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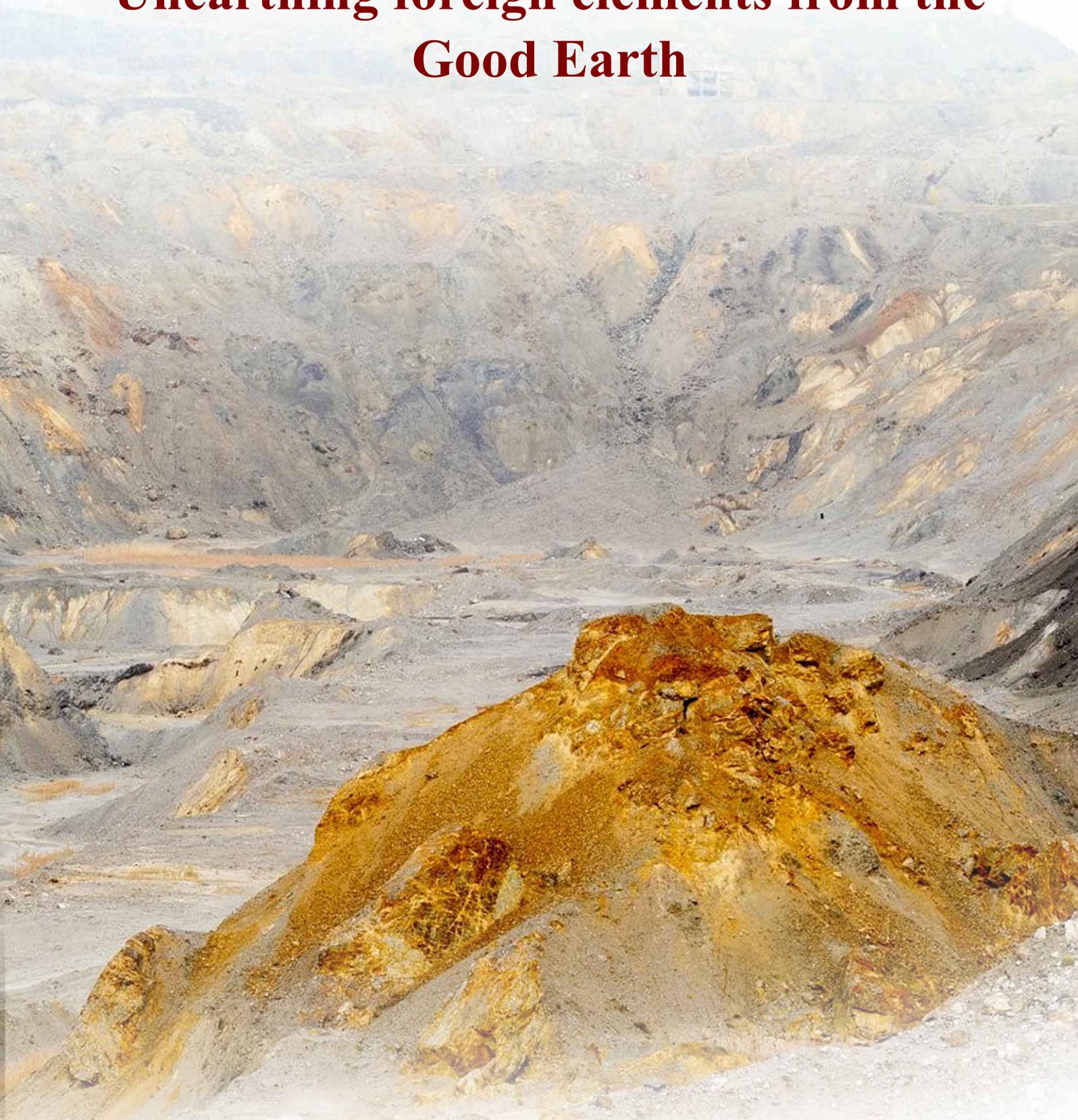
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# Geonesis

Indian Mining & Exploration Updates

## Unearthing foreign elements from the Good Earth



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## Unearthing foreign elements from the Good Earth

Beyond base and ferrous, Rare Earth Elements (REE), a group of 17 chemical elements that occur together in the periodic table, merit an introspection.

