

NEWS WRAP

AGD

There has been a steady rise in iron prices in India, over the past ten years. At roughly the same time that China was in the midst of the biggest construction boom of the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, India relaxed export restrictions on iron ore. The price per metric ton soared, as technical advances allowed increasing quantities of iron ore to be exported. Prices rose from \$17 to about \$130 per metric ton. People with money power or muscle power, and mostly without any knowledge of mining, ventured into mining. Political figures rushed into mining. In the past three months, more than 20,000 complaints of illegal mining have been filed in India. There are accusations of politicians enriching themselves or their friends through illegal mining leases. Scandals over mining have emanated in at least five Indian states. At least ten members of Parliament or the Karnataka State Assembly, now control leases in the Bellary region. Along with various other offences, a former chief minister of Jharkhand awaits trial, on charges of extortion of huge bribes, in exchange for granting mining leases.

A committee constituted by the union environment ministry and the union ministry of tribal affairs, which visited the POSCO Iron and Steel Project site in Jagatsinghpur district (Orissa) found evidence of alleged violation in the diversion of 1253 hectares of forest land, for the construction of the iron and steel plant. Contrary to facts presented by the district administration of Jagatsinghpur, the land in question was inhabited by forest dwellers whose resettlement had not been done, in accordance with the law. The district administration had not completed the process of verifying claims of the local residents, as mandated under the Forest Rights Act (FRA). On the basis of alleged violations of FRA, the union environment ministry and Orissa State Government have stopped all work relating to POSCO iron and steel project, and withdrawn the clearance given in December 2009. The \$12 billion POSCO project would have been the single biggest foreign investment in India.

RADICAL DISCONTENT

More and more members of the Sidhu-Kanho militia, the armed wing of the People's Committee Against Police Atrocities (PCPA) are flying Trinamool Congress flags and organizing rallies for the Trinamool, in West Midnapur district. The different lines between the Maoists and the Trinamool are increasingly blurred. The PCPA is stigmatized after the Jnaneswari train attack, and the Santras Virodhi Mancha is steadily replacing it, with the same PCPA activists, but having a much broader platform. The Santras Virodhi Manch includes (JMM-Anushilon), JMM (Naren Hansda faction), Socialist Unity Centre of India, Congress in Jhargram, the CPI(ML), Bandi Mukti Committee, Association of Protection of Democratic Rights, Lalgarh Samhati Manch and the Forum for Peace, Justice and Democracy.

SPECIAL FORCES

During Indonesia's decade long dictatorship, Kopassus, a military unit with some 5000 members, stands accused of widespread human rights violations, including torture and

murder, in the provinces of Aceh and Papua, and the Now-Independent East Timor. Separatist movements were brutally suppressed and hundreds of thousands of people killed. There was a suspension of US military ties with Jakarta in 1999, following revelation of crimes committed by Kopassus, in President Suharto's autocratic 32-year rule. Not many of the unit's members have faced legal proceedings. In recent years, as Indonesia implemented democratic reforms, Indonesian and US military ties have gradually resumed.

WIKILEAKS REVELATIONS

In July 2010, *Wikileaks* released thousands of reports from the Afghan war. Julian Assange is the organization's front man in the "small team" of full time employees. There are 800 part-time workers, an "extended networks" of 10,000 people, and another 70,000 supporters. Details on funding, organization of Wikileaks is all opaque. The Afghan files appear genuine military filings, without any "operational consequence". The 85,000 documents so far disclosed by Wikileaks add details to what is already widely known about the war in Afghanistan. There are about 1300 US dead in Afghanistan, which is around 2% of the 58,000 fatalities USA suffered in Vietnam. In several cases as Afghan insurgents were breaching US defences in Combat Outposts in eastern Afghanistan, US soldiers were typing in messages for Wikileaks, from military computers, on some of the most intense battles in the war. The whistle blowing website Wikileaks has displayed about 92,000 documents, giving a raw uncensored picture of the Afghan war.

Pakistan intelligence services are playing a double game, backing the NATO effort, while colluding with the Taliban. □□□