EXPLORATION OF LITHIUM

1525. SHRI P.V. MIDHUN REDDY:
    SHRIMATI CHINTA ANURADHA:
    SHRI KURUVA GORANTLA MADHAV:

Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has taken any steps to explore the development of Lithium in the country;
(b) if so, the details thereof along with the reserves of Lithium in the country;
(c) whether the Government has recently signed an agreement with Argentina for joint exploration of Lithium;
(d) if so, the details thereof;
(e) whether the Government has any other similar agreements with other countries for Lithium sourcing; and
(f) if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF MINES, COAL AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS
(Shri Pralhad Joshi)

(a) & (b) Every year, as per approved annual Field Season Programme [FSP], Geological Survey of India, an attached office of Ministry of Mines, takes up different stages of mineral exploration viz. reconnaissance surveys (G4), preliminary exploration (G3) and general exploration (G2) following the guidelines of United Nations Framework Classification (UNFC) and Mineral Evidence and Mineral Content Rules (MEMC-2015) for augmenting mineral resource for various mineral commodities including lithium. During FSP 2016-17 to FSP 2020-21, GSI carried out 14 projects on Lithium and associated elements in Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya, Karnataka and Rajasthan. During the present FSP 2021-22, GSI has taken up 7 projects on Lithium in Arunachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Jammu & Kashmir and Rajasthan. However, resource of lithium has not yet been augmented by GSI.

Further, Atomic Minerals Directorate for Exploration and Research (AMDER), a constituent unit of Department Atomic Energy (DAE), has undertaken exploration for lithium in potential geological domains in parts of Karnataka and Rajasthan. AMDER has also taken up subsurface exploration in Marlagalla area, Mandyak district, Karnataka. Reconnaissance surveys have been also carried out along Saraswati River palaeochannel, in Jodhpur and Barmer districts, Rajasthan for locating lithium mineralisation associated with brine (saline water in salt lakes). Preliminary surveys on surface and limited
subsurface exploration by AMD, have shown presence of Lithium resources of 1,600 tonnes (inferred category) in the pegmatites of Marlagalla – Allapatna area, Mandya district, Karnataka.

As per the available records, Lithium bearing minerals are in Part B ‘Atomic Minerals’ of First Schedule to MMDR Act, 1957 and their reserves/resources are not available in National Mineral Inventory.

(c) to (f) No, Sir. However, under the aegis of Ministry of Mines, a joint venture company named 'Khanij Bidesh India Ltd. (KABIL) has been formed by three CPSEs namely National Aluminium Company Limited (NALCO), Hindustan Copper Limited (HCL) and Mineral Exploration Corporation Limited (MECL) with equity participation of 40:30:30 respectively, to acquire mineral assets overseas – primarily the critical & strategic minerals including Lithium, Cobalt & others and NOT Rare Earth Elements.

KABIL has signed Non-Binding Memorandum of Understanding [MoU] with non-disclosure agreement with the following three State-owned organizations of Argentina, for the purpose of information sharing w.r.t. prospective mineral acreages:

(i) M/s JEMSE, a State-owned enterprise of JUJUY province on 10th July, 2020,
(ii) M/S YPF an Energy major & federal owned enterprises on 9th September, 2020, and
(iii) M/s CAMYEN, a state owned enterprise of CATAMARCA province on 29th December, 2020.

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