Local bodies to compensate mining-affected families

SUDHEER PAL SINGH
New Delhi, 13 October

To ensure smooth functioning of profit sharing proposed under the new mining legislation, the government will create bodies at the district level to oversee proper disbursement of compensation to the local families affected by mining projects.

Every such body, created in each district where mining activity is undertaken, will be called the District Mineral Foundation (DMF) and will be a trust set up by the state government concerned.

“The District Mineral Foundation shall be responsible for distribution of monetary benefit to persons or families affected by mining-related operations in the district,” the finalised draft of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Bill 2010, after Group of Ministers (GoM) discussions, states.

DMF will be a non-profit corporate body set up under the MMDR Act.

“The object of the DMF shall be to work for the interest and benefit of persons or families affected by mining operations in the district,” the Bill further adds.

The draft, finalised by the 10-member GoM headed by Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee after discussions spanning over the past six months, has the controversial provision for 26 per cent profit sharing by miners with tribals as annual compensation. With a final meeting of the GoM likely soon to give its go-ahead to the finalised draft, the government has expedited efforts to introduce the compensation regime by introducing the Bill in the coming session of Parliament.

The Bill provides that the state governments will identify the families affected by projects before mining operations begin.

THE NATIONAL MINERAL FOUNDATION, to be set up in every district, will be a non-profit corporate body set up under the MMDR Act.

As a first step, the holder of a mining lease will pay an amount equal to 26 per cent of the profit (after deduction of the tax paid) of the previous year from mining operations or a sum equivalent to the royalty paid during the previous financial year, whichever is more. This amount will be credited annually to the District Mineral Foundation.

In addition, the government will levy a cess on all major minerals and the proceeds of the cess levied will be credited to the Consolidated Fund of India. “The central government may, if Parliament by appropriation made by law in this behalf so provides, credit such proceeds to the National Mineral Fund from time to time,” the draft Bill states.

On similar lines, the state governments will create State Mineral Funds which will also be channelised for financial assistance to DMF which, in turn, will make payments of monetary benefits on a monthly or quarterly basis to all members of the affected families.

However, the new Bill also gives the state government the power to regulate the compensation payment to different categories of local population based on the “nature and extent to which they are affected by the mining operation”.

DMF will be managed by a governing council chaired by the district magistrate and having as members, the president of the zila parishad, all mining lease holders in the district, head of local state government departments concerned, representatives of affected families and the Indian Bureau of Mines.

The district mining officer will act as the secretary of the governing council. The council will approve the disbursement of the compensation amounts.

ON THE CARDS

■ A District Mineral Foundation (DMF) will be set up in every district where mining is undertaken
■ The state government will identify the beneficiaries of the compensation before mining operations begin
■ The state government will ensure disbursement of compensation amount to locals on a monthly or quarterly basis
■ A governing council headed by the district magistrate will manage each district mineral foundation
■ DMF accounts to be audited by the CAG

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DMF will maintain a list of lease holders in a district and keep details of compensation benefit disbursements. It will maintain an annual balance sheet of the funds available. Its accounts will be audited in a manner prescribed by the state government in consultation with the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Experts, however, believe that the task before the government is to make sure that conflicting interests do not override the intent of the proposal. “The intention of creating a fund or foundation at the grass-roots level is quite noble. The challenge is to ensure long-term sustainable and equitable working of such institutions, and prevent such initiatives from tripping between bureaucratic and competing interest groups,” said Golul Chaudhuri, partner, BMR Advisors.
Industrial output dips to 5.6% in August

FM, India Inc disappointed

NEW DELHI: Industrial output, in August, grew at the slowest pace in 15 months at 5.6 per cent, nearly half of same period last year, disappointing the government that was betting on domestic consumption to drive the economy.

Manufacturing sector, which accounts for 80 per cent of the factory output numbers and a key indicator of consumer demand, saw growth slip to 5.9 per cent from 10.6 per cent in August, 2009.

"The trend is a little disappointing. Let us see how it fares in annualised terms," Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee said on the sharp fall in industrial output growth.

Growth in capital goods — used by the manufacturing segment — was a negative 2.6 per cent in August compared to a 9.2 expansion in the year-ago period.

