Mines ministry cracks whip on leaseholders

New Delhi: Cracking down on companies holding leases for large tracts of land without giving a comprehensive account of their reserves, the mining ministry last month issued a notification asking all companies granted leases before 2003 to undertake prospecting as per the norms set by the ministry and give reports about their holdings to the government in a time-bound manner. There have been allegations about companies holding captive mines for years and not undertaking mining which causes revenue loss to the government because the areas were leased out for a pittance many years ago while companies hope to make a killing when market prices rise.
अवैध बालू खनन में
दर्जनों वाहन पकड़े

नोएडा, (सीबीआई): हिंदुन नगरपालिका नदी के तट पर लगातार अवैध रूप से बालू की खुदाई की जाती है जिसे गहरे बागों में एकेलाइंग में बक्साई की जाती है। इसके पीछे भू-पानियाँ का माफियादेवी का हामिद है। प्रशासन को दशखंड मिल रहे हैं। प्रकार की बालूकारों के चलते बीती रात कई स्थानों पर जापेयारों की गई जबमें कई बालू से लदे वाहनों को पकड़ा गया है।

एसडीएम सदर विशाल सिंह ने इस संबंध में अधिकारी जानकारी देते हुए बताया कि जिला प्रशासन द्वारा अवैध बालू खनन करने वालों पर हिंजा का जा रहा है। इसी ग्राम में हो चैन ने पुलिस के साथ संयुक्त रूप से टीम बनाकर हिंजा व बालूबालू नदी के तट पर अवैध बालू खनन करने के मामले में 20 ट्रक, 6 ट्रैक्टर रहा है।
अधिक खानन में दो दर्जन से अधिक वाहन जब्त

नोएडा. नोएडा-ग्य़र्ज़ नोएडा क्षेत्र के अभियुक्त क्षेत्र की भूमि तथा चुपचाप ग्रामों के बिना उपलब्ध के बिना उदाहरण तकरार आए। नोएडा अभियुक्त के तहत सरकार ने एसडीएम सदर ने जानबूझकर करते हुए 20 ट्रक, 6 ट्रेक्टर व एक जेटीबी भोजन को सजा कर दिया है। नोएडा सदर के अदेश पर कोर्टसा के सेक्टर 39 में अधिक खानन करने वाले अत्यधिक तंगी के लिए नस्लता दर्ज कर दिया गया है। निवास प्रशासन द्वारा लगातार इस कार्रवाई को अंदाज माना जाएगा। वाहन वापसी ने पश्चिम अरुणाचल प्रदेश में भारी अधिकारियों का बाजार चौड़ा बनाया जाएगा। नोएडा के सदर विभाग में निवास करने के लिए वाहन को बीजात मिल रही थी। जिसके वाद प्रशासन ने डीप कार के लिए स्वीकार दे दिया। सरकार को ज्ञान खानन के लिए खानन प्रशासन द्वारा अभियंता बनाया गया। इससे पश्चिम अरुणाचल प्रदेश के संयुक्त दीन ने पिस्ता ट्रक में प्रतिक्रिया दिया। अभियंता द्वारा अभियंता ने वाहन खानन के लिए स्वीकार किया। अब अभियंता दो ट्रक व एक ड्रेक्टर को नस्लता दर्ज कर दिया। इसके वाद के पश्चिम नोएडा ने मदद के लिए अधिक खानन कर रहे दो ट्रक व एक ड्रेक्टर को नस्लता दर्ज कर दिया।
Gujarat takes action on late RTI activist’s PIL

AHMEDABAD: A public interest litigation (PIL) filed by late RTI activist Amit Jadwa, who was murdered near Gujarat high court last year, has forced the state authorities to initiate measures to rein in on illegal mining activities in the state.

In his petition, Jadwa had alleged rampant illegal mining was being carried out thanks to nexus between politicians of ruling party, mining mafias and the government officials.
20 TRUCKS, 6 TRACTORS SEIZED OVER ILLEGAL MINING

HT Correspondent
http://www.hindustantimes.com

NOIDA: The district administration on Saturday seized 20 trucks and six tractors over illegal mining.

