

NEW MINNIG POLICY BY MARCH 15

Utpal Bhaskar / New Delhi February 21, 2006

A Planning Commission review of the twelve-year-old National Mineral Policy will focus on removing procedural delays in granting reconnaissance permits, prospective licence and mining lease deeds to companies.

The review of the 1993 policy and the Mines and Minerals Development and Regulation Act, 1957, is being done to attract public and private sector investment in mineral exploration. An amended policy is expected in a month's time.

"The review of the existing procedures is being done to streamline and simplify them. The new mining policy will be out by March 15," a Planning Commission official told Business Standard.

The procedures for giving clearances for mining and mineral exploration projects under the Forest (Conservation) and Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, are under review and solutions are being sought to speed up the procedures for granting clearances.

The national mineral policy is being reviewed to prioritise infrastructure needs of the mining sector and make recommendations to attract investment to meet those needs. The Plan panel is examining the implications of the policy on mineral-rich states at its meetings. This is being done to make value-addition within the state as a condition for grants of mineral concession.

The review for which the fourth meeting was held last month is also considering various proposals on captive mines and non-captive mines and the debates which have pitted them against each other.

Ways to increase state revenues from the mineral sector and introduction of new technology in mining are also being mulled. "The other important aspect that the review will cover are the problems faced by the small mining companies and finding out ways and measures to solve them," the official added.

The review is being conducted in consultation with the officials of ministries of mines, steel, finance, environment and forest, departments of revenue, atomic energy, road transport and highways, shipping, industries and mining and various officials of mineral-rich states.