India Inc believes the deceleration was owing to the tight monetary policy stance that has pushed up interest rates for corporates, as well as for retail customers, most of whom rely on loans or credit to buy auto or other consumer durables.

Mukherjee, though disappointed, asserted that the "Indian economy is on the path of robust growth led by increased investment and capital inflows, stronger industrial output and rising aggregate demand." He expects annual industrial growth to be around 12-13 per cent, which could push economic growth to 8.5 per cent or more. The last time factory output growth was slower was in May 2009 (2.7 per cent).

Industry chambers were unanimous in their view that Reserve Bank of India should not raise policy rates any further as it could have a negative impact on consumer demand as well as corporate investment thereby slowing down economic growth.

Meanwhile, RBI Governor D Subbarao said "We will study (IIP numbers). I cannot make a comment (just yet)."

Of the 17 industry groups, as many as 14 have shown positive growth during the month of August. Meanwhile, industrial expansion figure for July was revised upwards to 15.2 per cent from earlier estimates of 13.8 per cent.

Industrial growth for first five months of this fiscal stood at 10.6 per cent in comparison to 5.9 per cent growth in the same period a year ago.

Press Trust of India
Gold still glitters

This refers to the article “Gold won’t glitter always” by Subir Roy (October 9). It is amusing that Mr Roy correlates his own life experiences and how the world should think. Just because his daughter does not find value in gold, the metal does not lose its investment worth. Her generation, in fact, represents a shift from savings (in any form including gold) to consumption (clothes and shoes). It’s not about gold but about westernisation of a younger generation that likes to spend.

Abhishek Kulkarni, on email
सोना 20,000 के करीब, चांदी भी 450 रुपये बढ़ी

भारत में सोना 20 हजार का आंकड़ा चुंबन को बढ़ावा दे रहा है। 

फूलसागर का दीया दादा प्रसाद ने बताया कि आज भारत में 20 हजार का सोना बिकरहा जा रहा है। इस दिन चांदी के दाम में भी 450 रुपये की बढ़त देखा जा रहा है।

चांदी के दाम में वृद्धि हुई यह अवसर सोने के दाम की बढ़त की उम्मीद भी करती है।

अंतरराष्ट्रीय बाजार में सोने और चांदी को कम मांग के कारण दाम गिर रहे हैं।
सोना 20,000 के करीब, चांदी भी 450 रुपये बढ़ी

बिजनेस भाषकर • नई दिल्ली

सोना अब 20 हजार का अंक छूने को आजाम है। चुभार की दीवेस नए बाजार में सोने की कीमतों में 75 रुपये की तेजी आकर भाव 19,995 रुपये प्रति दस ग्राम हो गए। इस दौरान चांदी की मांगों में भी 450 रुपये की तेजी रही और भाव 35,850 रुपये प्रति किलो हो गए।

आंतरराष्ट्रीय बाजार में भाव चोटी हुए, जिसके नतीजे में आंतरराष्ट्रीय बाजार में चांदी की कीमतों में भी बढ़ी गई। आंतरराष्ट्रीय बाजार में चांदी की कीमतों में 450 रुपये की तेजी हुई और भाव 1,357 डॉलर प्रति औस उठा गए। 12 अक्टूबर को नयी दिल्ली बाजार में सोने का भाव 1,350 डॉलर प्रति औस पर बढ़ा दिया गया।
आरएसएमएमएल को पार्टनर की तलाश

लक्ष्य

राज्य में खरीद की तलाश व रूपांतरण के लिए सहयोगी उपक्रम द्वारा सहयोगी पार्टनर की तलाश के लिए राज्य सरकार द्वारा समिति गठित

