

No. M.VI-16/15/2021-Mines VI
Government of India
Ministry of Mines

Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi
Dated the 30th May, 2025

Order

Subject: Amendment in the Guidelines issued vide Order No. M.VI-16/15/2021-Mines VI dated 12.08.2021 for notification of accredited private exploration agencies under the second proviso to sub-section (1) of section 4 of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957.

Clause (i) of Para 7 of the guidelines issued vide Order No. M.VI-16/15/2021-Mines VI dated 12.08.2021 (copy enclosed) for notification of accredited private exploration agencies under the second proviso to sub-section (1) of section 4 of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 is hereby amended as follows, namely:-

| Existing Clause (i) of Para 7 of the guidelines | To be read as |
|---|---|
| The notification of private exploration agency shall be valid for the period of three years from the date of notification or till expiry or termination of the accreditation granted to such agency, whichever is earlier and the agency may apply for fresh notification in its favour on or before the expiry of the said period. | The notification of private exploration agency shall be valid for the period of three years from the date of notification or till expiry or termination of the accreditation granted to such agency, whichever is earlier. The agency may apply for extension of the period of notification for a further period of three years after obtaining re-accreditation from QCI NABET in its favour in accordance with the scheme for accreditation (Annexure-I). |

2. This is issued with the approval of Hon'ble Minister of Mines.

(Dinesh Mahur)
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To,

1. Chief Secretaries of all States
2. Administrators of Union Territories

Copy for information to:

1. PS to Hon'ble Minister for Mines
2. OSD to Hon'ble Minister for State for Mines
3. PSO to Secretary (Mines)
4. PA to AS (Mines)
5. PPS to JS (Policy)
6. PA to Director (Policy)
7. PA to Director (Technical)
8. PA to Director (NMET)

No. M.VI-16/15/2021-Mines VI

Government of India

Ministry of Mines

Shastri Bhawan,

New Delhi-110 001

Dated: 12.08.2021


Order

Subject: Guidelines for notification of accredited private exploration agencies under the second proviso to sub-section (1) of section 4 of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957.

The second proviso to section 4(1) of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 (hereinafter, 'the MMDR Act') has been amended through the MMDR Amendment Act, 2021, *w.e.f.* 28.03.2021. The said amended provision empowers the Central Government to notify entities, including private entities that may undertake prospecting operations, subject to such terms and conditions as may be specified by the Central Government.

2. With the view to increase the pace of exploration in the country and to bring advance technology in exploration of minerals, it has been decided to notify private exploration agencies to undertake prospecting operations under the second proviso to section 4(1). Accordingly, a Committee was constituted by the Ministry of Mines to recommend eligibility norms, manner for selection, procedure of application, etc. for notification of exploration agencies.

3. The Committee observed that Ministry of Coal has notified and implemented a scheme for accreditation of prospecting agencies in coal and lignite sector in May, 2020, which was developed by the National Accreditation Board for Education and Training of the Quality Council of India (QCI-NABET). Accordingly, the Committee studied the scheme of accreditation in coal and lignite sector and consulted senior executives of the QCI-NABET. The committee requested QCI-NABET to develop a scheme for accreditation of exploration agencies to meet the requirements of mineral sector so as to enable the Government identify eligible entities for notification under the second proviso to section 4(1).


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4. The scheme for accreditation so developed by the QCI-NABET was examined by the Committee and after detailed deliberations, the Committee recommended for adoption of the scheme for accreditation of private exploration agencies in mineral sector. Accordingly, the scheme for accreditation is hereby accepted by the Ministry for its implementation. It is hereby directed that the QCI-NABET shall not amend any provisions of the scheme for accreditation, including the provisions related to qualification, experience, role and responsibility of project coordinator, technical area expert and team members, fee, accreditation process, etc. without approval of the Ministry of Mines.

5. In view of the above, it has been decided by the Ministry that the QCI-NABET shall grant accreditation to private exploration agencies for undertaking prospecting operations of minerals in accordance with the standards and procedures of the scheme for accreditation annexed herewith as **Annexure-I** and such private exploration agencies accredited under the said scheme shall be considered by the Ministry of Mines for notification under the second proviso to sub-section (1) of section 4 of the Act.

6. The interested private exploration agencies (applicants) shall be required to obtain accreditation in accordance with the scheme for accreditation and thereafter apply to the Ministry for their notification in the format specified in **Annexure-II**. The Ministry after examination may notify such accredited exploration agencies. The Ministry may make any enquiry or seek further information from such agency, as it deem fit, for consideration of its application. Accreditation of any agency shall not create any right in favour of such agency for its notification and the Ministry may reject any application after consideration.

7. The issue of notification shall be subject to such terms and conditions as may be specified by the Ministry in the notification, including the following conditions:-

(i) The notification of private exploration agency shall be valid for the period of three years from the date of notification or till expiry or termination of the accreditation granted to such agency, whichever is earlier and the agency may apply for fresh notification in its favour on or before the expiry of the said period.

(ii) Private exploration agencies will be notified under the following two categories having right to undertake prospecting operations in


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respect of the mineral deposits as specified below against each category:

| Category of exploration agency | Type of mineral deposit |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Category A Exploration Agencies | (a) Bedded Stratiform & Tabular deposits (b) Lenticular composite veins (c) Gem-Stone and rare metal pegmatite, reefs and veins/pipes (d) Float & Placer deposits (e) Deep Seated deposits |
| Category B Exploration Agencies | (a) Bedded Stratiform & Tabular deposits (b) Float & placer deposits |

(iii) Before commencement of the prospecting operations in any area, the exploration agency shall obtain written permission of the following and it shall have right to undertake prospecting operations only for the area and minerals for which it has obtained the written permission:-

- (a) the Central Government, in case exploration is sanctioned by the Central Government; or
- (b) the State Government, in case exploration is sanctioned by the State Government; or
- (c) the holder of prospecting licence, composite licence or mining lease for the area granted to such concession holder.

(iv) Prospecting operations shall be undertaken in accordance with the provisions regarding such operations in the Minerals (Evidence of Mineral Contents) Rules, 2015, the Mineral Conservation and Development Rules, 2017 and any other applicable law for the time being in force. The terms and conditions as specified under Rule 11 and other rules of the Minerals (Other than Atomic and Hydro Carbons Energy Minerals) Concession Rules, 2016 shall be applicable *mutatis mutandis* to the exploration agency.

(v) On completion or abandonment of the prospecting operations or termination of the notification in favour of accredited exploration agency, whichever is earlier, the agency shall submit the report of


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work done in the form of geological study report to the State Government, Indian Bureau of Mines and Geological Survey of India.

(vi) The exploration agency shall intimate in writing the Ministry of Mines immediately of any changes in its status or in the information provided by it to the Ministry of Mines in the application seeking notification, where information regarding such changes, if intimated, may affect the consideration for notification of the exploration agency. This requirement of intimation shall be in addition to the requirement of intimation/ providing of information to QCI-NABET under the provision of the accreditation scheme.

(vii) The Central Government may rescind the notification in favour of an exploration agency at any time for any reasons, including but not limited to violation of the Act, Rules, terms and conditions of notification, conditions of accreditation; submission of false or misleading information; termination or suspension of accreditation; failure to report any major changes in status or in the information provided by the exploration agency and evident conflict of interest.

8. This is issued with the approval of Hon'ble Minister of Mines.


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To,

1. Chief Secretaries of all States
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