

(b) if so, the names of these companies and the States where these companies are keen to participate in the exploitation of gold;

(c) whether these companies have submitted any application for prospective licences to explore and exploit gold resources in Karnataka, Kerala and Rajasthan; and

(d) if so, the reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES (SHRI VISHNU DEO SAI) : (a) As per provisions of section 5(1) of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, mineral concessions for gold can be given only to an Indian National or a company as defined in clause (20) of section 2 of the Companies Act, 2013. Hence, question of exploitation of gold by any foreign firm does not arise.

(b) to (d) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

Targets for reduction of oil imports

712. DR. PRADEEP KUMAR BALMUCHU : Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is planning to reduce the oil imports in the coming years;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the details of the conservative measures being taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DHARMENDRA PRADHAN) : (a) and (b) In order to reduce import dependency on crude oil, Government has taken/is taking a number of initiative to increase domestic production of crude oil and to promote conservation of petroleum products. To accelerate the pace of exploration and production of oil and gas in the country, various steps have been/are being taken by the Government as under:

- (i) Project for survey of about 1.5 million square Km. of unappraised area of the Indian Sedimentary Basins has been started through National Oil Companies to gather geo-scientific data for identifying prospective blocks.
- (ii) Re-assessment of hydrocarbon resources making use of geo-scientific data gathered over the past couple of decades has been initiated to get a better understanding of the prospectivity of Indian Sedimentary basins.

- (iii) A National Data Respository has been developed and is under trial now. It is a platform which will help access the geo-scientific data easily and help in carving out new hydrocarbon blocks.
- (iv) 52 new blocks with in-principle clearances from various agencies have been carved out for offer under the next round of bidding.
- (v) Policies for Exploration and Production are being reviewed for incentivizing and accelerating E&P activities.
- (vi) A Policy for non-exclusive multi-client speculative survey for assessment of unexplored sedimentary basins is being implemented.
- (vii) A policy framework for relaxations, extensions and clarification at the development and production stage under the PSC regime to remove rigidities in timelines with a view to early monetization of hydrocarbon discoveries has been approved.
- viii) Revision in domestic gas price, with provision for premium for difficult areas (deep water, ultra deep water and High Pressure, High Temperature areas) has been approved.
- ix) Extension of 40% subsidy in North East Region to private companies operating in that region has been made.
- (x) Exploration for shale oil and gas by National Oil Companies has been taken up.

(c) The Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA), under the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas, has been given the mandate to promote conservation of petroleum products in the major sectors of economy like transport, industry, households and agriculture through direct technical assistance, R &D educational and training programmes and mass awareness campaigns. PCRA's activities cover conservation of all energy sources, development, evaluation and commercialization of efficient equipment and additives, popularizing production of bio-fuels, environment protection etc.

PCRA has also initiated Star Labelling Programme for various equipments/appliances consuming petroleum products such as LPG domestic Gas stoves, Diesel Monoset pumps and Diesel Generator Sets.

Deviation from Standard tendering procedure by ONGC

713. SHRI RAM KUMAR KASHYAP : Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) deviated from the standard