Vehicle owners alleged that officials damaged the front glass and punctured the tyres too. They said that they only had the right to levy a fine.

Sub-divisional magistrate Vishal Singh said, “We only deflated their tyres to seize the vehicles. The glass may have been damaged by them to level charges against officials so that they can force officials to release their vehicles.”

“From Friday night till Saturday morning, a drive against illegal mining was launched. Twenty trucks, six tractor trolleys and one JCB machine was held,” said Singh.

“Besides mining from the Yamuna embankment area, they also violated the Motor Vehicles Act by overkilling and driving at a high speed. Such vehicles have caused several fatal accidents in the city,” he added.

“Such drivers even assault policemen when they signal them to stop. Last year, one such truck hit a police van and injured the policemen.”
2nd NMDC plant in Chhattisgarh
MUMBAI, 22 JAN: State-run National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC) today said it plans to set up its second steel plant in Chhattisgarh with a capacity of two million ton per annum. The country's largest iron ore miner in the public sector plans to set up the integrated steel plant in a joint venture (JV) at an investment of around Rs 10,000 crore. “We will set up our second steel plant in Chhattisgarh with a capacity of two million ton per annum. We will announce the JV partner by the end of this fiscal,” NMDC's chairman and managing director, Mr Rana Som, told reporters here. However, Mr Som, did not reveal the exact location and time-frame for the construction of the steel plant. pti
NMDC, TATAS IN TALKS TO SET UP STEEL PLANT

This will be NMDC’s second plant in Chhattisgarh

SHUBHASISH
Mumbai, 22 January

NMDC Ltd has decided to set up its second steel plant in Chhattisgarh and is in talks with two companies to form a joint venture. One of them is Tata Steel.

“We have decided to set up a two-million-tonne steel plant in Chhattisgarh, apart from the three-million-tonne plant that we are working on,” Chairman and Managing Director Rana Som said on a sideline of an industry conference in Mumbai.

He refused to name the partner. “I am not going to announce the name right now. All I can say is that it is a two-million-tonne steel plant and will be set up in a joint venture.”

Two persons in know of the development confirmed that NMDC was in talks with two companies. One official said, “Tata Steel is one of the two companies.”

Tata Steel did not respond to email queries.

NMDC and Tata Steel had signed a memorandum of association in January last year, which, apart from other things, said the two would build steel plants together. Tata Steel, after signing the agreement, said, “Both NMDC and Tata Steel have agreed to co-operate to explore possibilities of entering into joint ventures for the purpose of acquisition, exploration and development of mines, extraction and processing of minerals, setting up integrated steel plants and any other business which is of mutual interest to both.”

“I am confident that we will be able to make the announcement regarding the details, including the partner, during the current financial year,” Som said.

The estimated cost of the plant will be ₹10,000 crore.

The under-construction plant is expected to come on-stream by the end of 2013 or early 2014. NMDC is not looking to raise debt for this. “We haven’t decided as yet as we have enough cash. We are currently working out the amount of debt we will have to raise, if any, and its benefits,” Som said.

NMDC will get additional iron ore mines for its two Chhattisgarh steel plants as well as the one it is building in Karnataka. The company has already signed a deal with Severstal of Russia to set up a five-million-tonne steel plant in Karnataka.

“We have also signed an agreement with Severstal which says that the coking coal for the Karnataka plant will be supplied by it completely at a discounted price,” he said.

Som said Severstal had been allotted a coking coal mine by the Russian government and NMDC’s entire requirement would be met from there. “It should be for the Chhattisgarh plant also, but that hasn’t been finalised yet,” he said.
The Asian Age, Delhi
Sunday, 23rd January 2011, Page: 5

Through the door

- The PM should have inducted some heavyweights from the Dalit or Rajput communities if the Congress wants to give a tough fight to the BSP and the Samajwadi Party in next year's state Assembly polls. But even J.V. Prasad Verma failed to get his due and was demoted with the PM making him MoS (independent charge) from Cabinet rank. Beni Prasad is the second leader after Srikant Jena who got demoted. Both were Cabinet rank ministers in the United Front governments headed by H.D. Deve Gowda and Inder Kumar Gujral during 1996 to 1998. They were in the Janata Parivar.

