Ministry of Earth Science

Ministry of Earth Sciences to launch ‘Deep Ocean Mission’ by January 2018

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Ministry of Earth Sciences, Government of India is all set to launch ‘Deep Ocean Mission’ by January 2018. This will improve India’s position in ocean research field. Shri M Rajeevan, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences announced today. Secretary was speaking through video conference in the workshop arranged by National Institute of Oceanography, Dona Paula. Shri M S Nagar, Member Standing Committee, Ministry of Earth Science, Dr VSN Murthy, Director, National Institute of Oceanography were also present at the inauguration of the workshop on ‘Three decades of India acquiring Pioneer Investor Status- Achievements and way forward’. India achieved a lot in the field of ocean research; still it is long way to go, said Secretary M Rajeevan on this occasion.

The program on Poly metallic nodules was initiated at CSIR-NIO with the collection of the first nodule sample from Arabian Sea on board the first Research Vessel Gaveshani on 26 January 1981. India was the first country in the world to have been given the Pioneer Area for exploration of deep-sea mineral viz. Polymetallic nodules in the Central Indian Ocean Basin in 1987. This was based on the extensive surveys carried out by the scientists of CSIR-NIO, on several research ships leading to the allocation of an area of 150,000 sq km to the country with exclusive rights under the UN Law of the sea.

Subsequently, Environment Impact Assessment studies for nodule mining by CSIR-NIO, development of metal extraction process by CSIR-National Metallurgical Laboratory, Jamshedpur and CSIR- Institute for Minerals and Metals Technology, Bhubaneswar and development of mining technology by National Institute of Ocean Technology, Chennai, have been taken up under the national program on Polymetallic nodules funded by Ministry of Earth Sciences.

Based on the resource evaluation, India has now retained an area of 75,000 sq km with an estimated resource of about 100 million tons of strategic metals such Copper,Nickel, Cobalt besides Manganese and Iron. A First Generation Mine-site (FGM) with an area of 18,000 sq km has been identified. Latest technologies for extraction of metals from the minerals have also been developed under the programme. Detailed environmental data has been collected for compliance with International Seabed Authorities requirements. Besides identifying the mineral resource and developing technologies for mining and extraction, the programme has also resulted in high impact research as well as manpower development.

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