Mines violated green norms, must pay: Report to SC

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Expressing concern that a large number of mines in Bellary district have violated green norms and mining conditions, a study ordered by the Supreme Court has recommended “punitive actions against the defaulting mine owners by mandating them to pay for the damages”.

Accusing mine owners of flouting norms, the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE) has suggested that the quantum of iron ore to be mined from the area should be annually capped as the mineral is a finite resource.

**BELLARY MINING**

On a directive of the apex court on August 5, the ICFRE conducted a macro Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) study on Bellary. In its report submitted to the court recently, the Institute said the flora and fauna of the district have been severely impacted while the environment has sustained significant damage. The damage has been compounded as the small miners resorted to blatant and unscientific mining operations.

It said a large number of mines in the district have not only violated the environment clearance norms and approvals granted by the Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM), but have also encroached upon the adjacent lands illegally and in the process damaged the environment. “To mitigate the damage, it is now necessary to take stringent punitive actions against the mines and the defaulting mine owners should be asked to pay for the damage caused to the environment caused due to unscientific mining,” the ICFRE said.

Pointing out that the IBM had accorded approval for increase in the quantity of iron that could be mined, the institute reminded the mining regulator that it has to bear in mind that the mineral is a finite resource and the issue of “inter-generation equity” has to be borne in mind while giving its consent to mining.
Eco warriors protest against coal mining

MUMBAI: Virtual citizenship and passports of a make believe ‘Republic of Junglistar’ were distributed at the historic Azad Maidan on Tuesday, by eco-warriors, in a bid to spread awareness about the destruction of forests and bio-diversity due to unrestrained and rampant coal mining.

The eco warriors belonged to the Greenpeace organisation. The activists, protesting against the wanton annihilation of forests and its inhabitants, said that the mobilisation drive against coal mining in the central Indian states and eastern Maharashtra would take place simultaneously in Mumbai, Delhi and Chennai this week.

“Next week we will be focusing on Bangalore and Chandrapur. Our main aim is to garner support from the people, not through any coercion, but by presenting irrefutable stark facts,” said one of the activists.

Greenpeace Public Engagement Campaigner Deven Dignal said “Coal India Ltd has 200,000 hectares of land out of which 58,000 hectares is forest land. It is surprising that despite this ministry continues to harp that forest clearances are hampering power generation.

To top that, the ministry’s attempt to get more land for mining is nothing but land grab.

Gobbling forests
The gobbling up of the forests will not just rupture the flora-fauna, but will also snuff out lives of the varied tribal communities who have been living in harmony with nature for thousands of years.”

Hozefa Merchant, another eco-activist added that since the year 2007, approximately 26,000 hectares of forest land has been diverted for coal mining and “it is surprising that the Indian government does not want to explore alternate sources of energy which are cleaner as well as sustainable.”

As he detailed the mobilisation drive, Merchant said that the first passport of the ‘Republic of Junglistar’, was presented to the first citizen of India, President Pratibha Devi Singh Patil, by children on Children’s Day.
Pro-mining Goa protesters clash with cops

PANAJI: Accelerating a high-pitched campaign against a possible ban on iron ore exports from Goa, pro-mining protesters clashed with the police here on Tuesday.

Nearly 100 persons were detained after a mild lathi-charge, the police said.

The cash rich mining lobby had threatened a Goa bandh on Tuesday, but they barely managed a traffic disruption in Panaji as a few hundreds, mostly those employed in barges, trucks and hired labour, converged at the Azad Maidan where they clashed with the police.

The Mandovi channel was also blocked by barges for a few hours earlier in the day.

The mining lobby has put out a very visible adverstorial campaign in the local media over the past few weeks, challenging CM Digambar Kamat to take up their case.

A front-page advertisement on Tuesday said the “families of truck owners, barge owners, machinery owners and its dependents will starve if the mining industry is shut down for various reasons solely attributable to defunct government” (sic).

It said the state government had been insensitive to its crisis “inspite of being made aware of the situation”.

Kamat told Deccan Herald he agreed with the assessment of iron ore exporters that a ban would lead to a collapse of the state’s economy.

DH News Service
Report warns of coal mining threat to Maharashtra tigers

Pioneer News Service NEW DELHI

Coal mining poses a serious threat to tigers in Chandrapur region of Maharashtra near the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) and must be reined in, says a report by the Fact Finding Mission of Greenpeace India.

