कैबिनेट के फैसले

पुनर्भीम संबंधी फैसले के बारे में पूछे जाने पर वित्त निर्म. प्रशासन मुख्यालयों ने हिस्सों करने से इन्कार कर किया। उन्होंने कहा कि इसकी प्रक्रिया पूरा होने पर घोषणा की जाएगी। विभिन्न कार्यवाहक को ज्ञाती हो रहे हैं अन्य बातों के लिए विभिन्न विभाग ने संबंधी मंत्रालयों को यथा प्राप्त हुए हैं। इसके तुरंत नकदी काले पार्स्यां, अन्य बातों को पूरा होने पर घोषणा की जाएगी। वैज्ञानिक, उद्योगपति, सेवाओं, फूड, खाने भरने और खान मंत्रालयों ने अपने विभागों का विवेचन किया है।
वेदांत ने सरकार
को दिया 16,000
cरोड़ का ऑफर

वेदांत ने सरकार विभाग के स्वामी दिसंबर, इंडियन रूपरेंज्स ने हिंदूस्तान विभाग (एक्सवे) तथा भारत फार्मसीफार्मिक दल ने सरकार की हिस्सेदारी खारीनों के लिए 16,000 करोड़ रुपये की भरावना की है। इस कंपनी के मेन्स एक्सवे एंड दल ने एक दस्तावेज़ पत्रों में हिस्सेदारी खारीनों की भरावना की है।

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FUND CRUNCH

Desperate times call for desperate measures

The government has figured out an innovative way to raise more money from its disinvestment drive: get state-owned companies to buy part of the stakes that the government holds in them.

ONGC's share sale initially closed with bids for only 68% of shares. Analysts blamed the price. The government blamed a glitch, and asked Sebi to step in. The sale eventually scrapped through.

Sterlite has offered to pay the ₹16,000 crore for the government's residual stake in Hindustan Zinc and Balco. The government desperately needs money, but the price is too low, say analysts.

BY ASHRAF MISHRA, BHUMA SRIKAVASSY, ASHWINI LASKER, ANVISHI DATTA & PRAMIT BHATTACHARYA

A day after disclosing that its fiscal deficit for the first 10 months of this fiscal year (ending 31 March) had touched 100% of the full-year estimate, the government pul-
ed out all stops to shore up its numbers by asking some state-owned firms to buy part of its stake in them and trying to push the Oil and Natural Gas Corp. Ltd (ONGC) share sale through (it went through after interven-
tion, initially by UAE Insurance Corporation of India, ex LIC, and subsequently by the gov-
ernment).

The government also re-
ceived, on request, an offer from Sterlite Industries (India) Ltd, part of the Vedanta group, to pay ₹16,000 crore for the govern-
ment's significant residual stakes in Hindustan Zinc Ltd (HZL) and Hindustan Aluminium Co. Ltd (Balco), in which the metals conglomerate had ac-
quired a controlling stake nearly a decade ago.

Analysts were quick to crit-
cize the plan to raise money from state-owned companies and one described it as "win-
dress-dressing" the books, although all of them said they under-
edstood that the government had no other option.

Late on Thursday evening, the disinvestment department said the share sale was sub-
scribed nearly entirely. This came after hectic negotiations with the stock markets regula-
tor, whom it convinced to ac-
cept some bids for ONGC shares that it claimed had been reject-
ed on technical grounds. There was strong buzz on the Street that the government preferred investor of last resort, state-
owned LIC, had stepped in dur-
ing the final moments of the sale with a bid for 120 million shares.

The initial estimate of the ex-
changes showed that the oil and gas explora-
er and producer's share sale saw bids being received for only 68% of the stock on offer.

Experts said it was time for the government to focus on ex-
penditure reforms if it wished to bring down the fiscal deficit in the next fiscal year. Many of them were of the opinion that it is far too late to try and save the situation this year.

Declining tax collections and the burden of the subsidies are widening the fiscal deficit. Finance minister Pranab Mukherjee has admitted that the government is unlikely to meet the fiscal deficit target of 4.6% of gross domestic product (GDP) outlined in its 2011-12 budget.

