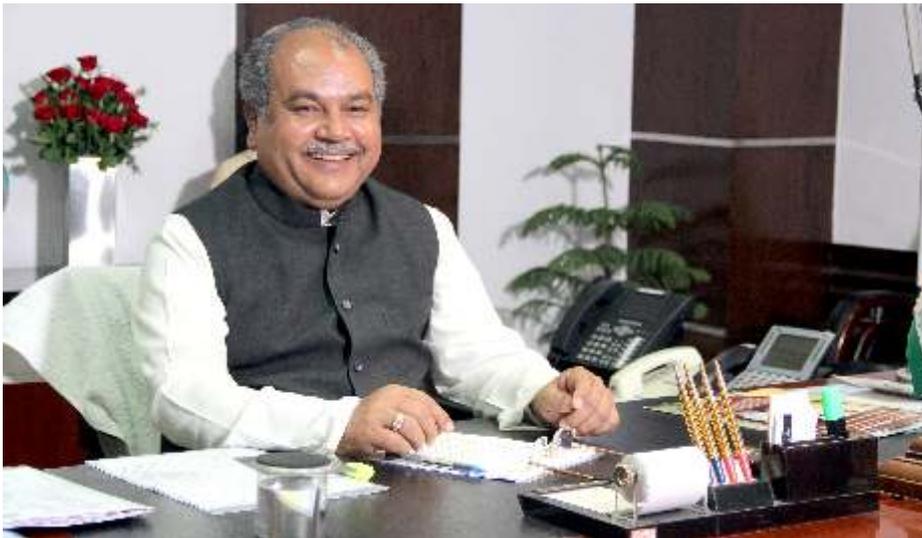


Tomar Calls on CMs of Jharkhand, Rajasthan & Karnataka



Shri Tomar handed over the detailed exploration reports of 10 blocks of Jharkhand to Chief Minister Shri Raghubar Das. The reports, prepared as part of Mineral Exploration Corporation Limited (MECL) promotional exploration, include reports for 7 copper blocks and 3 gold blocks. Speaking at this occasion in Udyog Bhawan, Shri Tomar said, "The MMDR Act was amended in January 2015 to harness the immense mining potential of mineral rich states like Jharkhand. It is now incumbent on us to expedite the process and realise its benefits." Shri Tomar urged the Chief Minister and senior officials of the state and ministry, to focus on implementation and create visible change in the status of mining and the welfare of peripheral and tribal population. Shri Raghubar Das assured the Minister that the District Mineral Foundation will be constituted within a month's time, and work for auctioning of mining leases will begin within the same time.

Currently equipped with detailed exploration reports (of G1-G2 level) for 12 blocks, Jharkhand is in a position to start auctioning Mining Leases for these blocks. As for the regional exploration reports of 14 blocks, the state has an option to either go in for auctioning of leases for carrying out PL-cum-ML, or to go in for detailed exploration. CMD of MECL Dr Gopal Dhawan highlighted Jharkhand's hidden potential in gold, and suggested that the state could begin auctioning of PL-cum-ML of the mineral since it is a non-notified one.

Shri Tomar offered the help of parastatal exploration agencies such as Geological Survey of India (GSI) and MECL in assisting the state in exploration work. Referring to the successful auctioning of coal blocks in recent past, Shri Tomar

said that the state could utilise the expertise of MSTC Limited, a PSU under the Ministry of Steel, which had provided the digital platform to carry out the auctioning of coal blocks. CMD, MSTC Shri SK Tripathi expressed his willingness to visit the state at the earliest to prepare them for the process.

The meeting further deliberated over issues concerning the renewal and extension of mining leases for SAIL. Jharkhand CM was apprised of the 50 MTPA expansion plan of SAIL, in line with which, the capacity of Bokaro Steel Plant in Jharkhand will be raised from the present level of 4.3 MTPA to 14.1 MTPA by 2025-26. The capacity expansion will require augmented supply of iron ore, and hence, urgent renewal of Gua and Chiria mines. Shri Tomar also discussed on the possibility of allowing sale of inferior grades of iron ore from SAIL mines in Jharkhand to small manufacturers, which would be mutually beneficial for both sides. Shri Raghubar Das welcomed all the suggestions and ensured prompt action.

Whereas, on the other hand, Shri Tomar met CM of Rajasthan Smt. Vasundhara Raje at Jaipur. He urged the CM to expedite the process of notification for auction of mine blocks. Union Minister appreciated the efforts of state government in identifying more than 30 blocks for auction of ML and PL-cum-ML, including those for limestone, manganese, potash and iron ore. In addition to these blocks, the Minister handed over detailed exploration report of 28 blocks to the chief minister. These reports are of base metals, gold and phosphorite of G2-G1 level prepared by MECL. These inputs were got prepared by Ministry of Mines at a cost of about Rs. 60 crore. Recently, Ministry has taken a decision to supply promotional exploration

reports of MECL to state governments without any cost. With these additional inputs, government of Rajasthan has 38 blocks ready for auction of ML and 24 blocks for auction of PL-cum-ML. He also offered help from MSTC in conducting the auctions.

Earlier, GSI had carried out exploration of around 35 blocks in the state and shared the findings with the government. Shri Tomar proposed help from GSI, MECL and SAIL in detailed exploration of blocks so that additional mines can be identified for auctions. He emphasized the importance of constituting District Mineral Foundation (DMF) for the selected districts at the earliest. Progress on ML for iron ore in Bhilwara to SAIL and allotment of Banera iron ore mine and Jahajpur iron ore blocks to RINL was also discussed during the meeting.

Smt. Raje apprised the Minister about preparedness of the state for conducting the auctions and related activities like exploration and setting up of DMF. She sought support from central government in according environment clearances to mining proposals to safeguard jobs and livelihood of mine-workers. The Chief Minister appreciated the decision of Union Mines Minister to make detailed exploration reports available to states, free of cost.

It is noteworthy, in September 2014, central government had increased royalty rates after a gap of five years. This will result in around 41 % increase in cumulative royalty revenue to the states. In case of Rajasthan, the annual royalty will increase to the tune of 18 % to about Rs. 1533 crore.

Apparently, Tomar also called on Karnataka CM, Shri Siddaramaiah in Belgaum, to deliberate on steel and mines related issues in the state.

He stated that auction rules and draft tender documents for auctioning mines have been issued. He requested the state government to expedite the auction process so that mining activity gets a boost and state gets more revenue. Shri Tomar informed about the plan to set up a steel plant in the state of Karnataka through a Special Purpose Vehicle and reiterated the commitment of central government to the plan. He further added, in addition to 13 blocks identified by the state for ML and 9 blocks for PL-cum-ML, action should also be initiated for auction of leases for mines in cases where Supreme Court has cancelled the leases. More areas under mineralization should be identified for auction. For exploration of such areas, central undertakings viz. GSI and MECL shall provide all assistance. Centre and state government must decide the future course of action in case of Bharat Gold Mines Limited. Quick action also needs to be taken for setting up of District Mineral Foundation in different districts. Issue of reservation of mine for VISL, Bhadravati also came up for discussion.

Shri Siddaramaiah expressed gratitude to Shri Tomar for the visit. He assured active consideration and positive action in respect of issues that came up for discussion during the meeting.