- The Congress now has two Muslim ministers with Cabinet rank. They are Ghulam Nabi Azad and Salman Khursheed but they are not seen as heavyweights in their own community for different reasons. They cannot be the party's minority face in Muslim dominated Assam, West Bengal, Bihar and even in Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir falls under a different category, insiders said. Uttar Pradesh has two Cabinet rank ministers — Sriprakash Jaiswal and Salman Khursheed — one MoS (independent charge) Beni Prasad Verma and three MoS Jitin Prasada, R.P.N Singh and Pradesh Jain. But Andhra Pradesh, the only major state in the country which has been giving strength to the Congress in the Lok Sabha and the Assembly as well, has only one minister with a Cabinet rank. He is S. Jaipal Reddy. The rest: A. Sai Pratap, M.M. Pallam Raju, D. Purandeswari and Panabaka Lakshmi are MoS.

- S. Jaipal Reddy's new portfolio — petroleum and natural gas — has surprised many in political circles considering his strong background in politics. This is because the ministry has always been given to those who enjoy the confidence of the all-powerful corporate sector. Mr Reddy says he is a Mandalite. It will be interesting to see whether he will be successful in ensuring reservation for the OBCs in this sector and oil companies.
West Bengal, Bihar and even in Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir falls under a different category, insiders said. Uttar Pradesh has two Cabinet rank ministers — Sripaksha Jaiswal and Salman Khushed — one MoS (Independent charge) Beni Prasad Verma and three MoS Jitin Prasada, R.P.N Singh and Pradehs Jain. But Andhra Pradesh, the only major state in the country which has been giving strength to the Congress in the Lok Sabha and the Assembly as well, has only one minister with a Cabinet rank. He is S. Jaipal Reddy. The rest: A. Sai Pratap, M.M. Pallam Raju, D. Purandeshwari and Panabaka Lakshmi are MoSs.

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• Chhattisgarh, known for Naxal activities, has been left out while Goa and Manipur continue to be unrepresented.

• Former Maharashtra chief minister Vikasa Rao Deshmukh who was in two minds over whether to remain in Delhi or go back to state politics after getting a lightweight ministry, was elevated to the key rural development and panchayat raj ministry. He has a rural background and started his political career as a sarpanch in Latur district. He can get a profile if he delivers. The ministry has over ₹30,000 crore budget. His performance would be under watch inside and outside Parliament.

OUT OF THE RECKONING

• M.S. Gill (statistics and programme implementation), Virbhadra Singh (micro, small and medium enterprises), Kamal Nath (urban development), Murl Deora (corporate affairs) got less important ministries. B.K. Handique lost mines but retained development of north-eastern region portfolio.

• The impact of Nira Radia tapes is also seen in this exercise as the Prime Minister did not promote those who figured in it.

• Not touched were cabinet rank ministers from Karnataka by retaining portfolios of S.M. Krishna, Veerappa Moily, Mallikarjun Kharge and K.H. Muniyappa. Barring the NCP, no ally in the UPA had shown any interest in this exercise. The Trinamul Congress led by Mamata Banerjee stayed away after realising that the induction of one member of the party would only intensify factional fighting ahead of the West Bengal polls.

• The DMK has been on the defensive ever since the 2G spectrum allocation emerged as the biggest since independence and the Nira Radia tapes exposed the nexus between the party and the corporate lobbyists.
First the buzz. Then the letdown. A long-awaited reshuffle of the Cabinet by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh may have been slammed by the Opposition as a damp squib in its inability to meet raised expectations. Curiously, within the Congress, while it left the top guard untouched, the announcement that this reshuffle would be followed by another post-Budget, caused disquiet over whether there would be enough time for ministers to showcase progress in a limited five-month period. On the ever-changing political chessboard, the king has moved his pawns into place in tandem with the queen and his bishops ahead of the challenge ahead — harnessing India’s 9% growth for the common good. It’s now up to the Prime Minister to make sure his knights are up to the challenge of being both gnat and elephant in the electoral sea, three years from now. Was this check-mate or an opening move, only time will tell.
The Asian Age, Delhi
Sunday, 23rd January 2011, Page: 5

