

Ministry of Mines Classifies Limestone as Major Mineral Completely

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The Ministry of Mines issued notification, classifying Limestone as a major mineral completely. Earlier limestone was classified as minor mineral as well as major mineral depending upon the end use. 'Limestone used in kilns for manufacture of lime used as building material' had been notified as minor mineral. Otherwise, it was a major mineral when used for any other purpose like production of cement, chemicals, sugar, fertilizer, steel, etc.

The Ministry of Mines vide gazette notification dated 10th October, 2025 has removed above distinction based on the end use by deleting 'Limestone used in kilns for manufacture of lime used as building material' from the category of minor minerals. Further, to ensure ease of doing business, the Ministry has issued an order dated 13th October, 2025 under section 20A of the MMDR Act to facilitate smooth regulatory transition of existing minor mineral leases of limestone to major mineral lease.

Above decision was taken by the Ministry based on recommendations of an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Mines & Minerals Sector constituted under the chairmanship of Member NITI Aayog which held discussions with various stakeholders. Use of limestone in making lime has significantly reduced over the years and most of limestone is now used in cement manufacturing and in chemical industries, smelters, fertilizer unit, sugar factory etc.

The classification of all types of limestone as major mineral will promote ease of doing business as the lease holders will be able to sell or utilise limestone for any purpose, without any end-use restrictions based on artificial regulatory distinction of minor or major mineral. The existing minor mineral leases of limestone will continue to operate as major mineral leases without any disruption.

For smooth transition of the existing minor mineral mining leases to major mineral category, the Ministry of Mines issued an order dated 13th October, 2025 under section 20A. Some of the provisions are as follows:

- (i) The existing lease holders of minor mineral limestone leases are allowed time till 31st March, 2026 to register with IBM and they may pay royalty at the existing rates specified by the respective State Governments up to 31st March, 2026.
- (ii) Continuation of existing mining plans approved by the respective State Governments for such leases till 31st March, 2027 and seeking approval of IBM for mining plan in the meanwhile.
- (iii) Exemption from filing digital aerial images of mining lease area till 1st July, 2027 and exemption from filing of online self-assessment report as per the star rating template till 1st July, 2027.
- (iv) Exemption from penalty for non-filing of monthly and annual returns under Rule 45 of the MCDR, 2017 to the Indian Bureau of Mines till 31st March, 2026, subject to the condition that the lessees shall continue to submit their returns to the State Governments as per the existing provisions.

The order dated 13th October, 2025 also provides enabling provision with respect to pending applications for grant of mineral concession in respect of Limestone as a minor mineral. In case where the State Government had issued letter of intent for grant of a mineral concession before 10th October, 2025 or where the auction process for grant of mineral concession has been concluded and preferred bidder has been selected before 10th October, 2025, the mining lease shall be granted and executed in accordance with the rules made by the State Government in respect of minor minerals within a period of two years from the date of issue of this order. The applications on which the State Government has not issued Letter of Intent (LOI) for grant of

mineral concession before 10th October, 2025 shall lapse.

This removal of limestone from list of minor mineral has fulfilled a long-standing demand of hundreds of limestone minor mineral leaseholders to enable them to freely sell to cement industries as well as to the other industries. This will increase income as well as employment in rural areas. Further, increase in availability of limestone from minor mineral leases to cement industry will enable quick expansion of cement manufacturing capacity in the country. This measure will give boost to construction activities in the country leading to employment generation and economic growth.

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