

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF MINES
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2133
ANSWERED ON 12.03.2025

OFFSHORE SAND MINING

2133. ADV DEAN KURIAKOSE:

Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has called for tenders to conduct offshore sand mining in the country in co-operation with the private sector;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and especially the places in Kerala where the tender has been called for;
- (c) whether any proper scientific assessments have been made to the degradation to the marine ecosystem in the light of the sand mining that will be undertaken; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof?

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

(b): As per the Coastal Regulatory Zone, 2019 the mining of sand, rocks and other substrata materials is prohibited within the Coastal Regulatory Zone which extends up to twelve nautical miles on the seaward side. The offshore blocks notified for auction are beyond the territorial waters off the coast of Kerala. The details of these blocks are as under:

S.N.	Block Name	Offshore Region	Coast/ Sea	Area (in sq. km)	Commodity
1.	Kollam CS Block-1	Off Kerala	West Coast, Arabian Sea	79.00	Construction Sand

2.	Kollam CS Block-2	Off Kerala	West Coast, Arabian Sea	78.00	Construction Sand
3.	Kollam CS Block-3	Off Kerala	West Coast, Arabian Sea	85.00	Construction Sand

(c) & (d): 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 out by excluding these areas.

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.

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.

Further, Section 16A of the Offshore Areas Mineral (Development and Regulation) Act, 2002 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.