VENKATESH KESARI

The much-awaited cabinet reshuffle carried out by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's Cabinet office in the UPA-II, dubbed the non-event of 2011, proves that much may in the end, deliver little. There were 37 changes including inducements, elevations and change of portfolios but much had been said of his bold resolve to weed out the non-performing ministers, bring in technocrats and crack the whip. Finally though, the deck was shuffled, but no ministers were dropped.

The Prime Minister's remark that "This is a minor reshuffle, after the Budget session of parliament, we will undertake a more expansive exercise gauging the impression that the government may have only been going through the motions. As for the message to his Cabinet team, especially those who got better portfolios, many within the Congress said that being there only for a couple of months — as per the remarks made at the Rashtrapati Bhavan soon after the swearing in ceremony on January 15 — raised questions as to why the exercise was undertaken in the first place.

Some Congress leaders ask: "He reallocated some important ministries. Was he acting under pressure?" If the minister who got key portfolios in this exercise did not get enough time, how will they perform.

The spin doctors of the establishment in the NDA must have moved swiftly to quell doubts saying the Prime Minister was in consultation with his civil and military advisors. In fact, the buzz is that the day reshuffle was carried out and was immediately criticized by the Opposition as a mark of lacklustre, the spin doctors said the Prime Minister’s message was loud and clear — perform or perish. And that he acted against crony capitalism. But critics have raised several questions. They ask why Dr. Singh undertook this exercise at all, if he did not want to remove deadwood, non-performing ministers and bring in talent in his cabinet. They say that the Prime Minister played safe as he did not want to antagonise at a time when the government is under siege in the wake of several scams and was going to be for a primetime at the time when the government is under siege in the wake of several scams and was going to be.

But others within the Congress also ask: "How can you expect these ministers, who have been shuffled around to perform their new portfolios in four months?" The ministers will not be able to settle down to their new assignments. They cannot be sure that they will remain in their present positions for long. Most of them could well become lose interest or stay palled at the perceived sausages.

Dr. M.S. Gill may be inconsequential. But, shunted out of the Sports and Youth Affairs ministry, he is not a happy man. Reverting to his old portfolio, will the Prime Minister retain all the tired faces as also several notorious ones.

A party functionary conceded that: "We (government) have been lacking on the financial, floor and management. The 2G, Aarogya swam has already damaged the image, Bofors' ghost resurrected and now the issue of black money and bank accounts in foreign countries made the ruling front on the defensive. The Cabinet reshuffle was the idea of the Prime Minister which he had shared with a select group of editors. He had called in New Delhi a few months back for an informal meeting. There he told them that he wanted to bring in young people in his Cabinet. Next, induct Beni Prasad Verma, Ashwini Kumar and K.C. Venugopal. But the Cabinet reshuffle is to continue holding additional charges. Aboobucker continues.

Kamal Nath's claim that he does not have any involvement in the Congress party in the wake of the elections is a farce. Under the Congress, top leaders in the party were in consultation with the prime minister. His refusal to touch top ministries such as finance, home, defence, external affairs and railways made a mockery of his disassociation. The fact that the NDA regime, under the leadership of Baburam Bhattawary, initiated the Golden Quadral project to link the four corners of the country by expressways, the ministry has acquired considerable importance. Murli Deora, sources close to Petroleum Ministry, told that the Prime Minister wanted to send a tough signal. He was planning to tell the bankers to get down on scam-tainted, inefficient ministers.

But at the end of the day, he was not allowed to do so," a Congress functionary claimed. And perhaps, sensing the disapproval, the Prime Ministry retained all the tired faces as also several notorious ones. Sources in the PMO, also argue that the PM has been seriously thinking of making major changes for some time. He has been holding meetings with the Prime Minister high command, sending signals to the media and sounding out all the allies. The names of technocrats were floated to test the waters. It was claimed that the Prime Minister was "perhaps restrained by the party, which brought up coalition compulsions and the forthcoming assembly elections to "leave the PM seat with little option but to maintain the status quo," sources said.