Against the budgeted target of 4.6% of GDP, India's fiscal deficit is likely to cross 5%, wrote Chetan Ahya, an economist at Morgan Stanley India, in a 29 February research note. Including off-budget expenditure and the shortfall in the budget of states, India's consolidated fis-
ical deficit is likely to touch 9.4% this fiscal, he added. The central government is likely to aim for an ambitious fiscal deficit target of 6.7% in fiscal 2013, but the actual number is likely to be closer to 5-6%, a 1 March note by Kotak Institutional Equities said, at-
tributing the shortfall to the country's rising fuel subsidy bill.

The government had hoped to raise ₹40,000 crore by selling shares in state-owned firms in 2011-12. It subsequently reduced this target to ₹10,000 crore. Thus far, and excluding the money raised from ONGC's share sale, it has raised ₹1,135 crore. It is unclear how much it is hoped to raise from state-owned firms barring the government's stake in themselves. And it is unlikely, said an analyst, that it would accept Sterlite's offer.

Scraping through

On Tuesday, the government decided to sell 5% of ONGC, out of its 74.14% stake, through an auction. On Thursday, it initially looked as if the share sale had...
Desperate measures

The non-plan expenditure need to be curtailed to create space for capex.

The govt should find alternative growth so we can afford some level of fiscal deficit.

MINT, Delhi
Friday, 2nd March 2012, Page: 1

Width: 19.52 cms Height: 41.91 cms, Ref: pmin.2012-03-02.55.7

Bumped and it could sell only 5.3%.

Analysts said the main reason for the poor response was the aggressive pricing of the issue. Investors may have found the price of ₹926 per share set by the government too high, they pointed out.

The floor price was at a 2.37% premium to the closing price of ONGC’s shares on BSE on Tuesday. Interestingly, only 1.6 million shares (of the 437 million on offer) were bought through the auctions till 3.30pm, the remaining bids came in the last 10 minutes of the offer. ONGC’s shares closed 1.8% down at ₹378.45 each on Thursday on BSE, lower than the floor price.

Soon after the auction closed at 3.30pm, officials in the department of disinvestment in the finance ministry got into a huddle at the finance ministry’s North Block office in New Delhi, trying to control the damage. The unsegregated data on interesting splits on the story followed behind the charges of fiduciary breach. A finance ministry official claimed that the low subscription numbers were solely the result of confusion between the investors and some of their financial advisers.

"During the initial hours of the auction process, bids from some of the institutional investors were rejected as their crowns were not in the system," complained a public sector fund official. "Those investors did not have an account with the fund in their accounts to bid for the shares in the auction. Similarly, many of the foreign institutional investors had sufficient money to bid in the auction, but many of them did not want to be identified.

"The ministry is meeting the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to discuss the issue and examine if the bids from these institutional investors were valid. Hopefully, if SEBI allows allotment of shares to these bidders, the ONGC issue will see decent subscription levels and higher subscription numbers on the exchanges will be updated accordingly," added the official.

The additionalsecretary of the disinvestment department, Saurabh Pradhan, said as much later in the evening in a press conference with journalists (although he said the glitch happened in the closing minutes of the auction—3.13pm and 3.30pm), and added that it had been able to convince bidders to count these bids.

He added that bids had been received for around 400 million shares (excluding retail).

A late night joint media statement by the National Stock Exchange and BSE put the final demand at ₹43.3 million shares against an offer of 427.7 million.

Fake divestment

As a part of the meeting of the Union cabinet on Thursday, the government will ask both these state-owned companies—Oil India Ltd and NTPC Ltd—to buy back part of the government’s stake in themselves. This would be expected to provide cash to the government’s exchequer. It is not yet clear whether the plan, which has been discussed, includes allowing state-owned companies to hold stakes in other companies.

The government’s information division did not put out a statement on the divestment issue. "I can’t say anything about the cabinet decision which has been taken. There is due procedure and it will be announced in due course," said finance minister M Natarajan. However, the divestment panel, heavy industries minister Pralhad Patel told reporters in New Delhi.

