

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
DEPARTMENT OF ATOMIC ENERGY
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 424
TO BE ANSWERED ON 03.02.2021

DEVELOPMENT OF IRECHAVARA, KERALA

424. SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN:

Will the Prime Minister be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government proposes to diversify the activities of Indian Rare Earth (IRE) Ltd. and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) whether the Government proposes to develop IRE Chavara, Kerala so as to produce value added products using the minerals mined regionally and if so, the action taken thereon;
- (c) whether the proposal is pending with the Government for the development of IRE Chavara, if so, the details there of and the action taken thereon;
- (d) whether the Government proposes to invest more in Research and Development (R&D) in IRE and if so, the details thereof;
- (e) whether the Government proposes to utilise the resources and facilities in IRE Chavara for its development and if so, the details thereof and the action taken thereon; and
- (f) whether the Government proposes private participation in IRE and if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES & PENSIONS AND PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (DR. JITENDRA SINGH):

- (a) Yes, Sir. The operation of IREL (India) Limited (IREL), a Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSE) under the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) is aligned to meet the strategic needs of the Department, besides handling radioactive substances to produce activity free minerals/elements for manufacturing value added products.

In order to strengthen its strategic outreach, the activities of IREL are extended in line by undertaking projects to meet strategic need of DAE in terms of Rare Earth magnet, extraction of Dysprosium and Gadolinium. A Memorandum of Understanding is also signed with M/s. Ust-Kamenogorsk Titanium and Magnesium Plant JSC, Kazakhstan to set up a value-added plant for production of Titanium slag in Odisha. In addition based on a home grown technology developed through internal R & D, IREL is setting up a pilot plant for production of high pure titanium pigment and zirconium oxy-chloride. IREL is setting up a theme park (incubation centre) to demonstrate technologies in the value chain of Rare Earths.

- (b) Yes, Sir. The operations of IREL in Chavara, Kerala is one of the prime movers towards value addition of products of IREL having perfect equilibrium between demand and supply. Ilmenite, which is the major product produced in the unit is supplied to three units operating in the value chain of titanium i.e. M/s. Kerala Minerals and Metals Limited(KMML), M/s. Travancore Titanium Products Limited(TTPL) and M/s. Cochin Minerals and Rutile Limited(CMRL). All the other minerals are supplied to Micro and Small Enterprises, who have set up downstream industries, while monazite is meant for captive use for strategic purposes and production of Rare Earths. In the recent past, due to excessive inhabitation of the mining areas, supply side has weakened due to resource constraints. Therefore, efforts have been undertaken in the first instance, to meet the supply requirement of existing industry in value chain. Thereafter, value addition, if any, will be planned after ensuring adequate resources based on deposits, environment clearance and grant of lease.
- (c) No, Sir.
- (d) Yes, Sir. Department of Atomic Energy, Government of India have established a Technology Development Council (IRELTDC) comprising of eminent scientists of the country. Projects in the value chain of Rare Earths and Titanium are awarded to R&D institutes of repute such as Indian Institute of Technology, Centre for Scientific and Industrial Research, Institute of Minerals and Metals Technology NIR Cerium – Near Infra Red etc. Some of the projects so undertaken are development of Cerium-Zirconia based catalyst, NIR cerium oxide for energy saving in glazed tiles/cool textile, extraction of neodymium metal by clean process, extraction of yttrium from monazite/xenotime, textile fibre colors using environment friendly Rare Earths salts, thermal barrier coating materials, nano titania, etc.
- (e) The resources and facilities of IREL, Chavara are being utilized fully to the extent of availability of resources and statutory clearance like environment clearance. Ilmenite, the major product is supplied to three plants operating in the value chain i.e. KMML, TTPL and CMRL, while the other mineral products are supplied to number of Micro and Small Enterprises operating in the downstream sector. Monazite produced in the unit is used by IREL for strategic purposes and RE products.
- (f) No, Sir.