Dr. Manmohan Singh, however, may have undertaken this exercise at a time when his government and the party’s graph started to plummet, vis-a-vis its image and its performance. And while a divided Opposition works to the advantage of the government only for a while, even the Congress’ strategy to hold the allies responsible for the non-performance would only widen the rift between the party and the partners in the UPA. Further, how greater clarity on the political scenario among the allies, the Congress say they will wait and watch for the test — poll results of West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Kerala and Puducherry.

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T he fertility of the exercise can be seen from the Quad and DMK cabinet chairperson Stalin by sending a signal to UP. But one should also look at the electoral record of the Congress during the tenure of its chief minister MoS for the party. A Congress leader pointed out. However, as far as Andhra Pradesh is concerned there has been an upward movement for Jhalak Reddy, also known for his clean image. He got the high profile petroleum ministry, similar with electing us for approaching, in Kerala, Vayalar Ravi gets to handle two civil aviation minister. Another entry from Kerala is K.V. Thomas in the food and public distribution ministry. Except the Quad, the BJP is having a free run and the DMK is its bête noir. In Bihar, the BJP has taken the opportunity to flay the Prime Minister for the "cosmetic exercising." The BJP spokesperson Shahnawaz Hussain attacked the Prime Minister by claiming that the reshuffle "lacks any political message or signal." He said. "From one building, some of his ministers would now go to another building. It clearly allowed PM Manmohan Singh to not only effect a reshuffle of his cabinet by biting above pressure."
Gujarat govt adopts strict measures

Jan 22: After a PIL filed by late RTI activist Amit Jethwa exposed the Gujarat government's lenient approach towards illegal mining activities in the state, the authorities have now started a series of measures to stop the illegal mining of minerals across the state. It may be noted that Jethwa was murdered in July 2010 near the Gujarat high court when he was fighting powerful mining mafia who had created nexus with state government officials and politicians. In an affidavit and action taken report submitted before a division bench headed by Chief Justice S.J. Mukhopadhaya, principal secretary of industries and mines M. Sahu informed the court of various measures the authorities have undertaken after being upbraided by the court.

The government has amended provisions of Gujarat Mineral (Prevention of Illegal Mining, Transportation and Storage) Rules, 2005 and provision of suspension of royalty pass/delivery challans was introduced in cases of violation or breach of any lease deed conditions of dues pending, the bench was told.

It was further submitted that the government will hold police officers, revenue officers and geology and mining officers accountable and liable for negligence towards their official duty so far as detection of illegal mining activities in the state is concerned. The government has recently passed a resolution and a state/district level task force has been constituted to check illegal mining. “All the pending lease applications will be disposed off and new leases will be granted with all transparency,” the bench was told.
ICVL board postpones Riversdale decision to Jan 27

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 22

INTERNATIONAL Coal Ventures Ltd — a consortium of five state-run companies — today could not arrive at any decision on a possible bid for Australian entity Riversdale, which has received a bid from Rio Tinto.

ICVL board had convened a meeting today in Kolkata to take a decision on possible bidding for Africa-focused miner in which Tata Steel has 24.4 per cent stake and Rio Tinto has already put in a bid worth 3.9 billion Australian dollar to buy it.

“We discussed the issue but could not arrive at any decision. We have convened another meeting on January 27 in Delhi to finalise the issue,” Steel Authority of India, Chairman C S Verma who also heads ICVL board told PTI over phone.

ICVL, a consortium of SAIL, CIL, NMDC, RINL and NTPC, formed for mining assets' acquisition had appointed Citigroup for due-diligence on the issue and has already submitted its report to it.

