

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
DEPARTMENT OF ATOMIC ENERGY
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 802
TO BE ANSWERED ON 03.03.2016

VALUE ADDED PRODUCTS FROM RARE EARTHS

802. SHRI K.N. BALAGOPAL:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government has any specific plan to produce value added products from Indian Rare Earths, if so, the details thereof;
- (b) what are the Rare Earth products produced in the country at present; and
- (c) whether Government is planning to modernise Rare Earth Units in the country, and if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES & PENSIONS
AND PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (DR.JITENDRA SINGH):

- (a) Indian Rare Earths Limited (IREL), a Public Sector Undertaking (PSU), under Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) has the mandate for mining and mineral separation of beach sand minerals to produce ilmenite, rutile, zircon, monazite, sillimanite and garnet along with production of compounds of rare earths and thorium. IREL is also involved in processing of monazite for producing materials for strategic use by DAE for which it has set up a 10,000 tpa monazite processing plant (MoPP) at its unit in Orissa Sands Complex (OSCOM), Odisha. In addition to materials of strategic importance, monazite processing also results in production of mixed rare earth chloride and tri-sodium phosphate.

Licensing agreement for transfer of technology has been signed between IREL and Defence Metallurgical and Research Laboratory (DMRL), Hyderabad for transfer of rare earth based permanent magnet technology available with DMRL.

Further, an agreement has also been entered with Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), Mumbai for technology transfer of Samarium-Cobalt magnetic alloy powder. This is an important step towards producing magnets by Indian rare Earths, which is a value added product. For value addition to ilmenite and zircon, IREL is contemplating to set up a plant for production of 99.99% nano titania and 99.99% nano zirconia. The environmental clearances for setting up the plant are being obtained.

- (b) The rare earth products produced in the country at present are compounds of lanthanum, cerium, neodymium-praseodymium and samarium.
- (c) IREL has recently set up a monazite processing plant at OSCOM, Odisha (MoPP), which started commercial production from May, 2015. Further, the rare earths plant at Rare Earths Division (RED), Aluva based on the feed stock from MoPP has been retrofitted recently to produce high pure rare earths. In view of the above, there is no plan at present to further modernize the Rare Earth units.
