MINISTRY OF MINES MAJOR ACTIVITIES FEBRUARY – 2020

The highlights of the achievements and activities of the Ministry of Mines for the month of February, 2020 are as under

➢ Major activities of the month:

• 19 mining blocks were auctioned in February, 2020. Since the amendment to MMDR Act, 1957 in 2015, a total of 95 mineral blocks across 9 States have been auctioned with estimated revenues of Rs.6,83,048 Cr accruing over fifty years. With one more auctioned iron ore mine in Karnataka coming into operations, a total of 12 auctioned mines have now been operationalized. Further, 14 mineral blocks are presently under auction in Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka.

• There are 46 working mines with leases expiring on 31.03.2020 under Section 8A (6) of the MMDR Act, 1957. The major impact on production of minerals is from Odisha (24) & Karnataka (7). 19 mines were auctioned in Odisha in February, 2020. Thus, auction process has been completed for 25 mines out of 46. Against anticipated disruption of 60 MT iron ore, the production from these 25 auctioned mines will cover 50.9MT. Further, auction process for 3 more mines of Odisha will be completed in March. Exploration is being carried out in remaining 18 mines. Against the Ordinance for amendment in the MMDR Act 1957 promulgated on 10thJanuary, 2020 to facilitate seamless continuance of mining operations, the Draft Rules are finalized after elaborate consultation process with stakeholders and would be published after related Bill is passed by the Parliament.

• The 36th International Geological Congress (36IGC), scheduled to be held during 2nd to 8th March, 2020 was postponed due to Corona virus risks and would be held now from 9thto 14thNovember, 2020. The Ministry had to make intensive efforts to convince IUGS to not cancel the event altogether.

➢ Monthly Status of PMKKKY-DMF:
- Pradhan Mantri Khanij Kshetra Kalyan Yojana (PMKKKY) is being implemented through the funds collected under District Mineral Foundation (DMF) and as on 31st January, 2020, of Rs.35,925 Cr collected, Rs.30,652 Cr stands allocated and Rs.12,414 Cr are spent. 1,50,178 projects have been sanctioned.

- **Important Meetings and other activities:**

- I held a meeting with the Officers of Gujarat Mineral Development Corporation (GMDC), Commissionerate of Geology and Mining, Gujarat, Geological Survey of India (GSI) and Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM), Gujarat on 13.2.2020, at Ahmadabad, regarding the progress of all the exploration specially base metal exploration in Deri-Ambaji area and the status of non-working mines in Gujarat. I also reviewed the status of already auctioned mines. In this meeting, I advised them to consider option of a joint venture with Gujarat and Rajasthan Government for base metal exploration in Deri-Ambaji area. It was discussed that a TEFR report should be prepared with involvement of PSU/Government agency like MOIL and MECL. I visited Gandhi Nagar on 13.02.2020 and had a meeting with Chief Secretary Gujarat about the mining issues. On request of Ministry of Mines, State Government of Gujarat has agreed to initiate a pilot project for auction with pre embedded clearances. I attended Chintan Shivir at Kevadia, Gujarat on 16& 17.03.2020 under the chairmanship of Hon’ble Minister of Coal, Mines & Parliamentary affairs, Shri Pralhad Joshi to finalize strategies for the mineral sector.

- A review meeting on the issues of ‘pre-feasibility and pilot study for Potash exploration’ in State of Rajasthan was held on 12.2.2020 in Ministry with the officers of State Govt. of Rajasthan; resultanty, a Tripartite Memorandum of Understanding [MoU] between Directorate of
Geology and Mining, Udaipur, Rajasthan; RSMML and Mineral Exploration Corporation Limited [MECL] is under finalisation

- The mining lease of M/s NMDC Limited in Donimalai in Karnataka for iron ore (annual 7 MT) over 608 hectares expired on 02.11.2018. NMDC had sought an extension of lease under Rule 3(2) of the Mineral (Mining by Government Companies) (MMGC) Rules, 2015 from State Government of Karnataka which extended the mining lease on 02.11.2018 with a condition of payment of premium equivalent to 80% of the average sale price of iron ore. NMDC took the matter to Hon’ble High Court of Karnataka which ruled that the State Government’s order is unsustainable in law and liable to be quashed. Ministry of Mines amended the Rule 3(2) of MMGC Rules, 2015 on 27.09.2019 regarding the extension of leases in respect of PSUs by the State Governments duly substituting “may” with “shall”, for reasons to be recorded. The State Government of Karnataka is yet to grant extension of the said lease to NMDC despite several meetings including at the level of Ministers. This is now under further discussion between NMDC and the State Govt.

- A meeting was held on 5th February, 2020 with Dr. P.K Mishra, Principal Secretary to PM and Shri P.K. Sinha, Principal Advisor to PM in which Secretary, DAE was also present. It was decided that GSI will prepare a vision document-2025 on Rare Earth Elements (REE) in consultation with experts from IREL, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research(TIFR) and Bhabha Atomic Research Center(BARC). It was also decided that to increase the internal resources of REE, the convergence between DAE and Ministry of Mines would be further consolidated by ensuring better coordination between Geological Survey of India and Atomic Mineral Directorate for Exploration and Research. I have also written a DO letter to Secretary, DAE & Chairman, AEC in this regard.

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