Meanwhile, Tata Steel is likely to remain invested in Riversdale, its Group CFO Koushik Chatterjee said.
लखीमपुर में गढ़े से निकले तरल पदार्थ से दिया जला रहे लोग

लखीमपुर झांसी, 22 जनवरी। तहसील लखीमपुर की जेनरल प्रखंड पर लखीमपुर में एक गढ़े से ज्यादातर तरल पदार्थ निकल रहा है। हिलाप्रा प्रशासन भी इस तरल पदार्थ की पुष्टि की है।

इस तरल पदार्थ से लोग दिया जला रहे हैं। क्षेत्र की कारक मंज़ूरियत उपरांत एवं सड़क के किनारे के गढ़े से फिकनाइयुक्त धाराग्रीय जल निकल रहा है। जमीन में पेट्रोलियम पदार्थ होने के कारण भी।

अभी इस बारे में पुराना तीर पर कुछ नहीं पता।

लेकिन आसपास के कई गांवों के लोग इस तरल पदार्थ को बरा तरा जा रहे हैं। इसी दिन में केंद्रित्तन की तरह इलेमेनल कर रहे हैं।

स्थानीय जानकारों ने बताया कि तीन दिन पहले कुछ गोविण्ड ने जमीन के गढ़ों में धरे पनी के कारण फिकनाइयुक्त पदार्थ को परत तैरते देखा। आसपास की पास पर भी तेलगु जलाए दिखा। लोगों ने उसे धुककर और सुपरि प्रभाव दिखा। लोगों ने उसे धूल के सजने के बाकी भी। इसके बाद जलकर देखा गया तो पेट्रोलियम पदार्थ की तरह जलने लगा। किसका था। जैसे लोगों

की स्टार निकल पड़ी हो।
Silver recovers on demand, gold gains

Press Trust of India
Mumbai, Jan. 22

Silver prices recovered moderately on the bullion market on Saturday on fresh buying by stockists as well as industrial offtake despite bearish trend at the International markets,

Gold moved up on good local buying interest.

Silver ready (.999 fineness) firmed up by Rs 170 a kg and closed at Rs 43,435.

Standard gold (99.5 per cent purity) edged up by Rs 20 for 10 gm and settled at Rs 20,060. Pure gold (99.9 per cent purity) also looked up by a similar margin to Rs 20,160 for 10 gm.

Chennai: Bar silver: Rs 42,515; retail silver: Rs 45.50; standard gold: Rs 20,125; retail ornament gold (22 carat a gm): Rs 1,872.

Kolkata: Silver ready: Rs 42,750; gold ready: Rs 20,375.
अवैध खनन जारी

गुडगांव, 22 जनवरी (अजनसटा)। अंतर्राष्ट्रीय अंतरंगत फायरिंग पर अवैध खनन की चेतावनी आयोजन भोजन की प्रकाशन कार्यक्रम जारी की गई है। इसके अतिरिक्त, आईटीआई की दर्जा पर अवैध खनन की चेतावनी भी जारी की गई है।

अवैध खनन का जारी रखने का मामला ने राजस्थान ने निर्देशित है। गुडगांव-पूरलादों फांसी दर्ज करने से चला चल रहा है। सरकार ने इसका देरी करने और अवैध साधन दबाव का काम नियंत्रित है।

सरकार ने इसका देरी करने और अवैध साधन दबाव का काम नियंत्रित है।

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SUNDAY GUPSHUP
HARI SHANKAR VYAS

What has Man done?

Last week I had asked to what extent would Manmohan Singh exercise his power. We got the answer on January 19. Singh has cleansed up the cards. He’s not been able to either take Montek Singh Ahluwalia into his cabinet, nor has he been able to reshuffle the senior Ministers. Can inflation, which couldn’t be checked by Pranab Mukherjee be controlled by E Sreedharan? Likewise, can it be argued that the cabinet reshuffle of January 5 was a success? The Prime Minister is responsible for the situation. This fact proves that the Government has become a lame duck. Won’t the demoted Ministers be dissatisfied and fight against the decision? The PM has neither given a message that the reshuffle was based on performance, nor has it been argued that the Prime Minister has not taken the advice of the cabinet to keep the same in mind. But Verma is senior to Sushma Swaraj and Sri Prakash Javwal have been included in the cabinet keeping in mind the UP elections. Even Bihari Prasad Verma has been made Minister keeping the same in mind. But Verma is senior to Sushma Swaraj and Sushma Swaraj. Javwal was a minister in the Gulati and Devgouda cabinet. It is a suicidal step for Congress to put him at a junior level to Sushma Swaraj.

