

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
DEPARTMENT OF ATOMIC ENERGY
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 5272
ANSWERED ON 02/04/2025

MINING OF SEA SAND CONTAINING RARE EARTH MINERALS

5272. SHRI N K PREMACHANDRAN

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:-

- (a) whether the Ministry of Mines obtained permission from the Atomic Energy Department for engaging private agencies to mine sea sand containing rare earth minerals and radioactive elements from the Kerala coastal region;
- (b) if so, the details thereof along with the details of the permission order if it is granted;
- (c) whether the Department of Mines is competent to engage private agencies for mining of sea sand containing rare earth minerals and radioactive element without the prior consent and permission of Atomic Energy Department;
- (d) if so, the details thereof and the action taken thereon;
- (e) whether the Department of Mines or Atomic Energy Department conducted any study or examination regarding the percentage of rare earth minerals and radioactive elements in offshore sand in Kollam coastal region; and
- (f) if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

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

- (a) to (d) The Central Government has launched the first tranche of auction of 13 offshore blocks on 28.11.2024 for grant of composite licence, i.e. exploration licence-cum-production lease, in accordance with the Offshore Areas Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 2002. This includes three offshore blocks of construction sand off the coast of Kerala beyond the territorial waters.

As per Rule 5(2) of the Offshore Areas Operating Right Rules, 2024, prior consultation with stakeholder Ministries/Departments including Department of Atomic Energy, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF & CC) and Department of Fisheries is mandatory before notifying any offshore area for grant of operating right.

In the present case, the Ministry of Mines has consulted with the Department of Atomic Energy and other related Ministries/Departments before notification of blocks for auction and the no objection of all Ministries/Departments was received prior to notification for bloauction.

Further, as per the first proviso of Section 6 of the OAMDR Act, 2002, no exploration licence, or composite licence, or production lease shall be granted for an area to any person other than the Government, a Government company or a

corporation, in respect of any minerals specified in Part B of the First Schedule to the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 (67 of 1957). As per the GSI report, all three proposed blocks contains silica sand only and no radioactive elements have been reported.

- (e) Yes.
- (f) Department of Atomic Energy has carried out preliminary investigations in offshore sands of Kollam Coast, wherein ~0.04 million tonne in-situ monazite (a phosphate mineral containing 9-10% Th-oxide and 55-60% Rare Earth Elements Oxide) resource has been estimated.
