

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Minerals constitute the backbone of the economic growth of any nation and India has been eminently endowed with this gift of nature. There is much evidence that the exploitation of minerals like coal, iron ore, copper, and lead & zinc has been going on in the country from time immemorial. However, the first recorded history of mining in India dates back to 1774 when the English Company was granted permission by the East India Company for mining coal in Raniganj. M/s John Taylor & Sons Ltd. started gold mining in Kolar Gold Fields in the year 1880. The first oil well was drilled in Digboi in the year 1866 - just seven years after the first ever oil well was drilled anywhere in the world viz. in Pennsylvania State, USA in 1859. Mining activities in the country however remained primitive and modest in scale-up till the beginning of the 21st century. After India became independent, the growth of mining under the impact of successive Five-Year Plans has been very fast. Indian economy is on the aspirational path of becoming a \$5 trillion GDP economy by 2024-25 and mining is going to have a substantial contribution to the envisaged GDP and wealth creation.

Extraction of the Minerals from below the surface of the earth is fraught with innumerable dangers. Dangers due to a sudden inrush of water, release of lethal and inflammable gases or the fall of roof and sides are inherent to mining and it is essentially because of such unpredictable dangers that mining is considered the most hazardous of all peacetime occupations.

In 1895, the Government of India initiated steps to frame legislative measures for the safety of workmen. In 1897 first major disaster in mining hit the Kolar Goldfields killing 52 persons, soon followed by the Khost Coal Mine disaster in Baluchistan (now in Pakistan) killing 47 persons. The disaster hastened the process of formulation of safety laws and the first Mines Act was enacted in 1901. With further experience, this Act was superseded by the Indian Mines Act, 1923, which was again replaced by the present Mines Act, 1952. This Act came into force on the 1st of July 1952. The Mines Act, 1952 applies to mines of all minerals within the country, including the offshore mines within territorial water limits. Major changes were incorporated in this Act in the years 1959 and 1983.

For administering the provisions of the Indian Mines Act, 1901, the Government of India set up a "Bureau of Mines Inspection" on the 7th of January 1902 with headquarters at Calcutta. The name of the organization was changed to the Department of Mines in 1904 and its headquarters shifted to Dhanbad in 1908. On 01.01.1960, the organization was renamed as "Office of the Chief Inspector of Mines". Since 01.05.1967, the office has been re-designated as Directorate General of Mines Safety (DGMS in short).