

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF MINES  
RAJYA SABHA  
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1239  
ANSWERED ON 10.03.2025

**OFFSHORE SAND MINING WITH PRIVATE COLLABORATION IN COASTAL  
REGIONS OF KERALA**

1239 SHRI HARIS BEERAN:

Will the Minister of Mines be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Central Government has taken any decision to conduct offshore sand mining with private collaboration in Kerala coastal regions;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether Government got any environmental clearance from the concerned authorities or made any study report regarding the impact on offshore exploration that will devastate Kerala's ecological balance and bio-diversity, if so, the details thereof; and
- (d) whether Kerala Government submitted any letter of objection in this regard, if so, the details thereof?

**ANSWER**

THE MINISTER OF COAL AND MINES  
(SHRI G. KISHAN REDDY)

(a) & (b): 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. This includes three offshore blocks of construction sand off the coast of Kerala beyond the territorial waters. As such, the blocks are not on the coast of Kerala. The details of these blocks are as under:

Sl. No.	Block Name	Coast/ Sea	Area (in sq. km)	Resources (in Million Tonnes)
1.	Kollam CS Block-1	West Coast, Arabian Sea	79.00	100.33
2.	Kollam CS Block-2	West Coast, Arabian Sea	78.00	100.64
3.	Kollam CS Block-2	West Coast, Arabian Sea	85.00	101.45

An Indian national, or a company as defined in clause (20) of section 2 of the Companies Act, 2013 which fulfils the eligibility conditions can participate in the auction of these mineral blocks.

(c): As per Rule 5(2) of the Offshore Areas Operating Right Rules, 2024, prior consultation with stakeholder Ministries/Departments including 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 MoEF & CC, Department of Fisheries 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 auction.

In order to conserve marine species, MoEF & CC has notified 130 Marine Protected Areas across the Coastal States and Islands and 106 coastal and marine sites have been identified and prioritized as Important Coastal and Marine Biodiversity Areas (ICMBAs) to take care of marine species conservation. The offshore blocks have been carved by excluding these areas.

As per the provisions of the Offshore Areas Mineral (Auction) Rules, 2024, before execution of an operating right, the bidders are required to obtain all consents, approvals, permits, no-objections and the like as may be required under applicable laws for commencement of production operations.

Further, as per the provisions of the Offshore Areas Mineral Conservation and Development Rules, 2024, no production operations shall be undertaken except in accordance with a production plan. The production plan, *inter-alia*, includes environment management plan indicating baseline information, impact assessment and mitigation measures.

(d): The Ministry of Mines has received a reference dated 13.02.2025 from the Government of Kerala expressing its concerns regarding auction of offshore blocks on account of possible impact of marine ecosystem of Kerala.

The three offshore blocks notified for auction off the coast of Kerala are beyond the territorial waters. There are adequate provisions in the Offshore Areas Mineral (Development and Regulation) Act, 2002 and the rules made thereunder to safeguard ecological balance, bio-diversity and protecting the interest of fishermen.

Further, Section 16A of the Act provides for establishment of Offshore Areas Mineral Trust as a non-profit autonomous body. Accordingly, the Offshore Areas Mineral Trust has been established vide S.O. 3246(E) dated 09.08.2024. The coastal States have been made members of the Governing Body and Executive Committee of the Trust.

The funds accruing to the Trust shall, *inter-alia*, be used for research, administration, studies and related expenditure with respect to offshore areas and mitigation of any adverse impact that may be caused to the ecology in the offshore area, due to operations undertaken, providing relief upon the occurrence of any disaster in the offshore area and for the interest and benefit of persons affected by exploration or production operations undertaken.

\*\*\*\*\*