

Ministry of Mines will Launch the 1st Tranche of Auction of Exploration License Soon: Union Minister G Kishan Reddy

Jammu & Kashmir, Kerala and Assam will join the Mineral Auction Regime Soon: Mines Minister

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The Ministry of Mines will launch the 1st Tranche auction of Exploration License blocks in March 2025, said Union Minister of Coal and Mines Shri G Kishan Reddy today. Speaking at a press conference held in New Delhi, minister informed that the provision of grant of Exploration License for critical and deep-seated minerals through auction was made through an amendment in the MMDR Act in 2023. Shri Reddy also said that Assam, Jammu & Kashmir and Kerala will also join the mineral auction regime soon, expanding the mineral auction map of India to 17 states. The Union Minister highlighted several key achievements and upcoming initiatives aimed at strengthening the mining ecosystem in the country.



Expanding Exploration Activities

- **Geological Survey of India (GSI):** GSI undertook 438 exploration projects in field season 2024-25, including 195 critical mineral projects, a significant increase from 360 projects (including 127 critical mineral projects) of the previous field season, 2023-24. Advanced technologies such as heliborne geophysical surveys, AI/ML tools, and drone technologies have been deployed to accelerate data acquisition and mineral discovery. In the field season 2025-26, GSI have taken up 450 exploration projects, including 227 critical mineral projects.
- **Mineral Exploration Corporation Limited (MECL):** Exploratory drilling by MECL increased by 35%, significantly enhancing operational efficiency. Additionally, 33 geological reports were handed over in 2024, strengthening the National Mineral Inventory.
- **National Mineral Exploration Trust (NMET):** 146 exploration and procurement projects worth ₹712 crore were approved during 1st January 2024 to 31st January 2025. Innovative schemes, including partial reimbursement of exploration expenses and funding for private exploration agencies, have been introduced to boost mineral exploration.



Enhancing Private Sector Participation & Policy Reforms

- 12 new Notified Private Exploration Agencies (NPEAs) were added in 2024, bringing the total to 28, further encouraging private sector participation.
- Guidelines for exploration in border areas were relaxed, removing restrictions beyond 20 km from the border and streamlining the process within 20 km in coordination with the Ministry of Defence.

Strengthening Technology & Data-Driven Decision Making

- The Geological Survey of India is setting up an AI-enabled Data Processing Centre in Bengaluru to enhance mineral targeting through AI/ML. Complementing this, the Ministry of Mines organized the Mineral Exploration Hackathon in July 2024 to promote emerging technologies for geophysical data analysis and integrating multiple exploration datasets.
- Mining Tenement System (MTS): A dedicated module for average sale price based on real-time price data was launched on 22nd January, 2024. Further, two new modules - Final Mine Closure Plan module

and Exploration License/ Composite License/ Prospecting License module of MTS were launch

Strategic Initiatives for Critical Minerals

- The National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM) was approved with an expenditure of ₹16,300 crore and an expected investment of ₹18,000 crore, focusing on areas including domestic production, recycling, overseas acquisitions, and R&D.
- A new Tailings Policy will be introduced to recover critical minerals such as Gallium, Tellurium, and Selenium from the overburden dumps & tailings ensuring resource optimization.

Expanding the Mining Sector Across States

- Since 2024, 335 mineral blocks have been put up for auction, with 106 successfully auctioned. First-time auctions were conducted in Telangana, Bihar, and Arunachal Pradesh, expanding India's mineral auction landscape to 14 states. Assam has also notified blocks for auction, with Jammu & Kashmir and Kerala expected to join soon.
- A dedicated Project Management Unit (PMU) has been set up to expedite the operationalization of auctioned mines, ensuring smoother execution and faster mineral production. The dedicated PMU with 4 professionals in Delhi and 8 in different States will support expediting operationalization of mineral blocks by monitoring progress, identifying bottlenecks, and facilitating coordination among various stakeholders.

Sustainable Mining & State-Level Performance Index

- A State Mining Index will be introduced in 2025 to evaluate states on parameters such as regulatory environment, technical expertise, and sustainability practices. The State Mining Index is expected to be released in the 2nd quarter of 2025.
- The National Mining Ministers' Conference, held in Bhubaneswar in January 2025, facilitated discussions on auction performance, regulatory frameworks, and state best practices.

Commemorating 175 Years of GSI

- A year-long celebration from March 2025 to March 2026 will mark the 175th anniversary of the Geological Survey of India, featuring international and national seminars, outreach programs, and cultural events.

The Ministry of Mines remains committed to fostering a robust and sustainable mining sector through continuous innovation, policy reforms, and collaborative engagement with industry stakeholders. These initiatives are set to enhance India's mineral security, boost economic growth, and position the country as a global leader in mineral exploration and mining.

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