Coal India Ltd, the state-owned firm that holds the nation’s largest initial public offering in October 2010. Steel Authority of India Ltd, Bharti Enterprise Ltd and ONGC have a combined ₹1.1 trillion in cash and equivalents, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

The state-owned companies themselves have opposed the proposal, a spokesperson said, hinting that the proposal, which has been mooted for several years, is an attempt to get cash from banks. "The government only enabling in nature and will not be forced on any state-owned company," said Venu Gopal, chief executive officer of Coal India Ltd.

Barua’s views were echoed by Jamshed Mehta, chief executive officer of Sterlite Industries. "We need to make the present fiscal deficit manageable because the money that we need to bring down fiscal deficit in a difficult situation like the present one, putting high fiscal deficit is more important," the minister said.

There is no alternative but to raise excise duty and service tax in the budget.

"The government is in a good position to bring up the fiscal deficit," said Dinesh Mohan, an analyst at HDFC Securities Ltd, who retired to his clients in a 25 February note. “They believe that if they raise the indirect ...”

Sterlite’s share price tumbled 1.1% in the early morning trade. Sebi[E] closed almost 800 points, 11.0% down at 2,125.66, while those of Sterlite closed almost 37% down at 350.05. Each, Vedanta shares were up 1.07% at 11,55.51 on the BSE. The exchange benchmark index, Sensex, closed 5.02% down at 17,380.47 points. Sebi EPC Ltd shares lost 1.00% to close at 2,782.21, while those of Sterlite closed almost flat at 11,55.51 each.

A cabinet meeting is due to be held on Thursday to consider the government’s budget proposal.

An arbitration panel ruled in January last year that the government was free to sell the remaining stake in the company as it is deemed fit, striking down Sterlite’s call options.

Sterlite acquired part of its stake in HCL (it acquired the rest from shareholders through an open offer) from the government in 2003 for around ₹170 crore.

"With ₹5,000 crore in profits and ₹7,000 crore of cash on its books, HCL is a cash cow, (and) if it is 100% owned by Sebi, all its cash flow, is fungible and that will work to our benefit," said Dama.

"The lack of a clearly defined roadmap and the government’s inability to play a pro-active role in the company led to another confusion in the minds of investors," said Hari Har, managing director of Public Electronic Auctions Ltd.

On the government’s decision to sell its portion of the second public offering, Sebi was asked to review the offer price at the request of investors.

"There is a lack of clarity and transparency in the company’s strategy," said Hari Har, managing director of Public Electronic Auctions Ltd.

"There is a need to review the timing of the offer and take into account the market conditions," said Hari Har, managing director of Public Electronic Auctions Ltd.

"The government’s decision to sell its portion of the second public offering, Sebi was asked to review the offer price at the request of investors. The lack of clarity and transparency in the company’s strategy was a concern," said Hari Har, managing director of Public Electronic Auctions Ltd.
केंद्र की मंजूरी के बाद ही होगा राज्यों में खानन प्रस्तुत। नहीं हिस्सी

मुख्यमंत्री कोटे ने कहा है कि अब राज्य और केंद्र शासित प्रदेश केंद्रीय पर्यावरण मंत्रालय से मंजूरी के बाद ही पाँच हेक्टेयर से फ्रेन्च केंद्र में खानन पदके के झार के लिए पांड़े के साथ है या उनका जननीःरण कर सकते हैं। न्यायपालिका को रायभेदण और न्यायपालिका सर्केट प्रशासन की विशेष बनने पीढ़े ने राज्यों और केंद्रशासित प्रदेशों को निर्देशित दिया कि पर्यावरण और बन मंत्रालय द्वारा मार्च 2010 की उसकी सियों में स विशेषतिदेश और अनेक सियों देशों को प्रभाव में लाए जाए।

सबसे ही छोटे मौन में अनुपमा हिपोटेक जन्मे की गये। अद्वित से सूरजकिना सर्केट द्वारा फिनेंच साल तीन जून और अंत अंतर को जारी नीताम नॉटिस के अवधारण सूची तथा राजस्थान में कविता अविश्वास के भाष्य से बिचर करते हुए यह निर्देशित दिया।
Vedanta Aluminium Seeks Waiver of Public Hearing

NAGESHWAR PATNAIK
BHUANESWAR

Vedanta Aluminium Ltd has sought a level playing field by seeking a waiver on public hearings on grounds that they were conducted twice — in 2003 and 2009 — to build the refinery and smelter.

