

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF MINES  
**RAJYA SABHA**  
**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1869**  
ANSWERED ON 17.03.2025

**OFFSHORE MINERAL EXTRACTION**

1869 SHRI JOSE K. MANI:

Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government has issued tender notices to auction off 13 offshore mineral blocks located in the Arabian Sea and Andaman Sea;
- (b) whether Government has conducted any environment impact assessment before deciding to auction off these mineral blocks;
- (c) if so, the details thereof, if not, the reasons behind this decision; and
- (d) whether Government is aware of the fact that offshore mineral extraction will seriously impact our marine resources thereby impacting our fisherman community?

**ANSWER**

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

(a): 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. These blocks are situated off the coast beyond the territorial waters. The details of these blocks are as under:

- 3 construction-grade sand blocks off Kerala's coast (Arabian Sea) for use in infrastructure development.
- 3 lime-mud blocks off Gujarat's coast (Arabian Sea) with high-quality calcium carbonate suitable for cement production.
- 7 polymetallic nodule and crust blocks near the Great Nicobar Islands (Andaman Sea), containing critical metals such as cobalt and nickel, essential for electric vehicles, high-tech applications, and renewable energy.

(b) & (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): There are adequate provisions in the Offshore Areas Mineral (Development and Regulation) Act, 2002 and the rules made thereunder to safeguard ecological balance, biodiversity and protecting the interest of fishermen.

Section 16A of the Act provides for establishment of Offshore Areas Mineral Trust as a non-profit autonomous body. Accordingly, the of 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.

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