The mission consisting of wildlife experts Praveen Bhargav and Biswajit Mohanty and environmental lawyer Rahul Choudhary says no new mines should be given forest clearance in the region and further expansion of operational mines in tiger habitat be stopped.

They have also warned that TATR risks being completely cut off from surrounding forests by mines and dams, and that the ecological impact will be irreversible and cannot be compensated by afforestation.

Stressing on a fundamental shift in policy towards a scientific landscape approach, the report noted that the way forward is to focus on minimising fragmentation of large blocks of contiguous forests instead of the present emphasis on forest density and measuring area lost.

Pointing to the Durgapur Deep Extension coal mine, the report said that despite scientific evidence of a valuable source population of tigers in the Tadoba landscape, it is shocking to find that this data has been glossed over and willfully suppressed in the environment impact assessment report for the proposed. These are clear grounds for rejection of the project,” said Praveen Bhargav, one of the members.
Copper futures retreat on sour economic data

Dow Jones

Nov. 23

Copper futures fell on Wednesday amid pressure from a stronger dollar and downbeat economic data from the US and China.

The most actively traded contract, for December delivery, was recently down 6.65 cents, or 2 per cent, at $3.2665 a pound on the Comex division of the New York Mercantile Exchange.

"With China being the major source of expected metal demand, a slowing manufacturing sector would reduce use of the metals and thus lead to lower prices," traders at RBC Capital Markets said in a note to clients.

Copper futures faced added pressure from a stronger dollar.

The ICE Dollar Index was recently up 0.7 per cent at 78.786.

Copper is priced in dollars and appears more expensive to investors who use other currencies when the dollar strengthens.

Meanwhile, the International Copper Study Group said the global copper market faced a shortfall of 45,000 tonnes in August as strong Chinese consumption offset seasonally weak demand in other regions.

The ICSG estimated a copper production shortfall of 161,000 tonnes over the first eight months of the year, down from a deficit of 339,000 tonnes in the same period last year.
Mine owner charges Rajagopal, Lakshmi with fraud

Maheshwara Mining Company was denied leases by the two officials, says mine owner

Staff Reporter

HYDERABAD: A mine owner from Kurnool district, V.M. Balakrishna Reddy, deposed before the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Wednesday as yet another witness in the illegal mining case.

Sources stated that the CBI was particular about Mr. Balakrishna Reddy’s deposition in support of its efforts to build a strong case against all the accused in the case, including the State government officials, who played a key role in helping Obulapuram Mining Company (OMC) of Gali Janardhan Reddy.

The investigating agency is gathering every possible evidence to prove former Director of Mines and Geology (DMG) V.D. Rajagopal and IAS officer Y. Sri Lakshmi, who was the Secretary in Industries Department then, guilty of having committed irregularities in general and in helping the OMC.

Mr. Balakrishna Reddy’s mining lease applications, however, had nothing to do with OMC.

Mr. Balakrishna Reddy told reporters later that the two officials had denied iron ore mining leases to his Maheshwara Mining Company wilfully in 2006 in Dhone, Be- thamcherla and Veldurthi areas in Kurnool district.

The DMG had rejected their applications without citing reasons. The High Court had directed the government to do justice to the petitioner firm when it moved the court in 2008.

“When we approached Ms. Sri Lakshmi in due course, the officer suggested us to get recommendation either from the Chief Minister’s Office (CMO) or from K.V.P. Rama-chandra Rao,” Mr. Balakrishna Reddy explained.

When the firm moved the court again, the DMG argued that the areas applied were reserved for Andhra Pradesh Mining Development Corporation.

Later, when contended that first-come-first-serve policy was in vogue, the DMG said mineral reserves in the areas was uneconomical to exploit.

“When it was uneconomical, how could DMG reserve the areas for APMDC?” Mr. Balakrishna Reddy sought to know and alleged that it was done intentionally to support other firms as APMDC was not supposed to mine on its own.

Fourth time

Another mining businessman, Shashi Kumar, appeared before the CBI for the fourth time on Wednesday as a witness. Retired IAS officer K. Prabhakar Reddy, who was with the CMO till 2009, was also examined as a witness on Tuesday night.