Public works by the giants

PSUs fulfill their social responsibility without fail, says Debasis Roy

In the farthest corners of this country, in the most underprivileged sections, it is the public-sector's giants that reach unfailingly with their corporate social responsibility and charitable activities. PSUs, unlike other private sector companies, always stand committed towards charity and social responsibility. Their delivery systems on this front are perfect.

Companies such as SAIL and ONGC repeatedly support grass root level development of sporting activities such as golf, archery, shooting, swimming and football. It is a little known fact that icons such as Virender Sehwag, Suresh Raina and Gautam Gambhir have been employees of PSUs. In fact, captain Mahender Singh Dhoni has been an employee of the Indian Railways most of his professional life. After he left the South Eastern Railway as a ticket collector, Dhoni joined Air India as an employee. Ace shooter, Jaspal Rana is an ONGC employee. Dola Banerjee, a gold medalist in the archery world cup, is an employee in the Eastern Railway.

After Banerjee hung the gold in Dover recently, Samsung and other companies have started wooing her with sponsorship. However, as Bibek Bhowmik of ONGC states, “Private sector companies shower the successful sports person with gold but the PSUs looks after the sports person throughout their career. Even when they are yet to achieve stardom and after their fall from the peak of their career, the PSUs and their infrastructure is always with the sports person for life.” The odd part is that PSUs never tomm this fact anywhere and quietly go about their business. They follow a mandate to spend certain part of their revenue under the head of corporate social responsibility.

The PSU association with CSR is life-long and this is not limited to sports. They push their employees, specially the ones working in remote locations and semi-urban areas to a better lifestyle and more enriched components of life.

Usually, PSUs have their sites in very remote and uninhabited locations. For instance, SAIL’s numerous steel plants; Hindustan Copper’s smelting plants in places such as Khetri, Jhunjhunui, Rajasthan; ONGC’s sites in offshore areas where employees are locked up from the world at large for months; Indian Oil’s oil wells in Assam are areas where the private sector or even NGOs will not touch with a bargepole.
Biggies slip by police net in raid on illegal mining

By Sudhanshu Mishra in Jaipur

The success of Friday’s crackdown on illegal gravel stone mining in Bharatpur district of Rajasthan appeared to have fizzled out even before the last man had been bundled into the police van. The biggestraid on illegal mining in the Mewat region did manage to net 97 people, who were subsequently sent to judicial custody, but those who ran the show from behind remote chains.

While the general perception was that the real bigwigs behind the mining mafia—powerful people with connections in high places—would be difficult to catch, the police and government officials believed that they had caught the main fish. Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot’s decision to conduct the operation had been taken in the wake of media reports that the mining mafia was running a multi-crore racket, but the police had been unable to make any arrests.

But even before the police could start questioning the people they had picked up from the mining sites in Fauji village in Neelam tahsil of Neemuch district, authorities had received a tip-off about the presence of some mining mafia leaders in another area. They had then rushed to the scene and arrested the people.

While the operation had been successful in netting the big fish, the police were in for a shock when they tried to question the people they had picked up. They had been unable to get any information from them about the mining mafia.

The police have been under pressure to crack down on illegal mining in the state for some time now, but they have not been able to get any information from the people they have picked up. They have been in the dark about the underground operation and have been unable to get any information from the people they have picked up.

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In Friday’s crackdown on illegal gravel stone mining in Rajasthan’s Bharatpur

97 people have been arrested in the biggest crackdown on illegal gravel stone mining in Rajasthan’s Bharatpur.

22 minors were rounded up from the mining site

Heavy machinery, including 10 stone crushers, trucks, tractors and 34 dumpers were seized

Over 10,000 kg of explosives has been found in the last six months. The police claim it was meant for blasting rocks.

During the raid, the police came across the names of 12 companies, each of whose crushers were seized.

Among those arrested is a tea-stall owner who was repairing cycles.

ZAMBA KUZRA

Glarind irregularities have been found in mining and export of iron ore in Goa.

Mail Today Bureau

THE multi-crore mining industry in Goa has suffered huge losses, with many firms mining and exported illegally for a long time without the knowledge of the regulatory bodies. Figures compiled till mid-March indicate that almost 50 per cent of the ore mined from the state was illegally exported during the weapons fiscal. Figures available from the state’s two ports—Goa and Mangalore—show that a large portion of Goa-based exporters were caught.