The creator of 'The Odd Couple' captioned his memoir 'Neil Simon Rewrites,' a wry reference to Hollywood's penchant for modifying scripts. Rewriting a Nation's economic future calls for foiling a bigger plot.

Foil is most appropriate because the domain in question is metals, with a drama playing out on the world stage... its genre being a quest for rare earth and precious minerals, in which foreign elements, covert and overt, vie for dominance.

The target could be stable elements in the periodic table such as iron, copper, zinc and aluminium, so as to create economic instability or excess dependence on major producers. Here are some nuggets in support of my hypothesis.

**Steel:** China tops the top 10 list, and India is second, according to the World Steel Association.

**Aluminium:** China ranks first, and GCC countries second, as per International Aluminium Institute ranking.

**Zinc:** First is China, and India ranks fifth, as per The Global Economy website.

**Copper:** Chile, Peru and China rank among the top 3 copper producing countries in the world, according to an NS Energy report.

Beyond base and ferrous, Rare Earth Elements (REE), a group of 17 chemical elements that occur together in the periodic table, merit an introspection. Read on if you wonder why.

Public Sector Undertaking Indian Rare Earths Limited has captive units at Kerala, Tamilnadu and Odisha which together mine and process Ilmenite and other associated beach sand minerals such as Rutile, Zircon, Sillimanite, Rare Earth Chloride, and a High Pure Rare Earths (HPRE) plant to produce separated Rare Earth Oxide/Carbonates.

Natural resources conglomerate Vedanta recently acquired Nicomet, which produces nickel and cobalt, minerals integral to EV batteries and energy storage systems,

and slated to play a role in India's transition to clean energy and electric mobility.

While India has its share of rare earths, a global overview can be scary. China controls 70% of the strategic metals market as per a September 2021 Bloomberg news report. It accounts for 97% of global production of rare earths according to the US Foreign Policy Research Institute. Although China is the world leader in rare earth production, it only controls about 36% of the world's reserves.

REEs mined in other countries are sent to China for refining. Reasons could be lower labor costs, generous state subsidies and investment in rare earth mining and processing for over two decades.

In 2020, the monopoly and grip became so evident that President Donald Trump signed an executive order "declaring a national emergency in the mining industry," aimed at "incentivizing domestic production of rare earth minerals critical for military technologies while reducing American dependence on China."

His successor, Joe Biden, ordered in March 2021 a review of critical minerals and rare earths supply, as realisation dawned that reliance on imports from potentially hostile foreign nations like China creates a national security risk.

Rare earths are a key input in electric vehicles, battery making, renewable energy systems, consumer electronics, computers, communications and defence systems. The minerals' major usage is in permanent magnets, which form part of phones, computers, cars, wind turbines and missile guidance systems. To add to the scare and scarcity, the semiconductor industry too relies on rare earths.

Experts say rare earth mining is straightforward, while separation of concentrate to oxide is not, as the process involves technical and environmental challenges. Hence, a vast majority of Light REE separation is done in China, and almost all Heavy REE separation is done in China. The monopoly on separation has led to China's domination of downstream metal,



alloy and magnet making.

In December 2021, China merged three state-owned rare earth mining companies, and the newly-formed entity is slated to have such an extensive range in rare earths, it has been dubbed "aircraft carrier" by the Chinese media.

An example of rare earths stronghold playing out in the diplomatic arena: A decade ago, when a Chinese fishing boat rammed two Japanese coast guard vessels in the waters of the East China Sea, the Japanese wanted to put the fishing boat's captain on trial, whereupon the Chinese government retaliated with a threat of an embargo on rare earth sales to Japan, which would have impacted Japanese car production as REEs are integral to catalytic converters in engines.

