

NELP-VIII auctions by mid-March, blocks to be finalised soon

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Hyderabad: The eighth round of auctions for oil and natural gas blocks under the new exploration licensing policy (Nelp) is likely to take place by mid-March 2009. The directorate general of hydrocarbons, which is proposing to offer 4,00,000 sq km of land for the exploration purpose, is expected to finalise the blocks within 15-20 days of obtaining an approval from the ministries concerned.

The department is also hopeful of getting the necessary clearances from the ministries including defence and external affairs by the end of this month.

Speaking to the media on the sidelines of a seminar organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry in Hyderabad, SK Srivastava, deputy director general, directorate general of hydrocarbons, government of India, said, “the department has identified 400,000 sq km of land to offer under Nelp VIII, covering western offshore, Andaman offshore, Mizoram, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Assam, Nagaland, Andhra Pradesh, MP, Punjab, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, J&K, Arunachal Pradesh, Orissa, Tripura, Manipur and Nagaland. By the end of January, we hope to get all the approvals and within the next 15-20 days we will be able to finalise the blocks. The oil and natural gas blocks will be tendered through an international competitive bidding process, which should be over by mid March 2009, subject to getting approvals.”

This apart, the department is also planning to give on auction, 10 coal bed methane (CBM) blocks by March 2009. “We have already identified 10 blocks in various states including Jharkand, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Assam and Maharashtra. These CBM round IV blocks are expected to be auctioned by the second week of March 2009,” he said.

He said, the department is also in the process of establishing a national data repository (NDR), covering the entire energy mineral industry in Noida with an investment of about \$ 20 million-\$ 30 million. “Tenders have been floated for the purpose and within the next 2-3 months, the project would be awarded. By 2010, the NDR should be in place. The idea behind this move is to collect data and assess the entire mineral wealth (covering all minerals) in the country. The data can be accessed by all the stakeholders, including academia, industry people and policy makers,” he added.

(Source: The Financial Express)