

India to scale up critical mineral exploration and build strong domestic value chains to reduce import dependence and meet strategic needs: Dr. Jitendra Singh

'National Mineral Exploration and Development Trust' (NMET) Governing Body Meeting reviews critical mineral exploration, calls for faster pace, startup participation, and stronger domestic supply chains

Involving MPs and MLAs in exploration areas can improve ground-level coordination, says Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh

Role of scientific institutions like CSIR–IMMT and DAE crucial in mineral sector advancement: Dr. Jitendra Singh

Posted On: 26 MAR 2026 1:39PM by PIB Delhi

“India is in the process of scaling up exploration of critical minerals, creating a startup-driven mining ecosystem and building strong domestic value chains to reduce import dependence,” said Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh.

Addressing the Governing Body meeting of the "National Mineral Exploration and Development Trust" (NMET), held at GPOA Complex, Dr Jitendra Singh set out key priorities to accelerate exploration, strengthen domestic capacity and expand participation in the critical minerals sector.

The meeting was co-chaired by Union Minister of Coal and Mines & Chairman, Governing Body, National Mineral Exploration and Development Trust, Shri G. Kishan Reddy and attended by senior officials of the Ministry of Mines, Director of CSIR–Institute of Minerals & Materials Technology (CSIR–IMMT), Director of the Atomic Minerals Directorate, representatives of the Department of Atomic Energy, officials of exploration agencies, and representatives from State Governments including Rajasthan, Telangana and Maharashtra.

Dr. Jitendra Singh said that the pace of exploration, particularly for lithium and other critical minerals, needs to align with emerging global demand and India’s strategic requirements. He referred to ongoing work in regions such as the Siwana belt in Rajasthan and the Salal–Haimna block in Jammu & Kashmir, and called for expanding indigenous exploration efforts across more potential zones.

The Minister said that India must create a conducive environment for Indian companies and startups to enter the mining and critical minerals sector. Referring to the success of the biotechnology startup ecosystem, he added that similar institutional support, targeted incentives, and handholding mechanisms can enable innovation in mining technologies and exploration methods.

The Minister said that building capacity in private exploration agencies is essential for long-term growth of the sector. He called for strengthening the role of Notified Private Exploration Agencies (NPEAs), improving access to technology and finance, and ensuring faster project approvals so that private participation expands in a meaningful manner.

Dr Jitendra Singh added that faster approvals, better procurement systems, and timely pre-exploration clearances are necessary to maintain momentum in exploration activities. He also said that issues related to forest clearances continue to affect timelines in several projects and require coordinated efforts for resolution.

On local engagement, the Minister said that elected representatives, including Members of Parliament and State Legislators, may be associated in areas where exploration is underway. This, he said, will help build awareness among local communities and facilitate smoother implementation of projects.

Dr Jitendra Singh said that reducing dependence on imports requires development of end-to-end domestic supply chains, including processing and value addition. He referred to ongoing efforts to establish processing capabilities in states such as Maharashtra, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat, which are expected to strengthen India's position in global mineral supply chains.

The Minister added that international cooperation may be explored for access to advanced technologies and expertise, while maintaining focus on indigenous technology development through institutions such as CSIR-IMMT and the Department of Atomic Energy.

Reviewing the functioning of NMET, Dr Jitendra Singh discussed annual plans, project approvals, funding support, and institutional mechanisms aimed at improving efficiency and outcomes. He said that NMET must continue to support innovation, facilitate exploration agencies, incentivise states and promote pilot projects for recovery of critical minerals. He also said that awareness in exploration areas is important so that local communities understand the long-term benefits of mineral development.

Speaking on the occasion, G. Kishan Reddy said that critical minerals will play a key role in India's growth and called for prioritising their exploration along with faster auctions and greater participation from states and private players.

Senior officials of the Ministry of Mines presented updates on NMET activities, including progress on exploration projects, startup initiatives, project approval mechanisms, and measures to improve coordination and efficiency.





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