Mining woes: Accidents on rise in Bellary

Ajith Athrady

NEW DELHI: Unbridled mining in Bellary district of Karnataka has not only destroyed the environment but also led to an increase in road accidents.

According to environmental impact assessment report prepared by the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE), an autonomous body under the Ministry of Environment and Forests, the increasing vehicle population and deteriorating road conditions had a direct consequence in terms of soaring road mishaps.

The report was prepared at the behest of the Supreme Court, which is hearing petitions on the illegal mining in the district.

The number of fatal accidents, involving mining vehicles, jumped steeply in 2004 (275 people died in road mishaps) and remained consistently high in the subsequent years, till the peak mining activity years up to 2010 (370 persons killed).

Besides loss of life, road infrastructure crumbled due to excessive movement of overloaded mining vehicles. Though the state government increased its spending on roads from Rs 7.07 crore in 2005 to Rs 50.70 crore in 2010 in the three mining rich taluks - Bellary, Hospet and Sandur - road conditions remained non-motorable due to the movement of overladen trucks.

The noise from ore transportation was a major concern, particularly in villages situated along the state highway.

"Residents of these villages are fully exposed to and highly affected by the transportation noise," the report said while highlighting the severity of damage due to mining.

Owing to the pathetic condition of roads, traffic slows down leading to congestion and frequent use of horns, creating chaos in the acoustic environment and making life unbearable for the local residents, said the report.

To minimise the adverse impact on the inhabitants along the roadsides, which are being used by the transport agencies, the state government should explore the possibility of diverting this traffic by constructing a by-pass road.

While exploring alternative railway routes to transport ore, local authorities should take action to increase roadside plantation to prevent further pollution.

The report recommended curbing overloading of trucks, metalling of all major roads, sprinkling water and regularly cleaning roads to check dust emanating from these roads.

DH News Service
**TRADE**

**Iron ore exports plunge over 25%**

**New Delhi**: India's iron ore exports plunged 25.15% in April to October, data from the federation of Indian mineral industries (Fimi) showed on Wednesday, as the country's continued crackdown on illegal mining sowed business and brought about caution. Iron ore exports stood at 35.38 million tonnes (mt) in the first seven months of the fiscal, down from 47.27mt in the same period a year ago, a press statement from Fimi showed. RUCHIRA SINGH ⚫
NAVEEN TO PM: BAN IRON ORE EXPORT

Bhubaneswar: Orissa chief minister Naveen Patnaik on Wednesday urged Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to impose immediate ban on export of iron ore and levy mineral rent tax (MRT) at the rate of 50 per cent on the said mineral in view of the super normal profit being made by the private mine owners.
Orissa CM seeks rent tax, ban on iron ore exports

Press Trust of India
Bhubaneswar, Nov. 16

Urging immediate ban on export of iron ore, the Orissa Chief Minister, Mr Naveen Patnaik, on Wednesday told the Centre that the State government was ready to provide further information if needed for imposition of a mineral rent resource tax (MRRT) on iron ore.

Mr Patnaik, who has been demanding imposition of rent tax at the rate of 50 per cent on iron ore in view of the 'super normal profits' being made by private mine owners, said, "I understand that the Economic Advisory Council (EAC) has been asked to examine the issue."

"I do hope that the EAC has completed the exercise and given its views to your office," Mr Patnaik told the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, in a letter. "In case any further information is required from the State, we will be happy to provide the same," Mr Patnaik said, adding that the present fiscal and regulatory framework for iron ore was resulting in unjust and vast enrichment of a few mine owners without commensurate benefits to the community at large.

Mr Patnaik also told the Prime Minister that a decision on the imposition of the rent tax, which was in the public interest, should not be delayed any further. The Chief Minister, during his address at the National Development Council on October 22, had also proposed a ban on export of iron ore. The boom in iron ore prices in the last decade has created perverse incentives for mining activities to be carried out in an unregulated matter, he said. "A ban on the export of iron ore should be immediately imposed. This will not only bring down domestic prices of iron ore but also encourage local industries to invest in technologies to utilise the iron ore fines presently being exported, besides ensuring that mining activities are regulated and sustainable," he said.

Stating that ban on export is also necessary as the demand for steel and its production in the country are both expected to grow at an annual rate of 10 per cent, Mr Patnaik said, "There is thus a need for having a long term strategy for conservation of the finite iron ore resources to meet the future requirements of our country."
CBI probes Rs 780-cr iron ore transportation scam

An initial investigation conducted by the Railways revealed that the company caused huge revenue loss to it by making false or misleading declaration about the end use of the iron ore lifted from mining sources.

Official sources said the alleged irregularities were carried out in connivance with certain senior officials of South Eastern Railway (SER) for wrongfully transporting the goods from its Chakradharpur division which were exported through Haldia Port in West Bengal.

