

India, Malawi to cooperate in mineral resource development



Masi and Menon (centre) in a group photo with Malawi-India Joint Working Group

Malawi and India have pledged to strengthen their working relationship in the area of mineral resource development in order to assist each other develop the mining industry to its full economic potential.

The commitment was made when a delegation from Government of India's Ministry of Mines held second high level discussions with their counterparts from Malawi's Ministry of Natural Resources, Energy and Mining at Sunbird Capital Hotel in Lilongwe.

The first high level discussions were held on October 17, 2011 in New Delhi, India after the two countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in mineral resource development on November 3, 2010, leading to the establishment of a Joint Working Group (JWG) comprising technocrats from both countries' ministries responsible for mining.

Gracing the Lilongwe event was Minister of Natural Resources, Energy and Mining Aggrey Masi and Indian High Commissioner to Malawi, Suresh Kumar Menon, who both hailed the beneficial long term bilateral relationship that exists between the two countries.

Masi said the meeting was important to enable sharing of ideas and information between experts from the two countries.

He noted that though the mining industry in Malawi is relatively small, indicators show that it has the potential to significantly develop into an economic force to reckon with, hence the need to tap-in expertise from countries that have a fully-fledged mining industry like India.

As stipulated in Article I of the MOU, the minister said, Malawi and India will promote development of cooperation in fields of mineral resources development, which will lead to the achievement of the two countries' goals of cooperation.

"I am sure that the cooperation between the two countries will result in Malawi's mining industry being technically and legally empowered. Not only will Malawi benefit in terms of technical capacity, but it will also enable us find stable market to consume our minerals supply in India," he said.

Masi said the Malawi government is aware that after more than a century of mining, many African countries have not derived maximum benefits from mining in terms of soliciting tangible sustainable development outcomes, including improved livelihoods of people.

"So it is our ambition that this cooperation will enable us to be one of the model countries whose extractive industry optimally benefits the citizenry through promotion of sustainable development of the country," he said.

On his part, High Commissioner Kumar Menon said the partnership will mutually benefit the two countries in the area of trade as India will be buying minerals from this country as well as wooing investors to come to Malawi and technically as Indian experts will be imparting their knowledge and experience on their Malawian counterparts.

"We are looking into facilitating Indian investors to come to Malawi and make use of the available mining opportunities," he said.

He said India buys US\$13million worth of minerals from Malawi annually and he expects the figure to rise as the cooperation grows.

On his part, leader of Indian delegation Subhash Chandra, who is the Joint Secretary (International Cooperation) for India's Ministry of Mines, said the meeting will help the two countries realize maximum benefits from their respective mining industries.

"We are really glad to be here and I believe that whatever we will share and learn about this field of mining will contribute to our effort of trying to make mining realize its full economic potential, something that will end up making people from both countries happy," Chandra said.

The eight-member delegation from India included Deputy Director General (Geological Survey) Satyabrata Guha, Joint Secretary (Department of Atomic Energy) M.A. Inbarasu; Directorate General of HydroCarbon Amirtha Kumar, Under Secretary Ministry of External Affairs Ms. Deepti Jharwal and Head of Chancery Anil Kumar.

Among those in attendance from Malawi side were Acting Director of Mines Atileni Wona, Deputy Director of Mines Peter Chilumanga, Deputy Director Geological Survey Department Devison Makwela, Chief Mining Engineers Cassius Chiwambo and Burnett Msika and Deputy Director of Environmental Affairs Victoria Kachimera.

According to the MoU, cooperation with India will see Malawi improve its capacity in mining, geo-sciences, mineral exploration, data processing, interpretation and management.

Additionally, India will also support research in mineral beneficiation and value addition as well as facilitate foreign direct investment in the mining sector by Indian companies.

Malawi has a lot to gain from India considering the fact that that country's Geological Department was established 160 years ago, even before the country gained independence, something which entails their experience in extractives industry management ■