A Committee headed by Vice-chairman, NITI Aayog and comprising of Cabinet Secretary, Chief Executive Officer, NITI Aayog, Secretary, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs and Chairman &Managing Director of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation was constituted in October, 2018 for suggesting reforms in Exploration &Production (E&P Sector to enhance domestic Oil &Gas Exploration and Production. The Committee, in its report *inter-alia* recommended constitution of an Empowered Coordination Committee (ECC) under the chairmanship of Cabinet Secretary for streamlining and expediting grant of approval/clearances.

Empowered Coordination Committee (ECC) was constituted in May, 2019 under the Chairmanship of Cabinet Secretary, for considering matters relating to delay in granting various clearances, approvals etc. Three meetings of the committee have been held so far and issues related to delay/non-grant of Petroleum Exploration Licenses, environmental clearance issues and defence clearance issues have been taken up with other Ministries/departments and State Governments for expeditious resolution of the pending issues. Pursuant to the ECC meetings, following steps have been taken:-

I. Petroleum Exploration Licenses (PELs) have been granted in all Blocks awarded under Open Acreage Licensing Policy Round-I in the states of Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat &some blocks of Arunachal Pradesh,

II. Petroleum Mining Leases have been granted for many Discovered Small Fields and Nomination blocks in Assam, Tripura, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh,

III. Ministry of Defence and Department of Space have agreed to grant additional area for exploration,

IV. Notification of Eco Sensitive Zone (ESZ) has already been issued around 16 protected areas.

This information was given by the Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Shri Dharmendra Pradhan in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha today.

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YKB/SK

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