The Union ministry for environment and forest had early last month asked the Anil Agarwal-owned company to seek public consent afresh in Odisha’s Kalahandi district as a precursor to getting environmental clearance for expanding its alumina refinery and power plant, which had been stalled for two years.

In a letter to the member secretary, State Pollution Control Board (SPCB), president and chief operating officer (COO) of VAL’s Lanjigarh project, Mukesh Kumar, made it clear that since the Board had issued the consent on February 16, 2010, and there was no change in the site or project of capacity conducting fresh public hearing for the same project “will not serve any purpose except giving a chance to groups who are not opposing our project but other projects in the state on false ground for the past few years”.

VAL president argued that since the project has progressed more than 50% at the site, and expansion would be limited to within the existing plant boundary except acquisition of some additional land for waste disposal, the board should recommend waiver of public hearing to the MoEF.

The company said it has complied with all the 70 conditions laid down on the expansion plan according to the terms of reference (ToR) issued by the MoEF. SPCB member secretary Sidhant Das said the board is considering VAL’s appeal. “We have very limited role to play. The MoEF has asked us to conduct the public hearing. VAL’s contention is that since public hearing is over, there’s no need for further hearing. We are looking into the matter,” Das said.

VAL is also in talks with the MoEF for waiver of fresh public hearing for environment clearance for the expansion of the project. Vedanta Aluminium, a subsidiary of the newly announced Sesa Sterlite, was asked to stop expansion of its refinery in Lanjigarh from 1 mt to 6 mt in October 2010 because of environmental fears. The following year, the Orissa high court quashed an appeal filed by the company and upheld MoEF’s decision.
Ministry nod must for mining of minor minerals in less than 5 ha

Our Bureau
New Delhi, March 1

The Supreme Court has ruled that the States/Union Territories can grant and renewal of leases for mining of minor minerals for an area of less than five hectares only after getting environmental clearance from the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF).

The court took note of the MoEF report which said mining of minor minerals in smaller size of mine leases is perceived to have lesser impact as compared to mining of major minerals.

However, the report had also said, the activity is seen to have significant adverse impact on the environment.

It is, therefore, necessary that the mining of minor minerals is subjected to simpler but strict regulatory regime and carried out only under an approved framework of mining plan, which should provide for reclamation and rehabilitation of the mined out areas, the report had said.

The apex court bench comprising Mr Justice K.S. Radhakrishnan and Mr Justice C.K. Prasad said in its order on February 27 that, “all State Governments/Union Territories have to give due weight to the MoEF recommendations (in March 2010).”

“...the State Governments have to frame proper rules in accordance with the recommendations, under the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957,” it said.

The court also asked the States and UTs to submit compliance reports before it within six months.

The court said “it is highly necessary to have an effective framework of mining plan which will take care of all environmental issues and also evolve a long term rational and sustainable use of natural resource base and also the bio-assessment protocol.”

It asked the Centre to take steps to bring into force the Minor Minerals Conservation and Development Rules 2010 at the earliest.

The case pertained to a petition filed by one Deepak Kumar against the Haryana Government. It was regarding the validity of auction notices of the Haryana Government’s Mines and Geology Department. The court also considered the complaint of illegal mining in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

The petitioner had said mining areas earmarked are at the foothills of fragile Shivalik hills. The petitioner alleged that illegal and excessive mining has caused serious environmental degradation and ecological impact, and no Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) has ever taken place in areas earmarked for mining especially on the river beds.
Sterlite offers ₹16,000 cr to buy out HZL, Balco stakes

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Sterlite Industries has offered to pay ₹16,000 crore to buy government stakes in Hindustan Zinc (HZL) and Bharat Aluminium Company (Balco), in which the parent Vedanta group had acquired majority stakes a decade ago.

