COPE looks into the delay in formulating a National Policy on Mineral Resources in Sri Lanka

Date : 25-04-2022

The COPE took into account the delay in formulating a National Policy on Mineral Resources in Sri Lanka.

The following was taken into discussion at the Committee on Public Enterprises held recently (21), chaired by Hon. Prof. Charitha Herath taking the Report of the Auditor General of the Geological Survey and Mines Bureau for the financial years 2018 and 2019 and its current performance into consideration.

The Geological Survey and Mines Bureau was summoned before the COPE on February 23rd and was re-summoned again before the COPE on the 21st as there was not enough time to discuss the full report.

The Chairman of the COPE, Hon. (Prof) Charitha Herath pointed out that although the Cabinet of Ministers had formulated a National Policy in 2017 and requested for its approval, it is regrettable that it has not been formulated yet. Accordingly, the COPE Chairman questioned whether a time frame could be set for this and it could be completed within six months. Officials present said that this could be completed within five months.

The COPE Chairman further stated that if a national policy on mineral resources had been formulated, there would have been a better opportunity to earn foreign exchange in such a situation where there is a foreign exchange crisis in the country.

The COPE Chairman also pointed out the need to prepare a map of the resources available in various parts of the country.

Discussions were also held regarding the failure to collect royalty from licensees for 22094 cubes of Thiruvana excavated from a land belonging to the Forest Department in the Kotikambokka area in Wellawaya and adjacent to it. Responding to this, the officials present said that the collection of royalty of these items is done not by the mining license holders but by the export license holders. Accordingly, the Chairman of the COPE recommended that a report be submitted in this regard.

Attention was drawn to the fact that royalty of Rs. 27419690 due for the soil cube and sand cube used in the construction of the Yan oya Reservoir Project had not been recovered from the relevant contractor. The Chairman of the COPE recommended that a report on this be submitted to the COPE.

In 2017, two officers who had been suspended on criminal charges were given half pay, professional allowances, incentives and bonuses for the period of their suspension. These officers were also appointed to the service from August 2019 with the approval of the Board of Directors without a disciplinary inquiry order. Officials present said that action would be taken to recover the money. Accordingly, the COPE Chairman recommended the Secretary to the Ministry to conduct a formal inquiry into this matter.

Value added tax was not levied on customers in the field inspection revenue collection for the years 2011 to 2014. However, Rs. 93068185 had been paid to the Commissioner of Inland Revenue in the year under review and this had been identified as a loss to the Bureau. Therefore, the COPE recommended that the responsible officials be identified and appropriate action be taken.

State Minister Hon. Indika Anuruddha, Members of Parliament Hon. Mahinda Amaraweera, Hon. (Dr.) Susil Premajayantha, Hon. Eran Wickramaratne, Hon. (Dr.) Harsha de Silva, Madhura Withanage and Hon. Jagath Pushpakumara were present at this Committee.