



Spudding of first appraisal well, MN-DWN18-1-HD, begins in Mahanadi offshore basin

Every metre drilled brings us closer to reducing import dependence, strengthening self-reliance and realising the vision of Viksit Bharat: Sh. Hardeep Singh Puri

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Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas, Shri Hardeep Singh Puri, today marked the commencement of drilling of the first appraisal well, MN-DWN18-1-HD, in the Mahanadi Offshore Basin. Describing the occasion as "the beginning of a new chapter in India's journey towards energy security", the Minister said the commencement of drilling reflects the outcome of a decade of visionary reforms that have transformed India's exploration and production landscape.

The MN-DWN18-1-HD appraisal well being spudded today in the Mahanadi Offshore Basin is the first of four planned deepwater wells that will systematically evaluate one of India's most prospective offshore basins. The drilling programme will employ world-class deepwater drilling technology to unlock new hydrocarbon resources and strengthen India's domestic production capability.

The Minister said that over the past decade, the Government has fundamentally transformed the exploration and production ecosystem through landmark policy and regulatory reforms.

He highlighted the introduction of the Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP), replacement of the nomination-based approach with the Open Acreage Licensing Programme (OALP), adoption of a transparent Revenue Sharing framework and the opening of nearly 99% of the erstwhile offshore "No-Go" areas for exploration. He noted that nearly 81% of India's active exploration acreage has been awarded after 2014, reflecting the confidence these reforms have inspired among investors and explorers alike.

Emphasising the importance of scientific exploration, the Minister said the Government has made sustained investments in geoscientific data generation through initiatives such as Mission Anveshan, the National Seismic Programme, the Extended Continental Shelf Survey, the National Data Repository and the Hydrocarbon Resource Assessment Study, creating one of the world's most comprehensive geoscientific databases to unlock India's frontier basins.

Highlighting the progress achieved under the Government's exploration reforms, Shri Puri said that under OALP, 172 exploration blocks covering nearly 3.8 lakh square kilometres have been awarded with committed investments exceeding USD 4.3 billion. During FY 2025-26 alone, around 674 wells were drilled, five new discoveries were made and seven discoveries were monetised.

The Minister said the Government's strategy is two-fold—discovering new hydrocarbon resources while maximising recovery from existing national assets. He added that efforts are also underway to revitalise mature producing fields through the deployment of advanced technologies and global best practices.

The Minister emphasised that India's energy future will not be secured by a single discovery but through sustained reforms, cutting-edge technology, scientific exploration and the dedication of thousands of geologists, engineers, scientists and offshore professionals.

"As we commence this first well today, we are not merely drilling into the seabed—we are drilling into India's future energy security. Every metre drilled brings us closer to reducing import dependence, strengthening self-reliance and realising the vision of Viksit Bharat," the Minister said.

Congratulating ONGC, Oil India Limited, the Directorate General of Hydrocarbons, technical partners and the entire exploration fraternity, Shri Puri expressed confidence that today's commencement of drilling would further strengthen India's offshore exploration efforts and contribute to the country's long-term energy security and goal of energy self-reliance.

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