While Sterlite Opportunities and Ventures holds 64% stake in HZL, Vedanta had acquired government's 61% stake in Balco in 2001 for ₹561 crore.

The government holds 29.5% stake in HZL and 49% in Balco.

"The government had asked us, if we will be interested to take its stakes in HZL and Balco. We answered in the affirmative," said Anil Agarwal, chairman, Vedanta group. "As per the prevailing market price, we have offered ₹16,000 crore for buying stakes. That was in January."

The government does not seem to be happy with the valuation quoted by Vedanta and an empowered group of ministers which is looking into the matter had favoured a status quo till a fair valuation was arrived at.

Agarwal had said earlier that Vedanta did not receive any communication from the government and against this backdrop, it would not be possible for him to give any time-frame when the deals would be through.

"This is not in my hand. It is up to the government," he said when asked to project a time-line for the acquisition.

The Vedanta Group is revamping its corporate structure by merging Sterlite Industries into another group firm Sesa Goa.
Vedanta offers Rs 16,000 cr for Govt stake in Hind Zinc, Balco

Suresh P. Jyongar
S S Shanker
Mumbai, March 1

Vedanta Group, which is in the midst of reorganising its holding in India, has offered Rs 15,000-16,000 crore to buy out the Government's stake in Hindustan Zinc and Bharat Aluminium Company.

Mr Anil Agarwal, Chairman, Vedanta Group, told Business Line that the company is in talks with the Government and expects the deal to happen in a year.

"We have made lot of value addition and raised capacity at both the companies after it was acquired. Besides, these companies have the best of the technology and rank among the top when it comes to cost of production," he said.

According to sources, the Finance Ministry has started consultations with the Law Ministry on stake sale.

The Government holds a residual stake of 29.54 per cent stake in Hindustan Zinc and 49 per cent in Balco after the dis-investment in 2001. It had raised Rs 51.5 crore by divesting stake in Balco and Rs 750 crore in Hindustan Zinc to Sterlite Industries.

In January this year, the Government expressed its interest to offload the remaining stake in both the companies.

ROOM TO RAISE MORE DEBT
Sterlite Industries is now being merged with Sesa Goa to form a new entity Sessa Sterlite.

Three more group entities Cairn India, Vedanta Aluminium and Madras Aluminium are to be merged into Sessa Sterlite, along with debt of $9 billion.

"Sterlite had the call option to buy stake in both companies. Since it is being merged to form Sessa Sterlite the option will also be transferred. The merged entity, Sessa Sterlite, will have enough room to raise further debt to execute the deal as it will be generating enough cash. Sessa Sterlite itself will have a cash surplus of $6 billion (Rs 30,000 crore)," Mr Agarwal said.
Vedanta Aluminium’s expansion plans may face fresh delay

Firm has to seek public consent to get environment nod

Amit Mitra
Hyderabad, March 1
Vedanta Aluminium Ltd’s (VAL) plans to expand the capacity of its unit in Lanjigarh in Orissa is likely to face further delay with the Government asking the company to seek fresh public consent, as part of the new terms it has to meet to get the environment clearance.

 VAL, a subsidiary of the newly announced, Anil Aggarwal-controlled Sesa Sterlite, has been facing delay in completing the expansion of the Orissa unit from the present one million tonnes to five million tonnes due to environment clearance.

Confirming that the company had received the new terms of reference for environment clearance from the Ministry of Environment, Mr S.K. Roongta, Managing Director, said “We are working on the new terms that relate to some technical and environmental details.”

He was unwilling to give a time frame as to when the company expected to finally get the environment clearance. “All I can say now is that we can complete the first phase of the expansion from 1 mt to 2 mt within three to six months from the day we get the (environment) clearance,” Mr Roongta told Business Line on the sidelines of a function here.

He said a significant part of the phase one expansion has been completed. “We are investing about Rs 5,000 crore for doubling the capacity, out of which about 50 to 60 per cent has been spent. We can reach the 5 mt tonne mark within a year from this,” he said.