राजस्थान प्रदेश द्वारा 878 एकड़ भूमि विधिवत

प्रेम • नई दिल्ली

राजस्थान सरकार के वार्तालापिका उपक्रम राजस्थान रेस्ट महाराज इंडिया ग्रुप (आरएसएमएमएल) को राज्य में खरीद-विकलांग में संयोजनों की पहचान के लिए एक सहयोगी की तलाश है। राज्य में खरीदारों का मंत्री मोहन मौद्र ने, जिससे तलाश के लिए, यह विकलाप अन्य कंपनियों के साथ सहयोग-सम्बन्धित कर एक समुदाय उपक्रम स्थापित करना चाहता है। राज्य में खरीद-विकलांग के क्षेत्र में संयोजनों की उत्पत्ति की निम्नलिखित इसी संयुक्त उपक्रम की होगी। आरएसएमएमएल ने इस कार्य के लिए विभिन्न कंपनियों को इंडिया जारी करने संबंधित आयशेज नकल भेजा है। उपक्रम-प्रदेश में कहा गया है कि संयुक्त उपक्रम में अभिकर्ष हिम्मेदार आरएसएमएमएल की तलाशी। इस कार्य के लिए आरएसएमएमएल के चयन के लिए युवा सशिव उपक्रम (पहिले), आरएसएमएमएल के प्रथम सर्वोच्च तथा प्रवाह व भूमिका हितों के निर्देशक की समिति पार्टनर की है। वह समिति ही आरएसएमएमएल के सहयोगी की तलाश करेगी। इसमें राजस्थान सरकार के वार्तालापिका उपक्रम के लिए इंडिया जारी करने की उम्मीद उपक्रम भूमि होगी। इसके बाद जीएसएम ने आरएसएमएमएल राज्य में पेडलार के प्रदेश की तलाश व रूपांतरण लागू करने की निम्नलिखित संधि लागू करेगी। राजस्थान सरकार ने इस कार्य के लिए 878 एकड़ भूमि विधिवत की है, जिस पर संयुक्त उपक्रम की खरीद-विकलांग का काम करना चाहता है। यौगिक है कि उपक्रम व रूपांतरण के लिए बंद रहनें। प्रदेश का काम करना बढ़ाता है। आरएसएमएमएल ने इस कार्य के लिए राजस्थान के जीएसएम में 106.3 मेलाक्ट को वितरित रहित रूपांतरण स्थापित कर रूपांतरण के क्षेत्र में कार्य रचता है।
नई दिल्ली। बापुमुहुर्त खाली सोना ने कुपचार को महंगाई का अंदर तक का सारा दिखाई दी दिया। नगरी गृहि में चलने रही जो सोना राजस्थानी में कारोबार बढ़ाने के बाद अंतरराष्ट्रीय बाजार में 20,050 रुपए प्रति 10 ग्राम पर पहुँच गया। कारोबारी व्यवस्थाएं में सोने को की दिल्ली में विकाली तक इसके दाम 22 हजार रुपए प्रति 10 ग्राम का रास छू सकते हैं।

कारोबारियों के मुताबिक दिन के समय अंतरराष्ट्रीय बाजार में सोने के दाम 1358 जिंट प्रति ओसर पर पहुँच जाने का अस्त धार्मिक से संबंधित से देशी वास्तव में करोबार पर हो पड़ा। कुपचार को खोजने के वास्तव में भी 113 रुपए प्रति 10 ग्राम की बढ़ती हुई जबकि गोलकार को इसके बाद दामों में 14 प्रतिशत रखी थी।

कुपचार को दिन के समय कारोबार के वित्त में 19,945 रुपए प्रति 10 ग्राम तक जाने के बाद युद्ध .995 टंग सेने के दाम 19,900 रुपए प्रति 10 ग्राम पर बंद हुए। इसके बाद अंतरराष्ट्रीय बाजार में बढ़ती बढ़ती और रात सब आठ बजे .995 टंग सेने के दाम 20,050 रुपए प्रति 10 ग्राम पर पहुँच गए।

उस से तेज प्रति .999 टंग सेने के दाम 20,150 रुपए प्रति 10 ग्राम पर पहुँच गए। 

यह लोगही सीमा में मांग रहने के चलते व्यवस्था जा रहा है। इसी के लिए 22 क्रैंट खोजने के जो करते हैं बाजार में भी चीजों 18,500 रुपए प्रति 10 ग्राम तक पहुँच गए। सेने में सतह भर से लगातार हट जाने के चलते जो करते हैं खुददार भी ग्राहक बिल्कुल।