In the current fiscal year, the state government had put in restrictive measures to stop the illegal trade, but the trade continued.

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Glaring irregularities have been found in mining and export of iron ore in Goa.

By Mail Today Bureau
in Panaji

THE multi-crore mining industry in Goa has suffered huge losses after iron ore was mined and exported illegally for a long time right under the nose of the previous Congress-led state government.

Figures compiled till mid-March indicate that almost 10 per cent of the ore mined from the state was illegally exported during the ongoing fiscal. Figures available from the state’s two ports and the association of Goa-based exporters reveal that 4 million metric tonnes (MMT) of ore — of the almost 40 MMT exported till mid-March — went unregistered.

Goa Mineral Ore Exporters Association (GMOEA) had registered only 30 MMT of ore till January end, while the actual exports at the ports till that time were around 34 MMT.

In the last fiscal, Goa had exported 54 MMT of iron ore — a huge figure. Of the total ore, 7 MMT was sent illegally from the state’s two ports.

After glaring irregularities were found in the exports, the state’s public accounts committee had indicted then CM Digambar Kamat for graft.

Even the Justice M.B. Shah-led commission, appointed by the Union mines ministry to investigate the illegal trade, had pointed out the wrongdoings in its report.

In the current fiscal, the state government did put in restrictions to stop the ore from being sent out of the state illegally, but the trade continued.

New CM Manohar Parrikar has said: “Give me time. Problems within the mining department need to be settled first.”

Parrikar has suggested putting a cap of 40 MMT on iron ore mining, which will fulfill the requirements of the trade and also curb the illegalities.

Kamat’s earlier government had made it compulsory that ore cargo must leave the port with an NOC from the mines and geology department. “Despite this, the illegal trade went on because there were moles within the department,” a senior official of the GMOEA said.

The mines department, while probing the unregistered ore exports, found that half of the traders registered with it were fake. The details of half of the 400 exporters were not available. When the police were told to verify their addresses, they were found to be fake.

The department has kept silent since then, even though the same traders continue to buy ore from the mining site.

Mines and geology director A. Lokenkar, who is in the eye of a storm for allowing the illegalities, did not entertain queries.
ENVIRONMENT CONCERNS

Green Bench issues notices to pollution control board

Ambika Sharma

Solan, March 24

Acting on a complaint filed by a section of HP State Pollution Control Board employees pertaining to violations of Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) norms in granting permissions to over 110 industrial units by a key officer of the board, the Green Bench of the state high court has issued notices to the government and directed it to file their reply within four weeks.

Chief Secretary, secretaries of the departments concerned, State Pollution Control Board, and its former member-secretary, State Geologist and Deputy Commissioners of Solan, Una, Kangra and Sirmour were among those who had been made party in the case after the court accepted it as a PIL.

According to the complaint, an Indian Forest Services officer, who was a former member-secretary of the board, had allegedly in connivance with some senior officers of the board, granted NOCs/consent/renewal to over 110 industrial units, including mining units, without prior EIA clearance, thus violating the EIA notification of 2006 of the Ministry of Environment and Forests.

A state Expert Appraisal Committee has been constituted to oversee the technical assessment of such projects while the final nod is given by the state EIA authority.

The working of this committee has come under scanner with this PIL.

The complainant has alleged that these units were located at the inter-state boundary of Punjab, Haryana and Uttarakhand and running illegally without EIA clearance, despite falling in category B of the said notification.

They also include mining units where the lease area of over five hectares was involved and NoCs were allegedly granted on the basis of fake affidavits submitted by these unit managements.

Even housing, tourism and building projects involving area of over 20,000 sq m in Shimla, Solan, Sirmour, Una, Hamirpur, Kullu and Kangra have been allegedly granted NoCs and consent without the required EIA clearance as per the complaint.

A list of 110 units has been submitted to the court out of which the maximum of 40 units belong to Solan district while the remaining 22, 8 and 28 pertain to Una, Sirmour and Kangra districts, respectively. Regional officers of the board were now directed to submit their reply within three days to the head office at Shimla.