

Blocks Awarded for Exploration & production

National Oil Companies, viz, ONGC and OIL are carrying out hydrocarbon exploration and production (E&P) activities in the country since inception. Consequent upon liberalization in petroleum sector in 1990s, the participation of foreign and Indian companies in the exploration and development activities to supplement the efforts of national oil companies was observed to narrow the gap between supply and demand.

Government of India has signed production sharing contracts for 28 discovered blocks, 28 exploration blocks under pre-NELP regime and 254 blocks under NELP regime with National Oil Companies and private (both Indian and foreign)/ Joint Venture companies as licensee for blocks. At present out of, 310 exploration blocks awarded so far under various bidding rounds (Discovered Field, Pre-NELP & NELP), 189 blocks/fields are operational. 17 blocks under nomination are being operated by ONGC and OIL. Petroleum Exploration Licenses (PEL) for domestic exploration & production of crude oil and natural gas were granted under four different regimes over a period time:

1. Nomination Basis: Petroleum Exploration License (PEL) were granted to National Oil Companies viz. Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Ltd (ONGC) and Oil India Ltd. (OIL) on Nomination basis prior to implementation of NELP.
2. Pre-NELP Discovered Field: Petroleum Mining Lease (PML) was granted under small / medium size discovered field Production Sharing Contract (PSCs) during 1991 to 1993 where operators of blocks were private companies and ONGC/OIL have the participating interest.
3. Pre-NELP Exploration Blocks: 28 Exploration Blocks were awarded to private companies between 1990 and prior to implementation of NELP where ONGC and OIL have the rights for participation in the block after hydrocarbon discoveries.
4. New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP) -1999 onwards : Under NELP, exploration blocks were awarded to Indian Private and foreign companies through international competitive bidding process where National Oil Companies viz, ONGC and OIL are also competing on equal footing.

Out of 310 blocks, 121 exploration blocks were relinquished and currently E&P activities in 189 blocks are in progress. The PSC regime-wise details of operational and relinquished blocks are as under:

Table 2.9: Blocks awarded under Production Sharing Regime

Bidding Rounds	Active Blocks	Relinquished Blocks	Total Blocks
Pre-NELP Field	27	1	28
Pre-NELP Exploration	14	14	28
NELP I	4	20	24
NELP II	4	19	23
NELP III	8	15	23
NELP IV	7	13	20
NELP V	10	10	20
NELP VI	33	19	52
NELP VII	34	7	41
NELP VIII	29	3	32
NELP IX	19	0	19
Total	189	121	310

The pace of exploration for oil and gas has increased after the introduction of NELP regime. The awarded 254 blocks are located in onland (111), offshore shallow water (62) and deepwater (81) areas. As a result of exploratory activities, several unexplored and poorly explored areas, in particular offshore and deepwater areas have been appraised through geophysical surveys and exploratory drilling.