

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

**LOK SABHA**  
**STARRED QUESTION NO. 225**  
TO BE ANSWERED ON 17.03.2025

**Proposal for Auction of Sand Blocks for offshore Mining in Kerala**

225\*. SHRI K C VENUGOPAL:

Will the MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether a comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was conducted prior to the Centre's proposal to auction sand blocks for offshore mining in the State of Kerala and if so, the details of key findings thereof along with the degradation of coastal ecosystems;
- (b) whether the Government has taken steps to address the concerns among local fishing communities particularly the disruption of fish breeding grounds and migratory patterns essential for sustaining traditional livelihoods, if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government has coordinated with State Authorities and Environmental Experts to assess the long-term environmental and socio-economic impacts of the proposed offshore sand mining and whether it prompted any consideration to recall or suspend the proposal until adequate safeguards are in place, if so, the details thereof; and
- (d) the action plan proposed by the Government to ensure that the ecological integrity of Kerala's coastal regions is preserved?

**ANSWER**

MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE  
(SHRI BHUPENDER YADAV)

(a) to (d): A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

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**STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARA (a) TO (d) OF THE LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION No. 225 DUE FOR REPLY ON 17/03/2025 REGARDING “PROPOSAL FOR AUCTION OF SAND BLOCKS FOR OFFSHORE MINING IN KERALA” RAISED BY SHRI K C VENUGOPAL, HON’BLE MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT**

(a) to (d) As per the information received from the Ministry of Mines, the first tranche of the auction for 13 offshore blocks was launched on 28/11/2024, for the grant of composite licenses (exploration-cum-production leases) under the Offshore Areas Mineral (Development and Regulation) Act, 2002. This includes three offshore blocks for construction sand off the coast of Kerala, beyond territorial waters.

The Offshore Areas Mineral (Development and Regulation) Act, 2002, along with the rules made thereunder, contains adequate provisions to safeguard ecological balance, biodiversity, and protect the interests of fishermen. In accordance with the Offshore Areas Mineral Conservation and Development Rules, 2024, no production operations will be undertaken except in accordance with an approved production plan. The concerns of fishermen and local communities will be specifically addressed during the preparation of the production plan and Environmental Management Plan (EMP), which every lessee is required to submit before commencing exploration or production activities. These plans will likely include:

- Fisheries impact assessment studies to minimize disruption to fishing activities.
- Navigation safety measures to ensure that fishing zones and marine routes remain accessible.
- Environmental conservation strategies to protect marine ecosystems.

Section 16A of the Offshore Areas Mineral (Development and Regulation) Act, 2002, provides for the establishment of the Offshore Areas Mineral Trust, a non-profit, autonomous body. The Offshore Areas Mineral Trust was established through S.O. 3246(E) dated 09/08/2024. Coastal States have been included as members of the Governing Body and Executive Committee of the Trust. The funds accruing to the Trust will be used for research, administration, studies, and related expenditures concerning offshore areas, as well as for the mitigation of any adverse ecological impacts resulting from operations in these areas. The Trust will also provide relief in the event of disasters in offshore areas and work for the welfare of individuals and communities affected by exploration or production operations.

The Government of Kerala, based on the recommendation of Kerala Coastal Zone Management Authority (KCZMA), had submitted the proposal for updation of CZMP as per CRZ Notification 2019. The Ministry has based on such recommendations approved the Coastal Zone Management Plan (CZMP) for Kerala and as on date provisions of CRZ Notification 2019 are in force. The mining of sand, rocks, and other substrata materials is prohibited within the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ), which extends up to 12 nautical miles from the Low Tide Line (LTL) on the seaward side, as per the CRZ Notifications of 2011 and 2019. Additionally, the provisions of the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification, 2006, as amended, apply up to the limit of territorial waters, i.e., 12 nautical miles.

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