

**'Tremendous' response to OALP: DGH**

**Securing energy needs:**The HELP aims to assist in cutting India's oil imports by at least 10%, by 2022.K.R. Deepak

Interest in the Open Acreage Licensing Programme (OALP) and Discovered Small Fields (DSF), two key components of the Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy, has been considerable as India works to reduce oil imports by at least 10%, by 2022, according to a senior government official.

The OALP Bid Round-1 — under which almost 60,000 square kilometre of exploration area is to be added — has seen a “tremendous response,” Atanu Chakraborty, Director General at the Directorate General of Hydrocarbons, said here on Wednesday. That would be a “quantum jump,” he said, pointing out that the existing area under oil and gas exploration in the country was a little over 1 lakh sq. km.

Mr. Chakraborty said more than 120 entities, from India and abroad, had sought data related to the OALP programme. As many as 55 onshore and offshore blocks in 10 sedimentary basins across 11 States would be awarded through a bidding process.

In view of the ensuing holidays, the deadline for submission of bids was likely to be extended by about a fortnight from April 3, he said.

**DSF contracts**

On DSF, he said 30 contracts had been signed with 23 companies in the first round. The first (offshore) oil production was expected in 2020. “Some onshore people may come in even with an aggressive schedule,” the DGH said, adding the contracts were signed in March last year and the companies were in the process of getting approvals.

The DSF-II is expected to be rolled out in April. As many as 60 fields with an estimated 194.7 million tonne of oil and oil equivalent gas would be offered in the round, which is expected to be completed by November. The DSF, he added, was an excellent entry point for entrepreneurs seeking to enter the oil and gas sector.

In the second round, “we propose to increase the size of the plot [thus] enabling the proper prognostication of the resource and get into the sweet spot so to say,” he said.

On the investments likely from the two HELP programmes, Mr. Chakraborty said it would be in the range of \$30 billion in a phased manner. He said the DGH was also engaging with private equity players in an effort to underscore the need to invest in the oil and gas sector. Equity, he said, played a key role in the exploration stage, while debt gained prominence during the field development stage.

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