दिनी भूमिका एंड जीनियर बेल्फॉर एसोसिएशन के अध्यक्ष जीपीरा गोयेल के उपाध्यक्षिप सोना लगातार बढ़ा है और अब तक के शीर्ष दामों पर जबर रहा है। अगले शादी-विवाह का सार्थक देखा गया जहाँ सोना भंग करने लगा है। इसके बाद उम्मीद है कि बाजार के सप्ताह 22 हजार रुपए प्रति 10 ग्राम का आंकड़ा छू सकते हैं। संख्या कारोबारियों के मुताबिक सोना 20 हजार का सत्य पर कुछ है। जीनियर-बेल्फ़ॉर के व्यवस्था में मांग बढ़कर के रखे के चलते जो करते हैं दामों में भी बढ़ता है।
GOLD, SILVER AT NEW HIGHS

MUMBAI: Gold and silver continued to sparkle at the bullion market on Wednesday, touching historic highs on the back of robust buying by stocks and speculators amid a firm global trend. Silver conquered another milestone, scaling the ₹36,000 per kg level in a rally driven by strong industrial and investment demand. Silver jumped by ₹145 to ₹36,140 per kg, while gold hardened by ₹105 to ₹19,895 per ten grams.

PTI
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<th>Adani seeks tie-up for Australia mines</th>
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<td>THE ADANI GROUP has started talks with Coal India Ltd (CIL) to take on board the state-owned company as a partner for developing the Australian mines it recently bought in a ₹12,600 crore deal. “Talks have opened up between an Adani Group firm and Coal India Ltd. Adani Group is seeking to rope in CIL for development of coal assets it recently bought in Australia for ₹12,600 crore. There could be an equity partnership as well,” a market source said.</td>
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अफगानिस्तान में चीन की योजनाओं से भारतीय एजेंसियां सतर्क

चिनन समिति की द्वितीय परिषदें में सहायक के साथ ही आफगानिस्तान में भी वायुविज्ञान के विद्युत चीन तेली में पैर प्राप्त रहा है।

पहले आफगानिस्तान में ही रेल निकाय को चीन कुल निर्माण परियोजना बना रहा है। इस कहानी में यह हुआ कि सबसे बड़े तांता भड़ार का आयाम खोदने का रेल मार्ग के जोड़ रहा है।

उन्होंने निर्माण को इस रूपांतर ने भारतीय एजेंसियों को चीन का रेल शासन से जोड़ने के एक अभियान पर आपसी पर अनुरोध करने से सहायता किया है।

प्रतिवार के रूप में रेल लाइन उत्तरी पाकिस्तान और आफगानिस्तान की चीन के विस्तार रेल रेट्रोक निकल कर देंगी। चीन रेल ओलियोक्लोरी भावना उच्चायाप अधिकार वर्तमान प्रभावी भावी इस रेलवे के सहायता चीन की वस्त्र एनिया और भारत तक शुरुआत में भी सहम होंगी। रेल शासन ने चीनी कंपनियों का नेतृत्व चाहता इस परियोजना के जोड़े चीन की सहायता नहीं पूरा करेगी।

भारतीय समिश्लेषा एजेंसियां को इसका आक्षण रेपोर्ट के अनुसार इस रेल लाइन के नये पर निमंत्रण को अपनी विषयवस्तु जरूरतों पूरे करने में आसान पाएगा होगा। चालीसल है कि चीन की चाला मेरिकायंकल कंपनी ने तीन साल पहले कीवथ 80 अरब डॉलर मुख्य के तथ्यों भंडार का आयाम निर्माण भवन के वित्तीय विकास को रेक्टेक हरियल किया था।

वैज अफगानिस्तान में चीन की सबसे खुशियों भारत में हिस्टैटो कारिक का रेक्टेक हरियल किया था।
Rescue effort reaches Chilean miners

By midday on Wednesday, 15 of the 33 miners were above ground

By Mayt Moislut, Carolina Pica & Anthony Esposito

A bout 11 hours into the rescue of miners that had been trapped deep underground for 69 days, almost half the miners had been pushed out of the pit.

People around the world watched as one by one, the miners rose to the surface in a red, white and blue rescue capsule dubbed "The Phoenix." By midday Wednesday, 15 of the 33 miners were above ground.

Websites of Chilean newspapers were keeping a running score, almost like a sporting event. "Things have gone extraordinarily well up to now," said Health Minister Jaime Mañalich.

