Report on National Seminar on Safe & Sustainable Winning of Minor Minerals – Deepak Vidyarthi, Secretary, MEAI, Bangalore Chapter. (E: vidyarthikud@hotmail.com)

A National Seminar on Safe & Sustainable Winning of Minor Minerals was conducted by MEAI, Bangalore Chapter on Saturday, the 27th October 2018 at 10:00 AM at Prof. Satish Dhawan Auditorium, CSIC, IISC, Bangalore. It was supported by the Department of Mines & Geology, Govt. of Karnataka and the Geological Society of India, Bangalore. As the Government of India has recently notified 31 major minerals as minor minerals, it was considered necessary to conduct the National Seminar with the objective of covering all aspects like safe mining / quarrying practices, use of explosives, environmental issues, alternative to sands and the rules governing allocation of minor minerals.

Dr. T.N. Venugopal, Chairman, MEAI, Bangalore Chapter, gave background for the seminar and welcomed the guests and delegates. This was followed by address by the guests of honour Dr. S. M. Mannan, Dy. Chief Controller of Explosives, Sri Vijay Kumar, Director of Mines Safety, Dr. H.S. Venkatesh, Director, NIRM, Sri R. Veeramani, Chairman Gem Granites & President, CAPEXIL and Sri. R. H. Sawkar, Secretary, Geological Society of India.

The Souvenir of the seminar was released by the Chief Guest Sri N.S. Prasanna Kumar, Director, Department of Mines & Geology. In his address he emphasised on the need to extract minor minerals, without compromising on Safety and Environment. He stressed on the need to prevent any illegal quarrying activity which affects the economy and brings bad name to the State/industry. Transportation of minerals after mining is another area of concern which should be properly looked into. Sri A. K. Kohari, National President, MEAI, in his address explained the activities of MEAI and its role in formulating policies. He also expressed that MEAI is giving its input to Niti Aayog and Ministry of Mines on several issues concerned with the mining industry. Sri Deepak Vidyarthi, Secretary, MEAI, Bangalore Chapter proposed a vote of thanks, at the end of the inaugural session, expressing gratitude to all the guests, authors and delegates who had graced the occasion by their presence and assembled from distant places.

Technical Presentations
The day-long seminar had excellent technical presentations from learned and experienced persons. It was covered five technical themes, mentioned below:

- Use of Explosives
- Safe Mining / Quarrying
- Environmental Issues
- Sand & Alternatives
- Minor Mineral Rules and Auction of Mineral Blocks

Each theme had two technical papers – one from the Industry and one from the Regulatory authorities. The following papers were presented:

1. Regulations under Explosives Rules, 2008 – With Special Reference to Mining by Dr. S.M. Mannan
2. Statutory Provisions for Safe & Sustainable Winning of Minor Minerals by Sri G. Vijayakumar
3. Air dressing in blasting by Sri Deepak Vidyarthi
4. A correlation of geological structures with stability and safety in mining practices in granite dimensional quarries by Sri B. Kanishkan
5. Blasting concerns during quarrying by Sri. B.B. Prakash
6. Environment clearance for minor minerals - procedures and practice by Sri D.A. Hiremath
7. Manufacture of sand by Sri Venkat Chandrasekhar
8. Minor mineral concession rules in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana by Dr. V.D. Rajagopal
9. Critical analysis on quarrying of minor minerals under the KMMCR, 1994 – Issues & Concerns by Mr. A.R. Vijay Singh and
10. Auction of minor minerals by Sri Sabyasachi Nayak.

Different sessions were chaired by Dr. Meda Venkataiah, ED, MSPL; Sri D.V. Pichamuthu, former president, F.I.M.I; Sri K. Madhusudan, Vice President Mines, MSPL, VP-II, MEAI; Sri R.H. Sawkar, Secretary, Geological Society of India, Bangalore and Sri N.S. Prasanna Kumar, Director, Department of Mines & Geology, Bangalore.

Valedictory Function
Sri D.V. Pichamuthu, former president of F.I.M.I summed up the proceedings of the day. Sri A.K. Kohari, National President, MEAI, in his concluding remarks mentioned that this type of seminar would greatly benefit the mining companies and the lease holders engaged in mining of minor minerals. Sri N. Rajendran, Jt Secretary cum Treasurer proposed a vote of thanks. About 140 delegates from State/Central organisations, private companies and students from Engineering colleges and Polytechnics participated in the seminar.

Recommendations
Based on the technical papers presented in the seminar and discussions held, following are some of the recommendations:

1. Regulating agencies shall organise periodic training programmes for quarry lease holders at district level/taluk level and guide them on various statutory provisions/obligations and safe practices.
2. Different regulating departments shall meet at least once in a year, discuss and sort out inter departmental issues in grant/monitoring quarry leases. Director of Mines & Geology shall take a lead in organising such meetings.
3. Department of Mines and Geology shall look into Minor Mineral Concession Rules and eliminate redundancy. Provisions which are in contradiction to Act shall be omitted.
4. Quarry leases shall not be granted for smaller areas. An Expert Committee shall be constituted to look into minimum area for each mineral, based on available technology, reserves and safety aspects.
5. Quarry leases granted shall have definite shape i.e., rectangle, square and shall have GPS co-ordinates.
6. Assessing value and recovery of ornamental granite deposit is difficult in the absence of established figures on recovery. Auctioning ornamental granite deposits may not be prudent and lead to litigations. Andhra Pradesh and Telangana Governments have dispensed with auctioning of Minor Minerals.
7. Illegal quarrying is affecting the market of legal quarrying operators. Department of Mines & Geology shall be strengthened with manpower, technology and logistic support to regulate illegal quarrying. Such operators shall be blacklisted and stringent action shall be initiated on them.
8. Ornamental granites (Dimensional stones) may be classified as separate category of mineral/rock in view of the requirement of unique characteristic for its marketing.
9. State Government shall declare certain minor mineral bearing
areas as quarrying corridor so that the entrepreneur in the long run shall not face problem from neighbourhood development activities.

10. State Government shall take Mining Engineers’ Association in the Board, wherever some policy issues are discussed.

11. State Government shall constitute a body consisting of professional organisations from different disciplines. This body shall be responsible for recognizing individuals who are committed to transparent evaluation of mineral deposits.

12. The dead rent for 31 minerals newly included as minor minerals, shall be reviewed, otherwise many mines will not be able to operate as the area leased is large in extent.

13. While fixing the rates of dead rent and royalty, prevailing rates in the neighbouring states shall be taken into consideration.