It detected that certain industrial units were transporting iron ore through the Chakradharpur Division of SER declaring the material was for domestic consumption or internal use. “Actually the iron ore was being exported through Haldia Port. The investigations initially revealed a loss of revenue of about Rs 50 crore for a period of nine months in the year 2010 by a private company,” a source said without divulging the name of the company.

Later, the scope of investigations was widened to cover three years from 2008-09 to 2010-11.

“The recoverable amount worked out by the Railways in mis-declaration of goods is Rs 749.50 crore,” he said. Officials have got evidence of similar modus operandi being opted by other companies active in mining activities in Jharkhand and Orissa and they are now being separately investigated.

The case was referred to the CBI for an in-depth probe by the Central Vigilance Commission.

“The scam is huge and there is a possibility of involvement of certain railway officials who colluded with certain mining firm owners,” the official said.
Copper slips on Euro zone debt concerns

Reuters
London, Nov. 16

Copper slipped on Wednesday as worries about a worsening economic outlook in the euro zone outweighed supply and demand fundamentals in swaying the direction of metals prices, while buying of bonds by the European Central Bank steadied sentiment.

Three month copper futures on the London Metal Exchange fell by 0.7 per cent to $7,625 a tonne in official rings, down from Tuesday's close at $7,680 a tonne.

The metal has slipped about 3 per cent this month.

The euro bounced from one month lows, lending some support to metals. A softer dollar makes commodities less expensive for holders of other currencies.

Lending fragile support to copper prices was news that striking union workers at Freeport Indonesia's giant Grasberg copper mine are sticking to pay demands for $7.50 an hour, pouring cold water on government claims that a deal is nearing to resolve the country's longest-running mining dispute.

In other metals, zinc was at $1,917.50 ($1,908). Battery material lead was at $2,003 while aluminium was also flat at $2,118.

Nickel was untraded but bid at $17,745 from $17,550, as was tin, bid at at $21,395 ( $21,350).
The Australian PM's proposed nuclear policy would benefit both her country and ours

FOR someone who rode to victory by ridiculing the climate-friendly predilections of her predecessor, the Australian PM Julia Gillard has given everyone a cause for surprise by her moves on the sustainable energy front. She pushed forward a carbon tax, making way for the largest emissions-trading scheme outside the EU in Australia. She has now announced ahead of her party's conference next month that it should revisit a half-century long opposition to uranium exports to countries that haven't signed NPT, to make an exception for India: “As India rises and brings hundreds of millions of people out of poverty, it will need more energy. It is looking to supply 40% of that energy need through nuclear energy, and we are a very big supplier of uranium.” Given how India's economic rise and the Indo-US nuclear deal has transformed diplomatic circumstances across the world, “for us to refuse to budge is all pain with no gain”, she said. Her party is expected to confirm this policy change.

Does India really need Australian uranium today? Well, despite an expansion of domestic mining—a big deposit in Andhra Pradesh was announced in July this year—our nuclear energy programme continues to depend on imports for the bulk of its supplies. Our earlier import crunch has obviously been eased by the historic deal with the US, helping the NPCIL plant load factor increase by 10% and its electricity generation record an increase of 41% last year. And since 2008, India has been on a uranium-imports-agreements-signing spree with everyone from France, Russia and Kazakhstan to Namibia, Tajikistan and Mongolia. Fukushima and its fallout have softened supply anyway. But energy is obviously a long game; you plan today not only for tomorrow but for the next half century when demand may pick up again. This is why India has kept lobbying with Australia for loosening up its exports sanctions. As for Australian self-interest, India is already its fourth biggest export market and likely to just move upwards. Those really supporting the Gillard move today are the likes of Paul Kelly of The Australian, who argues George Bush's setting up a new US-India partnership will be more significant for the coming century than his Iraq war policy.
Iron ore exports fall 25% during April-Oct

fe Bureau

New Delhi, Nov 16: The country's iron ore exports have fallen over 25% to 35.38 million tonne (mt) during April-October from 47.27 mt in the same period last year. According to the data released by the Federation of Indian Minerals Industries (FIIM), iron ore exports have come down 23% at 4.55 mt in October as against 6.86 mt in the same month a year before. "The fall in (iron ore) exports is due to a combination of factors like ban on mining in Karnataka, restriction on truck movements and truckers' strike," said R K Sharma, secretary general, FIIM.

Beside the ban in Karnataka, the falling global prices of iron ore have also taken a toll on iron ore exports. Sharma said there was no chance that the exports would pick up as other states such as Goa and Orissa too were restricting the movement of iron ore out of the country. "So the outlook for the remaining period of the (fiscal) year is bleak for the exporters," he said.