



Shri Balvinder Kumar chairs the 56th Meeting of Central Geological Programming Board

India Has a Huge Untapped Potential for Mineral Resources Which Needs Exploration, says Mines Secretary

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The Secretary Mines Shri Balvinder Kumar inaugurated the 56th Central Geological Programming Board (CGPB) meeting of the Geological Survey of India (GSI), Ministry of Mines in New Delhi today. Addressing the members Shri Balvinder Kumar said, India has a huge untapped potential for mineral resources for which CGPB is an important platform for coordination of all activities of geosciences by GSI and other stakeholders. Mining is a core sector of economy and contributes towards growth of GDP of the country. Mineral sector has seen a big transformation in the last two years since Jan 2015 through MMDR Amendment Act 2015. The major changes are:

- i) Allocation of mineral blocks by auctioning only;
- ii) Creation of District Mineral Foundation (DMF) and use of the funds so collected for the welfare of people affected by mining through PMKKKY
- iii) Creation of National Mineral exploration Trust (NMET);
- iv) National Mineral Exploration Policy implemented from July-2016, and
- iv) Penalty for illegal mining enhanced.

In 2016-17, 21 Mining leases were auctioned successfully garnering revenues cumulatively in 50 years' time span of mines to the tune of Rs 94000 crores. The Year 2017-18 may turn out to be watershed year in the mining and mineral sector as many more blocks will be open for auctioning and allocation for mining leases. About 300 such leases may be available for auctioning in the coming year 2017-18. Further GSI has carved out 100 blocks for Regional exploration, which in turn will be upgraded to higher stages of exploration if merited.

In offshore sector, much work has not been done till 2015 as no clear cut rules were in force. Presently the Ministry of Mines is planning to redraft the Offshore Mineral Development Act and it should be in ready in another 2 to 3 months. Offshore resources worth of nearly Rs. 30,000 crores can be tapped once the Act comes in vogue. New geotechnical vessels with state-of-the-art technology is being procured by GSI, Shri Balvinder Kumar said.

GSI has launched Project Uncover (India) in two transects one in the northern sector and other in the southern sector in search of deep-seated concealed deposits.

Baseline aero-geophysical survey through outsourcing is going to be taken up to cover the Obvious Geological Potential (OGP) areas of the country of 8.13 lakh sq. km. Initially around 2 lakh sq km is proposed to be taken up in February to April this year and work order has been given to three reputed consortiums of companies after due deliberations for the same.

Online Core Business Integrated System (OCBIS) is a remarkable and collective achievement of GSI. Although the new Web Portal has already gone beta live in September 2016, it is expected to be operational by April 2017. GSI should endeavor to become fully paperless in all respects with the implementation of OCBIS. Another major achievement of GSI is creation of National Geo-science Data Repository (NGDR). It is to be set up by National Institute of Smart Governance (NISG) on turn-key basis. Data generated by GSI and other stakeholders will be accessible on a single platform. It is worth mentioning that GSI has already uploaded more than 6000 mineral exploration reports in the public domain. GSI should be more technology driven at par with other advanced geoscience organizations of the world. Restructuring of GSI is needed to be done to meet up the present day challenges, the Mines Secretary added.

During the 2-day meeting, the board will deliberate and discuss recommendations of all the 12 thematic committees of the CGPB as well as the State Geological Programming Boards (SGPBs) and finalize the Field Season Program of GSI for the year 2017-18. GSI has drawn up about 817 scientific programs for deliberation and finalization by the Board. This includes about 198 programs under mineral exploration. The finalization will take into consideration the priorities and importance set forth by the Government of India, through its various policy decisions. Last year GSI implemented 803 programs in all, which included 214 programs under mineral exploration.

Shri Piyush Goyal, the Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Power, Coal, New and Renewable Energy and Mines extended his best wishes for the successful deliberations in all the sessions of the 56th CGPB meeting.

The CGPB meeting is being attended by senior level officers of Ministry of Mines, GSI and members from other Central Ministries, State Directorates of Mining and Geology, mining industry, PSUs and other stakeholders.