HOT FAVOURITES

While there is a feeling of the reshuffled Cabinet being a successful, able and durable team, some Ministers can also be considered favorites. SM Krishna has an image of being an ineffective Minister. But Singh has made his decision. When there was a deadlock between handling over MEA either to Chidambaram or reshuffling her ministry. CP Joshi too has earned a durable and honest profile. In place of Karmacharya, CP Joshi has been given the ministry of railways, transport and, that is not a small thing. This means that the image of the government is working and honest in paying. It’s also a fact that all three Brahmins — Anand Sharma, Jairam Ramesh and CP Joshi — have a good rapport with Rahul Gandhi and have also made a strong hold in the government. In the list of favorites of Singh, Ashok Chavan comes just after Sibal. Prakash, the PM managed to get a Rajya Sabha ticket for Ashok Chavan, and then he was sent to the house despite the requests of the members of Lok Sabha, Ambika Soni and MS Gill. On the one hand, the graph of Cabinet ministers like Kamal Nath and Veerappa Moily has gone down, on the other hand, the Roadways Minister, Subodh Kant Shukla, SP Jyotlakshmi, Shashi Tharoor, Prithviraj Chavan, Ajay Maken, Pranab Mukherjee, Shashi Tharoor, Prithviraj Chavan, Ajay Maken, Pranab Mukherjee, Shashi Tharoor, Prithviraj Chavan, Ajay Maken, Pranab Mukherjee, Shashi Tharoor, Prithviraj Chavan, Ajay Maken, Pranab Mukherjee, Shashi Tharoor, Prithviraj Chavan, Ajay Maken, Pranab Mukherjee, Shashi Tharoor, Prithviraj Chavan, Ajay Maken, Pranab Mukherjee, Shashi Tharoor, Prithviraj Chavan, Ajay Maken, Pranab Mukherjee, Shashi Tharoor, Prithviraj Chavan, Ajay Maken, Pranab Mukherjee, Shashi Tharoor, Prithviraj Chavan, Ajay Maken, Pranab Mukherjee, Shashi Tharoor, Prithviraj Chavan, Ajay Maken, Pranab Mukherjee, Shashi Tharoor.

IT’S A BATTLEGROUND

The Manmohan Singh government has become a wrestling ring of Ministers. Every senior Congress Minister is trying to pin down the other one. No one believes the other one. The PM was concerned for his own and the government’s image and tried to do something for betterment, but obstacles were thrown before him. Dr Singh too did something unexpected. He wanted to give the Finance Ministry to Manmohan Singh Ahluwalia. In Singhs blueprint, the four top ministries were to be affected. Ministers were to be changed. A formula had been devised to put Chidambaram at MEA, Pranab Mukherjee at MHA, Montek Singh Ahluwalia at the Finance Ministry and SM Krishna in the Planning Commission. Since objection was raised on Ahluwalia’s name, C Rangarajan was suggested as an alternative. There was also an apprehension of a sabotage by senior Ministers. In a nutshell, it can be said that it does not matter whatever image the trio of Manmohan Singh, Pranab and Chidambaram have among people, inside the Government there is a sense of insecurity with these three. This reason is the reason of the last three months. The Nitish Kumar, inflation, JPC and corporate fights have created doubts between the Cabinet and Congress high command. This doubt has taken an ugly shape and they are trying to pin down the other.

