

222 mineral blocks likely to be auctions in 2017-18



readying 75 mineral blocks for the auction process. Karnataka tops the list with 57 mineral blocks on offer for auctions followed by Madhya Pradesh with 46 and Jharkhand at 39. This apart, there are 100 lapsed mineral applications under Section 10 (A) (2) (c) of the amended Mines and Minerals-Development & Regulation Act

As many as 222 mineral blocks are in the pipeline for auction in 2017-18, according to a press report. While all these blocks could be potentially auctioned, the actual number of blocks to go under the hammer would depend on their status of exploration and the readiness of the respective state governments.

In the list are blocks being explored by the Geological Survey of India and Mineral Exploration Corporation of India Ltd. Between them, nine mineral bearing states - Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Tamil Nadu and Telengana are

(MMDR), 2015. These leases refer to the cases where mining leases could not be executed within the stipulated deadline of January 11 this year due to lack of forestry and environment clearances and also because of non-settlement of forest rights. In addition, there are 83 more lapsed applications where the leaseholders have gone to courts and such blocks may also be made available for auctions.

The Union Mines Ministry has asked state governments to expedite the process of taking over of mining lease areas of the applications lapsed under Section 10 (A) (2) (c) of MMDR Act.

The ministry also enquired about the

action plan of various state governments for exploration of areas under mining leases the lease period of which will expire in March 2020. The emphasis is on the importance of accelerating the pace of exploration, especially in mines producing iron ore in Odisha, where iron ore production may reduce significantly resulting in a mineral crisis after expiry of such leases in 2020.

The state governments were advised to encourage the lessees of these mines to take up detailed exploration in the areas under the leases and to develop phased final mine closure strategies and plans so that any plant and equipment in these lease areas may be decommissioned properly and the blocks on expiry of the lease period may immediately be put up for auction. It was suggested that meetings be held with each individual state government to develop action plans for such mines at the earliest.

According to the Indian Bureau of Mines, there are 240 such leases of which barely 50 are operational, where the leases are due to expire in March 2020. The resources in such leases have already been identified. IBM has also evaluated and submitted a report to the Ministry of Mines on the resources that will be exploited till March 2020.

POSCO offers to return land to Odisha

Posco-India has requested the Odisha government to take back its 2,700 acres of land provided to it near Paradip for setting up a 12 mtpa steel plant at an investment of Rs 52,000 crore. Odisha's Industries Minister Debi Prasad Mishra told PTI "We have received a letter from Posco-India in this regard. The steel major has offered to return the land near Paradip in its possession."

When asked whether Posco-India offered to return the land on its own, Mishra said: "No, the state government had requested the company to pay pending dues of about Rs 82 crore towards forest land diversion, cess and others. While replying



to our letter, they (Posco-India) said that the company is not interested to take possession of the acquired land and pay the remaining amount".

He said "In the letter, Posco has cited its failure to start work on the proposed 12-mtpa steel plant project near Paradip to be

the reason for the request made to the Odisha government to take back the acquired land."

Mishra said that the state industries department had acquired 2,700 acres of land for Posco-India's proposed steel mill. Of the 2,700 acres of land, 1,700 acres were handed over to the company while the remaining land was in the possession of the state government.

The minister said the matter was placed before Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, who had approved a proposal of the industries department to get back the land from Posco-India and retain the land in the Land Bank.