

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF MINES
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO – 1414
ANSWERED ON 31.07.2024

AUCTION FOR CRITICAL MINERAL BLOCKS

1414. SMT. DAGGUBATI PURANDESWARI,
SHRI NARESH GANPAT MHASKE,
DR. SHRIKANT EKNATH SHINDE,
SHRI PRAVEEN PATEL
SHRI HARIBHAI PATEL:

Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government is planning to auction the critical minerals blocks to boost economic investment and development in mineral exploration;
- (b) if so, the details of the blocks of minerals which are scheduled to be auctioned;
- (c) whether the Government is planning to bring out a strategy to secure minerals essential for advanced technology sectors;
- (d) if so, the details of the reforms introduced in the sector;
- (e) the details of new mineral deposits found, if any, during the last ten years; and
- (f) the manner in which the Government is overcoming the challenges and taking up the opportunities for mineral exploration in India?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF COAL AND MINES
(SHRI G. KISHAN REDDY)

(a) to (b): Yes Sir. The Central Government has amended the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) (MMDR) Act, 1957 through the MMDR Amendment Act, 2023, whereby Central Government has been empowered to auction 24 critical and strategic minerals in part D to the Schedule-I of the MMDR Act, 1957. So far, 14 critical mineral blocks have been successfully auctioned having minerals viz., Lithium, REE, Graphite, Vanadium, Nickel, Chromium, Glauconite, Platinum Group of Elements (PGE) and Phosphorite. These blocks are spread across the States of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

Further, auction of 21 critical mineral blocks of commodities viz., Graphite, Glauconite, Phosphorite, Nickel, PGE, REE, Potash, Tungsten, Vanadium, Glauconite, Cobalt and Chromium from the States of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu are notified for auction.

(c) to (f). Yes, the Government of India has taken several initiatives to secure supply of minerals that are key to India's strategic interest and also to meet the requirement of key sectors including advanced technology sectors.

To secure the domestic supply of critical minerals essential for advanced technologies, Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 (MMDR Act), and the Offshore Areas Mineral (Development and Regulation) Act, 2002 (OAMDR Act), have been amended in 2023. The amendments aim to enhance exploration and mining of critical and strategic minerals, ensuring self-sufficiency in sectors like high-tech electronics and renewable energy. Additionally, a new mineral concession namely Exploration Licence has been introduced for 29 deep-seated minerals that include critical minerals as well. This will permit the licensee to undertake reconnaissance and prospecting operations for these minerals.

Further, to encourage private participation in exploration, Ministry of Mines has notified 22 private exploration agencies (NPEAs). These agencies are taking up exploration projects through funding from National Mineral Exploration Trust (NMET).

In 2023, the Ministry of Mines enlarged the scope of the S&T program by launching S&T-PRISM (Promotion of Research and Innovation in Start-ups and MSMEs) to fund research and innovation in Start-ups and MSMEs working in the field of mining and mineral sector in order to bridge the gap between R&D and commercialisation.

The Ministry of Mines has also entered into bilateral agreements with the resource rich countries such as Australia, Argentina, Chile, Mozambique etc. which are having rich critical mineral resources and access to the latest technologies in the exploration and development of critical minerals.

The joint venture company- Khanij Bidesh India Ltd. (KABIL) under Ministry has acquired 15,700 ha in Catamarca province of Argentina for exploration and mining of Lithium.

Since 2015, Geological Survey of India has handed over 244 Geological Reports and 324 Geological Memorandums of various minerals including critical minerals to the major mineral States and to the Ministry of Mines for auction of mineral blocks.

The above initiatives will contribute towards India's economic growth by ensuring availability and a reliable supply chain of the mineral resources.
