

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
EARTH SCIENCES  
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:5830  
ANSWERED ON:08.09.2011  
MINERAL EXPLORATION BY INDIA  
Haldar Shri Sucharu Ranjan

**Will the Minister of EARTH SCIENCES be pleased to state:**

- (a) whether India moved first in Indian Ocean for mineral exploration but failed to exploit its first mover advantage;
- (b) if so, the reasons therefor;
- (c) whether the Government has appointed a committee of secretaries in coordination with National Security Council to draw policies in this regard; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof and the time by which the Government is likely to show its presence in that region?

**Answer**

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EARTH SCIENCES (SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR)

(a&b) India was the first country to have received the status of a Pioneer Investor in August, 1987 and was allocated an area of 1,50,000 sq. km by UN for carrying out various developmental activities for polymetallic nodules (PMN) in Central Indian Ocean Basin (CIOB) in August, 1987. After detailed survey, a promising area of 75,000 sq. km has been identified for further development.

As per regulations adopted by International Seabed Authority (ISBA) for exploration of Polymetallic Nodules (PMN) in the area, the Ministry (formerly Department of Ocean Development), as a nodal agency of Government of India, has signed a contract of 15 years for various developmental activities in the area in 2002.

During first 10 years of developmental work, multibeam bathymetry survey has been carried out to understand the topography. Sampling has been carried out at grid interval of 12.5 km X 12.5 km. of the area and subsequently at 6.25 km. X 6.25 km. interval in selected blocks. The resource potential of polymetallic nodules in the area (i.e 75,000 sq. km area in Central Indian Ocean Basin) has been estimated at 380.00 million tonnes on the basis of detailed surveys. A First Generation Mine Site has been identified for further development. A comprehensive detailed Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out in the promising area. The process technology for extracting metals (copper, nickel & cobalt) has been demonstrated successfully at pilot plant of 500 kg per day capacity; which is first of its kind in the world. India has also developed and demonstrated a remotely operated vehicle and insitu soil sampler more than a water depth of 5000 m. India is in the process of developing technology for exploitation of nodules from seabed from the mine site at a water depth of about 6000 m in phases as a part of developmental activities. India is at par with other Pioneer Investor in respect of various developmental activities including development of mining technology for exploitation of nodules from the seabed.

(c&d) No, Madam. Government has not appointed a committee of secretaries (COS) in coordination with National Security Council to draw policies for mineral exploration in Indian Ocean. However, a meeting of the COS was held under the chairmanship of Cabinet Secretary on 20th July, 2011 on the application for Deep Sea Mining Exploration License for Hydrothermal Sulphide mineral in the Indian Ocean by China. The representative of National Security Adviser also attended the meeting. It was decided to have Inter-Ministerial Group meeting with Ministry of Earth Sciences as lead agency at regular interval to address the issue.