Presidential candidate Sebastian Pinera said the rescue could wrap up faster than anticipated. At the current pace of a miner surfacing every four hours, the operation could end Wednesday evening, he said in a press conference, rather than on Thursday as originally expected.

Florencio Avalos, a 31-year-old father of two, was the first to be rescued after having endured longer underground than any mine accident survivors in the past.

Mr. Avalos emerged above ground just after midnight on Wednesday half an hour after the rescue of Arcos Technology worker, Manuel González, who was the last miner to be rescued.

Before the emergence of Mr. Avalos, a rescue worker, Maurilio González, had ridden down into the mine's deepest level. Spectral images from a camera he used to see the miners, it was the first direct contact they had had with any other person since the August 5 cave-in. Mr. González told Mr. Gonzalez before his departure, "May God be with you. The Chilean people are with you."

A spirit of solidarity has bloomed in the Atacama Desert, the barren wasteland where the mine is located, since the cave-in. Volunteers from nearby towns came to cook and baby-sit for the families of miners who were camping above the mine.

Local mining companies brought drills to San José and began sending probes deep into the earth to look for the chamber where the men were holed up — to find their corpses, an investigation finally made contact after 17 days, when the miners were down to the last two cans of tuna that had sustained them through the ordeal. "Life is hard here; there are earthquakes and accidents," said Macario Valdivia, a 40-year-old topographer who helped direct the positioning of the drills in the rescue effort. "People have to work together.

After the miners were found, their cause ceased to be simply Chilean. Schoolchildren in St. Paul, Minn., and Fredricktown, Pa., sent letters of support to the miners' families. Pearl Jam front man Eddie Vedder celebrated them on his Twitter account: "'Viva chile! 33 miners are alive!' Town leaders and industrialists are buying half a ton of protein bars to be sent along with the miners as part of an effort to help the miners regain strength after a long period of being confined.
Aluminium firms enter power sector to stabilise earnings

DEBASHIS MOHAPATRA
Bangalore, 13 October

Power is the new buzzword for aluminium manufacturers in India. In a bid to protect bottom lines from sharp price movements in the international market, companies such as National Aluminium Company (Nalco) and Vedanta Aluminium, among others, are set to emerge as independent power producers (IPPs).

This will also help them get cheap power, whose rising prices are putting pressure on the manufacturing cost of the metal.

"Our intention is to protect the bottom line from fluctuating London Metal Exchange prices," said A K Sharma, director (production), Nalco.

Aluminium has seen large price swings in the last three years. At the peak of the global economic activity in 2008, it reached an all time high of $3,400 a tonne. It dropped 47 per cent to $1,800 a tonne in August 2009.

On the back of tangible improvement in the economy, the metal is now around $2,400 a tonne, up 30 per cent from the price in August 2009.

These fluctuations have reflected in the annual result of companies like Nalco, which posted a 36 per cent drop in net profit to ₹14.22 crore in FY10, as compared to ₹1,272.27 crore in the previous financial year.

On plans to produce power, Sharma said, "We feel the power deficit in India is going to continue for the next 10-15 years. As rates for merchant power are higher, we will be able to fetch a higher price for power produced from our plant."

Nalco was one of the bidders for the proposed 4,000-Mw ultra-mega power plant in Orissa, he added.

The company is also planning to build an independent power project in Orissa in collaboration with one of the state power agencies, along with wind mill projects.

"We have received bids to set up wind mills to produce power. These units will be strictly on a build-operate-transfer basis and contracted by third parties," Sharma said.

Vedanta Aluminium, a subsidiary of London-listed Vedanta Resources Plc, has also entered power production with a 2,400-Mw independent power plant in Jharsuguda in Orissa, with the first unit of 600 Mw commencing operation recently.

"We need a lot of power to feed our existing smelter along with the requirement that will arise when we expand," said Mukesh Kumar, chief operating officer of Vedanta Aluminium. He said though power from the Jharsuguda unit would be mainly traded, it would supply to the smelter in case of any deficit.

"We will sell power to our aluminium smelter, which will save us transmission and other costs," Kumar added. "We may consider transferring some power to the smelter in a power deficit situation. But that will be strictly for a short period," Sharma said.

