GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF MINES
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 116
ANSWERED ON 20.07.2026

CRITICAL MINERALS EXPLORATION AND GROWTH OF THE MINING SECTOR

116. SHRI BABUBHAI JESANGBHAI DESAI:

Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether mineral production has increased during the last three years;
(b) the progress in exploration of critical minerals;
(c) the measures taken to strengthen domestic mineral security; and
(d) the initiatives to attract private investment?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR COAL AND MINES
(SHRI SATISH CHANDRA DUBEY)

(a) The value of production of major minerals has shown an increasing trend during the last three years with 26.8% increase during last year. The details are as given below:

Year	Value of Major Mineral Production
2023-24	₹1.43 lakh crore
2024-25	₹1.49 lakh crore
2025-26 (Provisional)	₹1.89 lakh crore

(b)**:** Geological Survey of India (GSI) has intensified exploration of critical minerals. GSI carried out 195 critical mineral exploration projects in 2024–25, 230 projects in 2025–26 and took up 300 projects in 2026-27. Additionally, National Mineral Exploration and Development Trust (NMEDT) has sanctioned 62 projects for exploration of critical minerals during 2024-25, 84 during 2025-26 and 30 during 2026-27.

(c) & (d): To strengthen the domestic critical mineral security, the Ministry has undertaken several measures, which inter alia include:

- The Ministry of Mines has successfully auctioned 56 critical mineral blocks. Additionally, the Central Government has also successfully auctioned 11 blocks of Exploration License, which include six blocks of critical minerals.
- The Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act (MMDR Act), 1957 has been amended in 2025 whereby the scope of NMEDT has been expanded to support critical mineral exploration and mining overseas.

- Guidelines for funding Pilot Projects for Recovery of Critical Minerals from overburden/tailings/fly ash/ Red mud etc. issued on 14.11.2025.
- Khanij Bidesh India Limited (KABIL), under Ministry of Mines, has signed an Exploration and Development Agreement with CAMYEN, a state-owned enterprise of Catamarca province of Argentina, for exploration and mining of five Lithium Brine Blocks in Argentina covering an area of 15703 Ha.
- During Union Budget 2024–25, customs duties were eliminated on 25 critical minerals. In Budget 2025–26, Basic Customs Duty (BCD) was exempted on cobalt powder and waste, scrap of lithium-ion batteries, etc. Further, in Budget 2026–27, BCD was exempted on the import of capital goods required for processing of critical minerals in India.
- MMDR Act, 1957, was amended in 2023 to introduce the Exploration Licenses (EL) regime for deep-seated and critical minerals. The EL holder is entitled to a share in the auction premium payable by the mining lease/composite licence holder, as prescribed.
- Till date, forty-eight Private Exploration Agencies have been notified for taking up exploration projects with 100% funding support from NMEDT.
- To encourage, and incentivize private-sector participation in mineral exploration, scheme for partial reimbursement of exploration expenses has been introduced for holders of Composite Licences (CL) (reimbursement of up to 50%, subject to a ceiling of ₹8 crore) and holders of Exploration Licence (EL) (up to 50% of expenses, with a maximum limit of ₹20 crore).
- The Ministry of Mines has launched a scheme for reimbursement of up to 50% of the eligible exploration expenditure incurred by Composite Licence (CL) holders on approved exploration activities in offshore CL blocks, subject to a maximum limit of ₹300 crore.
- The Union Cabinet approved a ₹1,500 crore Incentive Scheme to develop recycling capacity for the separation and production of critical minerals from secondary sources. The Scheme Guidelines were issued on 02.10.2025. The scheme has received a very positive response from the private sector.

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