Vedanta has also been facing delay in securing its own bauxite resources, which is adding to the drag on its aluminium plans. It is currently sourcing the raw material from Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh, which is pushing up its production cost.

amitmitra@thehindu.co.in
Alcoa in Talks with Indian Cos to Sell Surplus Alumina

MV RAMSURYA
Mumbai

US-based Alcoa has opened talks with some Indian companies to sell surplus alumina, signalling the intention of the world’s third largest aluminium producer to increase presence in India.

With an output of 16 million tonnes a year, Alcoa is the world’s largest alumina producer. The company entered India in 2001 when it teamed up with Hindalco to bid for Balco, which was eventually acquired by Sterlite Industries. It has since been building its presence in the high-value, high-quality aluminium segments.

“There is a renewed focus on India,” Alcoa India managing director Vishal Seth told ET. “We sell about half of our production to various companies on annual contracts. We plan to bring some of our Australian alumina production here,” Alcoa is in talks with Vedanta Aluminium and Hindalco Industries among other Indian companies, people close to the development said.

Alumina is an intermediate compound that is smelted to make aluminium metal. Alloys of alumina are used in aircraft bodies, rail wagons, cars, beverage cans and consumer goods.

State-owned Nalco, which is Asia’s largest alumina producer, sells part of its produce to Indian producers. Nalco produces 1.5 million tonnes of alumina a year. Since Vedanta Aluminium and Balco do not have complete captive hauxite mines, they buy alumina from the domestic and international markets to feed Balco’s smelting operations. Hindalco also buys alumina for its smelter at Rennikot in Uttar Pradesh.

Alcoa is not keen on building a greenfield smelter and refinery in India because of the delays in getting government approvals and clearances. But it wants to expand its presence in the country’s mid to downstream markets, which make products for construction, food processing and car wheels.

“We are open to joint venture arrangements or even outright acquisitions as the company currently has a healthy appetite for such transactions in India,” said Seth, who took charge of the Indian operations in January.

Alcoa, which has shut down about 12% of its smelting capacity worldwide due to high energy costs, is building a $10.6 billion refinery-cum-smelter through a joint venture with Maaden Alum in Saudi Arabia. The plant is scheduled for completion by 2014. Mining majors are planning to build presence in the Middle East to cash in on the abundant gas supplies, which reduces their energy costs.
‘No mining in states without Centre’s nod’

Expressing concern over growing illegal mining in the country, the Supreme Court has ruled that the states and Union Territories can now grant leases for mining minor minerals in less than 5 hectares or renew them only after prior approval from the Union environment ministry. A special forest bench of SC directed the states and UTs to give effect to the various recommendations and guidelines framed by the ministry of environment and forests in its March 2010 report and submit compliance reports before the court within six months.
Sterlite offers ₹16K cr for
govt stake in Balco, HZL

Centre has 29.54% stake in HZL; 49% in Balco

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, MARCH 1

STERLITE Industries Ltd, owned by Anil Agarwal, has offered to pay Rs 16,000 crore to purchase the government’s 29.54 per cent stake in Hindustan Zinc or HZL and 49 per cent in Bharat Aluminium Company or Balco, in which the majority holding was acquired by the metal and mining company a decade ago.

“Government had asked us, if we will be interested to take its stakes in HZL and Balco. We answered in the affirmative. As per the prevailing market price, we have offered Rs 16,000 crore for buying stakes. That was in January,” Agarwal, chairman of the metal and mining conglomerate, told agencies. On Thursday, Sterlite shares closed marginally down to end at Rs 124.05 on the BSE.

Agency reports quoted Agarwal saying the price Vedanta has quoted for buying residual stakes in HZL was based on a month’s average stock price of the zinc producer. Vedanta had acquired the government’s 51 per cent stake in Balco in 2001 during the NDA regime for Rs 551 crore.

