

Exploitation of Atomic Minerals

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Government of India is aware of the fact that 10.98 million tonnes of resources of Molybdenum Ore is located in Tamil Nadu. However, Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) has not taken up any project for exploitation of Molybdenum available near Harur Taluk, Dharmapuri District in Tamil Nadu.

Atomic Minerals Directorate for Exploration and Research (AMD), a constituent unit of Department of Atomic Energy (DAE), has the mandate to identify, evaluate and augment mineral resources of uranium, thorium, niobium, tantalum, beryllium, lithium, zirconium, titanium, rare earths (containing uranium and thorium) besides beach sand minerals like garnet and sillimanite [Atomic Minerals (Part B, First Schedule), The Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957]. During the last six and a half decades, AMD has identified adequate resources of atomic minerals in the country. The details of the resources of atomic minerals as on May, 2018 are furnished below:

Uranium –3,00,034 tonne uranium oxide (U₃O₈)

Beach Sand Minerals [BSM] – 1,173.07 million tonne.

The resources of the minerals comprising BSM are given below:

Thorium (as monazite) - 12.47 million tonne (1.12 million tonne ThO₂)

The mineral monazite, containing ~ 55 - 60% total Rare Earth Elements (REE), is also the major resource for REE. AMD has also established ~ 2,000 tonne of ~2% xenotime (yttrium + REE mineral) - bearing heavy mineral concentrate.

Titanium (as ilmenite, leucoxene and rutile) - 682.30 million tonne

Zirconium (as zircon) - 35.75 million tonne

Garnet - 187.46 million tonne

Sillimanite -255.09 million tonne

The mining lease deed between the applicant and the State Government is executed by the respective State Governments subject to production of approved mining plan and other statutory permissions issued by various Government Departments. At present, uranium deposits established by AMD are mined by Uranium Corporation of India Limited (UCIL), a PSU of DAE. In respect of beach sand minerals, the mining operations are being carried out by both PSUs and private entrepreneurs. In respect of other atomic minerals like beryl, columbite, tantalite, lepidolite etc., no specific mining operations are being carried out except their recovery as by-products incidental to prospecting operations.

This information was provided by the Union Minister of State (Independent Charge)

Development of North-Eastern Region (DoNER), MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh in written reply to a question in Rajya Sabha today.

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