am just one of the many cogs in the vast wheel of India. Yet Himachal Pradesh seems to have lagged behind others as far as infrastructure and prosperity goes.

Himachal was formed after the integration of the hill states of Punjab and became a separate entity in 1948. It used to be a very backward state with little water, electricity supply or educational facilities. There were few motorable roads either. When I demitted office in 2007, there were 30,000 km of motorable roads, 100% electrification and we were the second state after Kerala to make primary education compulsory.

Have you ever had any job other than in politics?

No, I joined it straight after postgraduation from St Stephen’s College in Delhi. I was picked up by Lal Bahadur Shastri and earned my political spurs under Indira Gandhi. But if you see my bio-data, under ‘profession’, it says ‘horticulturist’. I have apple orchards and that is my source of income. As CM, I never took a salary, except a token amount of Rs 1. I didn’t stay in the official residence either, but in my own house in Shimla.

You are the Raja of Bashahr, a princely district in HP but isn’t it irrelevant even to acknowledge that fact today?

That’s true. I am the only royal in the Congress who actually signed the Instrument of Accession and is now serving the party. While there is respect for my family among the people of HP, I have always signed as ‘Virbhadra’, not as ‘Raja Virbhadra’. In 1963, when I became CM for the first time, I issued a notification that I shouldn’t be called Raja, I like it that way.

You are 75. Isn’t it important for senior politicians to make way for younger people?

This is the public verdict. As long as one is in good health, what’s the problem? Even today, I can walk 25-30 km a day. I work 16-18 hours daily, lead a regulated life—no smoking, no drinking, do yoga. I don’t even dye my hair. We were young too when we joined politics. Even in Nehru’s cabinet, the emphasis was on youth. But we were more realistic. Many had taken part in the freedom struggle and were deeply impacted by it. In our eyes, Nehru could do no wrong; we were in love with him. He was a man with a vision. I am glad Rahul Gandhi is focusing on taking the youth along. No party can survive without them.

Isn’t it hard to be part of a party where you will never expect to reach the highest level because you do not bear the Nehru-Gandhi name?

I am grateful to my party for giving me the opportunity to serve people. I have not aspired for more. Pandit Nehru called steel mills and dams the ‘temples of modern India’. Has the steel industry lived up to its billing?

Yes, it has. I am glad to be looking after Nehru’s legacy. We are the third largest producer of steel and production levels are going up. But India still lags behind China.

China is far ahead of us, producing 600m tonnes annually. When I took over, a year ago, steel production was 54m tonnes; now it’s 74m tonnes. By December 2012, we hope to produce 120m tonnes. What is gratifying is that demand is going up, showing the increasing prosperity of rural areas.

Many steel mines are in tribal areas. Your ministry wants a more generous land acquisition policy and more developmental spending by state-run steel and mining firms. But displacement is displacement, isn’t it?

While land will be acquired, we need a more humane policy towards them. Compensation rates for displacement should go up and there should be proper rehabilitation, be it giving houses, education or jobs. In Bastar, the National Mineral Development Corporation is planning a 3 million tonne steel plant which will take off in October. It’s giving generous compensation to the tribals and setting up a girls and boys school with hostel facilities, a college, an ITI and a hospital. Our industry is penny-wise and pound-foolish. Companies must change their practices. Let’s face it, tribals are attached to their land. In fact, once the mines have exhausted their capacity, maybe 50-60 years from now, it would be a good idea to give the land back to the tribals.
Regulators oppose $116-bn BHP-Rio JV

JAMES KANTER
BRUSSELS, 16 October

Antitrust authorities from around the world have signaled objections to a $116 billion joint venture between BHP Billiton and Rio Tinto, leaving the deal’s fate uncertain.

The German antitrust agency, the Federal Cartel Office, said Thursday that it had told the companies of its concerns after a preliminary review of the consequences of the merger. In Brussels, the European Commission said it had decided to object to the deal and had informed the companies during a meeting on Friday.

Amelia Torres, the spokeswoman for Competition Commissioner Joaquin Almunia, would not elaborate on the European Union’s concerns but said the formal statement of objections would be sent soon. “That is yet to happen,” she said.

European steel makers have joined forces with their Japanese and Chinese counterparts to fight the planned joint venture on the grounds that it would give the pair too much control over the global iron ore trade. “We are confident that the European Commission will soon follow with a similar decision” to Germany’s, said Gordon Moffat, the director general of Eurofer, a lobbying group for the steel industry.

Moffat said the Japanese competition authority was preparing to oppose the deal while, in South Korea, regulators had already issued their objections.

The two miners want to cut costs and grow more efficiently by collaborating on their mines, railroads and ports to produce iron ore in Western Australia.

UBS analysts in Sydney said last year that the joint venture could result in $11.5 billion in synergies, and potentially more than double that.

Even with opposition mounting, the companies may not want to walk away before the deal’s December 31 deadline. If one were to pull out, it would have to pay a substantial breakup fee to the other.