On February 25, London-listed Vedanta Resources Plc said it will merge Sterlite and mining company Sesa Goa Ltd to form Sesa Sterlite, creating a $10 billion natural resources giant. The merged company will have a larger balance sheet, which allows the company to raise resources to purchase the government’s residual stake in HZL and Balco. However, Sesa Sterlite will also inherit Vedanta’s $5.9 billion debt.

“They (the government) have sent a letter of intent. We have sent them an offer,” Agarwal told the media after announcing the Sterlite-Sesa Goa merger.

“The process is going on but, it should be completed by this year.” However, he cautioned that the buy-out will not come cheap. “...it will be an expensive acquisition.”

WITH AGENCIES
No mining in states or UTs without Centre’s nod, says SC

CEC report silent on illegal mining trend

NEW DELHI: Expressing concern over increasing rate of illegal mining in the country, the Supreme Court has ruled that the states and Union Territories can now grant leases for mining minor minerals in less than five hectares or renew them only after prior approval from the Union Environment Ministry.

A special forest Bench of justices K S Radhakrishnan and C K Prasad directed the states and UTs to give effect to the various recommendations and guidelines framed by the Ministry of Environment and Forests in its March 2010 report and submit compliance reports before the court within six months.

"Over the years, India’s rivers and riparian ecology have been badly affected by the alarming rate of unrestricted sand mining which damage the ecosystem of rivers and the safety of bridges, weakens river beds, destroys natural habitats of organisms living on the river beds, affects fish breeding and migration, spells disaster for the conservation of many bird species and increases saline water in the rivers," said Justice Radhakrishnan, writing the judgement for the bench.

The apex court passed the directions while dealing with the auction notice issued by the Haryana government on June 3 and August 8 2011 besides alleged illegal mining in UP and Rajasthan.

The Bench also expressed surprise at the report submitted by the Central Empowered Committee (CEC) on January 4, 2012, in which no mention was made of the illegal mining activities and the serious ecological dangers posed by it.

"The report, however, is silent with regard to the disturbing trend of serious illegal and unrestricted upstream, in-stream and flood plain sand mining activities and the prevailing degree of degradation of the sites and the environment, especially on the river beds mentioned earlier," the apex court maintained.

PTI
वेदांत ने की हिंदुस्तान जिंक और बाल्को में हिस्सेदारी खरीदने की पेशकश

नई दिल्ली, 1 मार्च (भाला). वेदांत समूह की स्टैंडलाइट इंडस्ट्रीज ने हिंदुस्तान जिंक लिमिटेड (एचजेएल) और भारत एंट्री-नो-नॉटिंग कंपनी (बाल्को) में सरकारी हिस्सेदारी खरीदने के लिए 16,000 करोड़ रुपए की पेशकश की है। वेदांत समूह ने एक दशक पहले इन कंपनियों की बहुली शारीरिक खरीदी थी।

कार्य 70 अरब धन के पात्र और जनता समूह के अध्यक्ष अनिल अपराजेय ने कहा कि सरकार ने हमसे पूछा कि हम एक हिंदुस्तान जिंक और बाल्को में उनकी हिस्सेदारी में कंपनी की क्षमता होगी। हमने अपनी हामी जानता है और भीजते बाजार मूल्य के मूल्यवर्धक हमने हिस्सेदारी खरीदने के लिए 16,000 करोड़ रुपए की पेशकश की है।

यह जनता की बात है। हमने कहा कि वेदांत ने हिंदुस्तान जिंक में लेग यंसेदारी खरीदने के लिए पिछले महीनों की आंशिक क्रियान्वयन के आधार पर यह खरीदी। वेदांत ने राज्य के कार्यालय के दौरान 2001 में 551 करोड़ रुपए में बाल्को को 51 प्रतिशत हिस्सेदारी खरीदी थी।

सरकार के पास अभी भी हिंदुस्तान जिंक की 29.54 प्रतिशत और बाल्को की 49 प्रतिशत हिस्सेदारी रही है। सरकार हालांकि वेदांत की पेशकश से सुना नहीं है और इस मामले पर चर्चा कर सके। एक अधिकारी प्राप्त के अनुसार वोल्टा में 9 प्रतिशत हिस्सेदारी होने के लिए यह खरीदी हुई है। समय वापस में पुलाए जा सकते हैं जब वेदांत की पेशकश से साक्ष्य की ओर से कोई सुवर्ण नहीं मिली है।

इसलिए उनके लिए इस खारे के पूरे तरीके की समस्याओं के बारे में बातचीत सामने नहीं होगी!
Row over MoEF stand on Western Ghats report

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 1

Eyebrows are being raised on why the ministry of environment and forests (MoEF) has been sitting on the Western Ghats ecology report for almost six months.

