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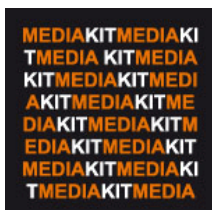
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## Australian mining companies feature among the world’s most controversial

Written by Ross Kendall

Thursday, 29 March 2012

BHP Billiton and Rio Tinto are among the top ten most controversial mining companies of 2011 according to a report by the Swiss-based RepRisk.

The [10 Most Controversial Mining Companies of 2011](#), benchmarked mining companies against the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) Principles and other international standards according to RepRisk. The Swiss company uses a propriety system to provide business intelligence on Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) risks in over 23,000 companies, it said.

BHP-Billiton (ASX: BHP) ranked fourth on the list and had a consistently high RepRisk Index (RRI). Health and safety was an issue and despite a commitment to improvement, BHP reported 26 deaths between 2009 and 2011.

It was also noted that in Pakistan, it was reported that 90 percent of the villagers living near the Zamzama gas plant operated by BHP Billiton are allegedly suffering from various diseases resulting from toxic fumes emitted by ponds at the plant.

“Furthermore, BHP reportedly has a huge stake in US shale gas, with plans to use the controversial hydraulic fracturing (fracking) technique to develop it. In Arkansas, BHP Billiton faced a class action lawsuit over the negative impact of fracking operations, the report said.

The company’s commitment to corporate social responsibility was also questioned because 139 BHP companies within the group were highlighted as operating from international tax havens.

Rio Tinto (ASX: RIO) is sixth on the list and the key issues include “uranium mining; alleged genocide and war crimes in Papua New Guinea; and the risk of social and environmental damage at many mining projects proposed by Rio Tinto and its subsidiaries,” according to the RepRisk report.

Reports by non-government organisations say that radioactive water is in danger of spilling from the Ranger Uranium Mine in Kakadu’s World Heritage-listed wetlands. The mine is operated by Energy Resource of Australia, which is controlled by Rio Tinto.

The company was also criticised by NGOs for supplying uranium to Tokyo Electric Power (the operator of the two Fukushima plants that are experiencing melt down and cooling problems in Japan), despite Tokyo Electric Power’s reported issues of ongoing falsification of information and cover-ups, the report said.

In Canada, Rio Tinto Alcan has been sued by two First Nation tribes in British Columbia’s Supreme Court because of the alleged adverse impacts on their culture, sustenance and fisheries of the Kenney Dam.

Alpha Natural Resources, Newmont Mining, and Glencore International topped the list for issues related to mountaintop removal mining and impacts on indigenous people and protected areas.

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