Goa govt told to be tough with mines

PANAJI, DHNS: The Union Ministry of Mines has told the Goa government to act against 25 mines that exceeded sanctioned production targets by over 20 per cent in the last four years. According to official records, 44 mines in Goa had been identified for excess iron ore extraction by the Indian Bureau of Mines. The state government took action against 19 of these.

In a letter to Goa's department of mines and geology dated October 25, the ministry has directed that an environmental impact assessment to be carried out by the Goa Pollution Control Board in the areas where mining had taken place in excess of over 20 per cent of permitted limits.

It also asked the Goa government to prepare a list of mining leases that have applied for renewal of environment clearances but continued to operate with "deemed extension".

Over 10.89 million tonnes of sub-grade iron ore had been lifted from dumps in Goa, the ministry said, warning that illegally extracted ore "may be passed off as dumps" if the state government failed to regulate the movement of iron ore lying in dumps. The Goa mines department claims that 750 million tonnes of low grade iron ore had piled up in dumps across Goa as a consequence of 40 years of mining in this state. No environment clearance is needed to lift ore, the Goa government told.
Goa gives nod to revive 60 mines in wildlife park

Panaji: The Congress-led Goa government has given a controversial lease of life to more than 60 non-operational mines in the Netravali Wildlife Sanctuary, leaving environmentalists angry.

The Regional Plan 2021, a futuristic land use document prepared by the government, has revived 63 mining leases in the sanctuary, located 60km from Panaji. The decision comes at a time when the BJP has accused the government of a Rs 25,000 crore illegal mining scam, saying it was bigger than the mining scam in Karnataka.

The Plan, whose parts were officially released recently, said some of the mines proposed to be revived in the sanctuary were non-operational for several decades. An environment activist said the government's move smacked of double standards and it was paving the way for mining in prohibited forest areas.

"The Goa government is trying to bring in 336 other mining leases which are non-operational back to life by including them in the Plan. There is no mining happening there for years now... why is the chief minister (Digambar Kamat) reviving them," said environment activist Claude Alvares. "Out of these 336 leases, 63 are in the Netravali Wildlife Sanctuary which is a protected area," Alvares said.

The sanctuary spread over 420 sq km is one of the five sanctuaries which are located in Goa and is home to animals like black panther, leopard, sloth loris and deer.

Goa forest minister Filipe Nary Rodrigues has said the state was against the Centre's decision to enforce a 10-km buffer zone around the sanctuaries.

The state exported 64 million tonnes of iron ore in the last fiscal from its nearly 100 operational mines.
Japan, India speed up joint rare-earth minerals development

Agence France-Presse
Tokyo, Oct. 29

The foreign ministers of Japan and India agreed on Saturday at a meeting in Tokyo to accelerate joint development of rare-earth mineral deposits in the South Asian country.

Mr Koichiro Gemba and his Indian counterpart Mr S.M. Krishna also confirmed they would move forward stalled talks on a civilian nuclear cooperation pact at a joint news conference after their meeting.

"The two countries will move ahead with a joint development" of rare-earth deposits in India, said Mr Gemba, quoted by Jiji Press, in line with an accord reached last year when Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited Japan.

Japan has looked to diversify rare earth supplies for its high-tech industries -- ranging from computer components to hybrid cars -- as China, which controls more than 90 percent of global supply, has tightened its export quotas.

Mr Gemba also said the two countries "will move forward talks on the civilian nuclear cooperation pact while paying consideration to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation," according to Jiji.

The pact would allow Tokyo to export its cutting-edge nuclear technology to the energy-hungry South Asian nation, a hotly contested market for atomic plants.

Nuclear co-operation: The Foreign Minister, Mr S.M. Krishna, with his Japanese counterpart, Mr Koichiro Gemba, at a press conference in Tokyo on Saturday. — AP

But negotiations on the deal have stalled after the March 11 quake and tsunami in northeast Japan triggered the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant accident, the world's worst since Chernobyl 25 years ago.

The Japanese foreign minister said India pressed for the nuclear pact negotiations to resume despite the Fukushima disaster.

"We agreed to resume negotiations at the working level so that we can surely move towards it," Mr Gemba said.
Financial Express, Delhi
Sunday, 30th October 2011, Page: 7

Though coal shortage can be addressed by easing logistic bottlenecks, sourcing from newer markets, keeping higher rolling stock and expanding port capacities, it's easier said than done

West Bengal coal fields is operated by Eastern Coalfields. The distance between Eastern Coalfields and Jamshedpur is around 450 km. From Jamshedpur, it is about a stretch of 300 km to reach the power plants in Jamshedpur town.

He adds, "Similarly, Jamshedpur's power plants are major producers of power, which is the major outlet for coal. A large number of coal is transported from Jamshedpur port to power plants by rail roads goods."

Ahmed Bhabha, senior president and CEO of Coal and Steel Group, Coast Energy, claims the lack of modern infrastructure, and the possibility of moving coal by rail, is major. The Coast Energy Group has the capability of moving coal off the coast to the rail ports, which is essential for transporting coal to power plants by rail roads goods.

While some of the coal demand is being met by railways, the lack of sufficient rail infrastructure is creating a bottleneck for the railways to transport coal. It's a major concern for the railways, which are already facing difficulties in transporting coal due to the limited rail capacity.

The Coast Energy Group, which has been able to transport coal by rail, is planning to expand its infrastructure to meet the growing demand for coal. The company is looking at expanding its rail network to transport coal from the coast to the inland power plants.

The government is also looking at ways to address the coal shortage. One of the measures being considered is to increase the coal production by encouraging private sector participation in the coal mining sector.