The MoEF had appointed a Western Ghats Ecology Expert Committee (WGEEC) under the chairmanship of leading environmentalist Madhav Gadgil to prepare a roadmap for the Western Ghats region which is under increasing threat, especially from the influential mining lobby operating in Goa and Maharashtra.

A host of mining and infrastructure projects were covering stiff opposition from the local population since they felt these were adversely affecting their livelihood and water sources. The committee was set up under the chairmanship of Jairam Ramesh in 2010 and was expected to submit its findings within a period of six months.

Amongst the recommendations made by the WGEEC was a moratorium on all mining activity. It also recommended that a detailed environmental impact of coal-based power projects in the coastal districts of the Konkan region of Maharashtra was a must before allowing them to come up.

The committee has divided the entire Western Ghats into three categories of ecologically sensitivity. While all mining activity in the premier Ecologically Sensitive Zone (ESZ) 1 be phased out by 2016, no new permission should be given to ESZ 2, even the existing ones be monitored more strictly.
Sterlite offers ₹16k cr for govt stakes in Balco, HZL

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terlite Industries, owned by Anil Agarwal, has offered to pay ₹16,000 crore to purchase the government’s 29.54% stake in Hindustan Zinc (HZL) and 49% in Bharat Aluminium Company (Balco), in which the majority holding was acquired by the metal and mining company a decade ago.

"Government had asked us, if we will be interested to take its stakes in HZL and Balco. We answered in affirmative. As per the prevailing market price, we have offered ₹16,000 crore for buying stakes. That was in January," Agarwal, the chairman of the metal and mining conglomerate, told agencies.

On Thursday, Sterlite shares closed marginally down to end at ₹124.05 on the BSE. The purchase offer comes soon after the government had kicked off its disinvestment programme on Thursday by selling a 5% stake in Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC). The government had fixed a price of ₹280 a piece and the disinvestment will be completed through an auction. The government had earlier planned to raise ₹40,000 crore to cut down its fiscal deficit by selling stakes in companies they own stakes, but had to call off on choppy stock markets.

Agency reports quoted Agarwal saying the price Vedanta had quoted for buying residual stakes in HZL was based on a month’s average stock price of the zinc producer. Vedanta had acquired the government’s 51% stake in Balco in 2001 during the NDA regime for ₹551 crore.

On February 22, London-listed Vedanta Resources said it will merge Sterlite and mining company Sesa Goa to form Sesa Sterlite, creating a $10 billion natural resources giant, the seventh largest global diversified natural resources company by earnings before interest taxes, depreciation and amortisation or Ebitda. The merged company will have a larger balance sheet, which allows the company to raise resources to purchase the government’s residual stake in HZL and Balco. However, Sesa Sterlite will also inherit Vedanta’s $5.9 billion debt.

"They (the government) have sent them an offer," Agarwal told media after announcing the Sterlite-Sesa Goa merger. "The process is going on but, it should be completed by this year." However, he cautioned that the buyout will not come cheap. "It will be an expensive acquisition, we also need to see where we can raise funds for this," he said.

The government does not seem to be happy with the valuation quoted by Vedanta and an empowered group of ministers which is looking into the matter had favoured a status quo till they find a fair valuation.

Agarwal said since January, Vedanta did not receive any communication from the government and against this backdrop, it would not be possible for him to give any time-frame when the deal would be through. "This is not in my hand. It is up to the government," he said when asked to project a time-line. Vedanta group company Sterlite Opportunities and Ventures (SOVL) owns 64% stake in HZL. It purchased n phases between 2002 and 2003.