An analyst with a Mumbai-based brokerage firm said rising power deficit in the country, along with uncertainty over coal block allocation for captive use, were some of the factors driving this diversification.
The miners who spent 69 agonising days deep under the Chilean earth were hoisted one by one to freedom on Wednesday, their rescue moving with remarkable speed while their countrymen erupted in cheers and the world watched transfixed.

Beginning at midnight and sometimes as quickly as once every 40 minutes, the men climbed into a slender cage nearly a half-mile underground and made a smooth ascent into fresh air. By early afternoon, more than half the men—20 of 33—had been rescued.

In a meticulously planned operation, the miners were monitored by video on the way up for any sign of panic. They had oxygen masks, dark glasses to protect their eyes from unfamiliar daylight and sweaters for the jarring climate change. They emerged looking healthier than many had expected and even clean-shaven.

The operation moved past the halfway point with the rescue of the 17th miner, a 56-year-old electrician named Omar Reygadas who helped organise life underground. His fourth great-grandchild was born a month after the men were sealed into the mine's lower reaches by an August 5 collapse of 700,000 tonnes of rock.

Phoenix for the mythical bird that rises from ashes and painted in the white, blue and red of the Chilean flag. One was used in the rescue.

The miners' vital signs were closely monitored throughout the ride. They were given a high-calorie liquid diet donated by NASA, designed to prevent nausea from
The entire rescue operation was meticulously choreographed, with no expense spared in bringing in top-flight drills and equipment—and boring three separate holes into the copper and gold mine. Pinera put his Mining Minister and the operations chief of state-owned Codelco, the country's biggest company, in charge of the rescue. A Chilean flag that was to obscure the hole from view was moved aside so that cameras perched on a hill could record images that state TV also fed live.

"This rescue operation has been so marvelous, so clean, so emotional that there was no reason not to allow the eyes of the world—which have been watching this operation so closely—to see it," Pinera told a news conference after Avalos was brought to the surface. When the first capsule came out, Avalos stepped out as bystanders cheered, clapped and broke into a chant of the country's name — "Chil Chil! Chil! Le Le! Le!" Panic attacks during the ascent, officials said, were the biggest concern. The miners were not sedated—they needed to be alert in case something went awry. Munaché said rescuers could accelerate the capsule to its maximum speed of 3 meters per second if necessary. Rescue coordinator Andre Sougaret said beforehand that the worst technical problem would be the possibility that "a rock could fall" and jam the capsule.

Minister Laurence Golborne, whose management of the crisis has made him a media star in Chile, insisted all risks had been considered.

"There is no need to try to start guessing what could go wrong. We have done that job," Golborne said.

Three rescue capsules were built by Chilean navy engineers, named Phoenix for the mythical bird that rises from ashes and painted in the white, blue and red of the Chilean flag. One was used in the rescue.

The miners' vital signs were closely monitored throughout the ride. They were given a high-caloric liquid diet donated by NASA, designed to prevent nausea from the rotation of the capsule in the 28-inch-diameter escape hole.

Engineers inserted steel piping at the top of the shaft, which is angled 11 degrees off vertical before plunging like a waterfall. Drillers had to curve the shaft to pass through "virgin" rock, narrowly avoiding collapsed areas.

At the hospital in Copiapó, two floors were prepared for the miners to be evaluated. Psychiatrists predict their lives will be anything but normal.

Rejoining a world intensely curious about their ordeal, they have been invited to presidential palaces, take all-expenses-paid vacations and appear on countless TV shows. Book and movie deals are pending, along with job offers.

US President Barack Obama, who watched live the rescue said that it was "a tremendously inspirational story, a story with a happy ending," said White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs.

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TRAPPED FOR 69 DAYS

San Jose Mine

Drills
Three drills raced to widen the escape shaft.

Emergency shelter

Medicine cabinet
Water tank

Relief capsule
Once a hole was drilled to the miners, food and supplies were delivered by palomas—Spanish for "carrier pigeons."

Three cargo spaces carried radios, food, LED lamps, water and oxygen.

Miners
Sought refuge in an emergency shelter off one of the tunnels. For more than two weeks, the miners shared food meant for 48 hours.

Collapse
A wall collapse on Aug. 5 trapped the miners. Rescue efforts were complicated by additional collapses.

