

1 . Introduction

Barytes, Barite or the 'Heavy Spar' are different names of the same mineral having the composition $BaSO_4$. The mineral is very important and vital to the petroleum industry. Petroleum industry consumes more than 80 percent of the world's barytes production in exploration of oil as a weighting agent in drilling mud. Petroleum being major source of energy of the world, the importance of barytes and its supporting role in global energy scenario cannot be over emphasised. There is another barium mineral, witherite ($BaCO_3$), but its occurrence is very limited throughout the world. Barytes finds its principal utility in drilling mud for exploration of oil because of its high specific gravity, inertness to acids, insolubility in water and above all its lower cost compared to many other available heavy materials.¹

India occupies a very prominent position in the world map of barytes, ranking second in production and third in reserves. It is a matter of pride that India is endowed with the world's largest single barytes deposit at Mangampet in Andhra Pradesh containing as high as 61 million

tonnes of recoverable reserves². With such huge reserves, India is in a comfortable position not only to meet the domestic requirement but also to export as per demands. In 1993-94, India exported barytes worth as much as Rs. 4.83 crore. It is therefore, in all fitness of things that Indian Bureau of Mines has chosen barytes as a subject for preparation of a monograph by consolidating all conceivable and relevant information on barytes at one place for the benefit of the mining and other consumer industries.

The subsequent chapters of this monograph cover in detail the various aspects of barytes including geology, exploration, reserves and deposits in India, world deposits and reserves, production and mining in India, uses, specification and consumption, beneficiation, outlook and prospects as well as world review.

References

1. Directory of Mineral Consumers in India, 1984, IBM.
2. Indian Minerals Yearbook, 1994, IBM.