SAVING THE CHAIR

CPM general secretary Prakash Karat is putting all his efforts to save his chair. He and his near ones know it well that communists might do well in WB and Kerala are going to be elected. Assembly elections are scheduled in both the States in April and May and CPM might face defeat in both the States. Party congress is scheduled just after the election result of Bengal and Kerala, and a new general secretary would be elected. Karat wants one more tenure for himself. But due to bad performance of the party probably it would not be possible. That is why before the election Karat is trying to prove that State units of the party are not good. Karat’s loyal cadre from Kerala & Ramchandra Paliwal has prepared a document of reforms. He has raised various questions on the State units of WB and Kerala in this document. According to a member of the CPM central committee, this document gives a clean chit to Karat for his wrong decisions in the polls. After defeat in Lok Sabha election, Karat faced criticism from all sides. Party leaders said that it was wrong to break ties with Congress. Now the close ones of Karat are saying that if the poor performance in Lok Sabha election was linked with wrong policies of Karat, then bad performance in the States should be linked to the poor work of State units. Karat has also criticized various policies of the Bengal Government several times.

have surfaced that the real reshuffle would happen after the budget session. This is sure to invite the ire of those in important ministries. There will be uncertainty and tussle in the Government.

DEMONETED

In the reshuffle, many second-rung Ministers have been given a demotion. This is probably the first time that such a thing has happened at the Centre. People think that even though the Ministers were incapable, the PM was not able to remove them. But Anand Sharma, Singh preferred to maintain status quo, Pranab, Chidambaram and AK Antony are star Ministers. Kapil Sibal is Singh’s favorite. The PM hopes to come out clean of the telecom scandal with the help of Sibal. Jairam Ramesh and Anand Sharma have proved themselves as effective Ministers and have a strong hold. There was a lot of speculation that the portfolio of Ramesh could be changed, but nothing happened. Ambika Soni too can be said to be durable because nobody talked about
MINING BILL TO ENSURE 26% PROFIT SHARE FOR LOCALS

PRITI BAJAJ | NEW DELHI

The mining sector in India is flourishing but it continues to keep the traditional stakeholders at bay. However, in an effort to offer the local people a fair deal, the new draft Mining and Minerals Development and Regulation Bill likely to be passed this year is expected to contain a clause that would require miners to share 26 per cent of their profit with the local population. It is also likely that provisions on labour and operational conditions would be included as well. Such moves are commendable since they would impact sustainable development imperatives in the industry. But the question remains, will the goodies trickle down to the target groups?

Undoubtedly, the mining sector owes a lot to the local population. The domestic miners have been minting money from the soaring commodity prices, specially over the last five years, with China coming up as a major importer of raw materials. During the last decade, some of the global players in mining have also gained ground but not much has been done either for the preservation of the environment or for the upliftment of the displaced masses.

Perhaps the policymakers can take a cue from the Alaskan Oil Fund model or countries such as Norway and Saudi Arabia, which transfer a share of their petroleum revenue into professionally managed Sovereign Wealth Funds (SWFs), to be used for specific purposes. However, the incomes from most well-managed SWFs can be utilised only after a legislative approval. We can aim for the same model in mining sector as well, where a part of the profit can be used for public welfare.

The Indian miners have been enjoying a privileged existence for quite some years now but analysts predict there are major challenges ahead considering the fact that illegal mining is rampant all over the country. Though India is the fourth largest producer of iron ore, with more than 50 per cent of the output being exported, this figure is expected to slump as the government may try to control illegal mining in Karnataka and Orissa.

Experts point out that the sector should embrace more transparent mechanisms in the sector. It should be statutorily mandated that the allotment of mines are done only after a competitive bidding process.

Policymakers need to focus on transparency and simplicity in allocation process and providing economic incentive for traditional stakeholders. In the absence of monetary benefits from local mines, the violent movements such as Maoist insurgency have gained passive support. At the same time, a lot of environmental damage can be saved by simplifying the convoluted route to obtaining licenses which has encouraged illegal mining and overshooting the permitted levels.
Ahmedabad: A public interest litigation (PIL) filed by late RTI activist Amit Jethwa, who was murdered near Gujarat high court last year, has forced the state authorities to initiate measures to rein in on illegal mining activities in the state. In his petition, Jethwa had alleged rampant illegal mining was being carried out thanks to nexus between politicians of ruling party, mining mafia and the government officials.