Wheels

Restraints

Oxygen

6-inches wide

3-feet tall

Wood tip

Capsize less than 23-inches wide

Thirty-three men, two months underground

Clockwise from top) Osman Araya embraces his wife after reaching the surface; wife and daughter of Claudio Yanez cheering; Carlos Barrios Edison Pena waves to the crowd.

AP
Chile rejoices as trapped miners taste freedom

One by one they see the light of day

Alexei Barrionuevo and Simon Romero

SAN JOSE MINE (CHILE): With tense moments increasingly yielding to exuberant celebration, the haggard men trapped under a half-mile of rock for more than two months have been emerging to the arms of their families and an electrified nation.

Some 10 hours into the final phase of the rescue operation, the 12th miner of the 33 stepped from the escape capsule. Chilean President Sebastian Pinera was on hand to embrace the earliest arrivals in their first stirring moments of freedom. On Wednesday, he moved to the makeshift hospital, chatting like a triumphant father with ever-growing groups of rescued men. Bolivian President Evo Morales joined him to welcome the sole Bolivian miner, Carlos Mamani.

After the first 10 men were pulled up, Health Minister Jaime Manalich said the next men to be raised would include those in a more “perilous” health condition.

He said all 33 miners might be lifted from the mine in less time than the original forecast of two days.

Cameras inside the mine showed the remaining miners sending off the last evacuee with cheers, and another positioned on the top of the capsule carried images of a seemingly smooth shaft slipping by the taut metal cable.

The race to save the miners has thrust Chile into a spotlight it has often sought but rarely experienced. While lauded for its economic management and austerity, the nation has often found the world’s attention trained more on its human rights violations and natural disasters than on uplifting moments.

Still, the perseverance of the miners, trapped in a lightless, dank space, has transfixed the globe with a universal story of human struggle and the enormously complex operation to rescue them.

Mr. Pinera, a billionaire businessman who is Latin America’s most conservative leader, staked his presidency on the effort. It has involved untold millions of dollars, specialists from NASA and drilling experts from a dozen or so countries. Some here at the mine have compared the rescue effort to the Apollo 13 space mission, for the emotional tension it has caused and the expectation of a collective sigh of relief at the end.

Earlier, the first miner was pulled through the narrow, twisting escape shaft in the specially designed capsule called the Phoenix, paving the way to the end of a drama that has riveted the world’s attention for two months.

The 33 miners, caught in a collapse on August 5, spent 17 days in isolation, rationing their meager supplies and organizing themselves before being located by drillers on August 22.

They had to withstand nearly two more months of waiting for this day. Their discipline and collaboration held firm, and they worked doggedly to help the rescue effort themselves, with a determination and spirit that captivated and inspired their nation.

The first miner, Florencio Avalos, 31, made it to the surface to the music of blaring celebratory horns. With a look of sturdy calm, he embraced his weeping child and other family members, the President and the workers around him before being taken away on a stretcher, lifting his thumb triumphantly. As each subsequent miner emerged alive and smiling, the world seemed to celebrate, but also to hold its collective breath that all 33 would make it out as effortlessly as the first ones.

The second miner to reach the surface, Mario Sepulveda, was ebullient as he left the capsule, hugging family members and officials. He embraced Mr. Pinera three times and presented people with gifts: rocks from the mine. Then he led the crowd in a cheer. “Chi, Chi, Chi, le, le, le,” they shouted. “Miners of Chile,” a refrain echoed as subsequent miners reached the surface.

Flanked by his family at a news conference afterward, Sepulveda acknowledged the stress of spending 69 days underground.

“I’ve been near God, but I’ve also been near the devil,” he said through a translator. “God won.” A global audience watched nonstop coverage on computers, television sets and even cellphones.

Deep in the mine, the remaining miners waited for their turn, along with a rescue worker who descended to their underground haven in the capsule, which was painted with the red, white and blue of the Chilean flag.

Tuesday was a day of great excitement and last-minute delays. As Mr. Pinera waited anxiously near the rescue hole, the families of the miners and more than 1,300 journalists gathered around plasma televisions set up at the makeshift tent city near the mine, which vibrated with a carnival-like atmosphere as the rescue drew near. — New York Times News Service