How did the United States, which has an abundance of rare earth, and was a key player in the 60s mainly due to deposits at Mountain Pass Mine in California, become an importer? In 1997, Magniquench, America's leading rare earths company, was sold to an investment consortium which included two Chinese state-owned metals firms. Magniquench was shut down in the United States, relocated to China, and reopened in 2003.

Molycorp, the last remaining major rare earths producer in the United States, collapsed in 2015 when China continued to drop prices to the extent others could not compete. In the last few years, prices of many rare earth oxides have risen 500% when China capitalized on its dominant position and began restricting exports. Steadily, Chinese companies have been purchasing rare earth resources in other countries. In 2009, China Non-Ferrous Metal

Mining Company bought a majority stake in Lynas Corporation, an Australian company that has one of the highest outputs of rare earth elements outside of China, and the Baluba Mine in Zambia.

If you are at ease reading about setbacks faced by US companies, damage control measures by Uncle Sam, or cornering of the metals and rare earths market by China, it's time check our own backyard. In India, the strategy works in reverse through undue focus on companies in the metal production category in which foreign countries wish to gain dominance.

Modern-day coercion is so tactical and subtle, you no longer require a military threat, geographical intrusion or political move to achieve an objective. Use a toolkit loaded with missives such as environment pollution or health hazard, ensure that the accused appear guilty until proven innocent, turn your own countrymen against progress, and the regress benefits the tactician.

The next time a manufacturing facility is announced, next time someone calls for an agitation against an industry in operation, we need to ponder before endorsing the protest in person or on paper. Because we may be playing the role for free, or you could be aiding a group alongside raising slogans for a fee.

Last year, our Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, announced a path-breaking initiative, 'AatmaNirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan' to propel the Nation towards self-reliance, with focus on enhancing manufacturing capabilities in 10

key sectors, which include electronic / technology products, automobiles and auto components, telecom products, renewable energy and specialty steel.

The issue is, if we have to import the refined metals or products essential to achieve self-reliance, the objective becomes self-defeating. Copper for example is key to most products listed above, and the irony is India's largest copper smelter is shut for the last three years, which has turned the country into a net importer.

Let's switch from copper to COP 26, the UN Climate Change Conference held in November 2021. World leaders gathered at Glasgow pledged to cut use of fossil fuels to fight greenhouse gas emissions. Which means investment in EVs and clean energy systems which require four to six times the copper used by conventional sources. If India were to increase production of green energy systems by using copper imported at high price, the cost increase will slow down their deployment and we are back to fuming at thermal energy.

What could be the solutions that the Indian Government could look at? Here are a few:

- Create an "essential elements" list and incentivize the segment.
- Place metal products essential for green energy on par with defence manufacturing.
- Name and nurture companies that can take us faster and closer to our carbon neutral goal.

● Monitor such companies, their plants and processes month on month for adherence to Environment, Social and Governance Goals through a body of experts.

With above checks and balances in place, block any attempt to drag the producers into a prolonged legal tangle. This will keep hidden sutradhars at bay even if they continue their ventriloquist bray.

A well-known Chinese idiom 卧虎藏龙 on which a blockbuster film was based, denotes a place or situation full of unnoticed masters. Our scrutiny of the global metals trade has revealed a strange similarity to the axiom in the marketplace. Permit me to explain:

In India, we pride the Tiger as our national animal. Courage is intrinsic to our DNA. As a country revered by superpowers for grit and intelligence, we must not go on the defensive. Recent media reports on frequent unrest at organisations manufacturing globally competitive products indicate that the foreign hand is no longer speculative but operative. If such elements must be unearthed, we can look for revelation, enlightenment and inner meaning in the idiom's English translation, which sounds innocuous yet sums up the plot: **"Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon."**

By R. Chandra Mouli (The writer is a communications specialist, columnist and former journalist. Views expressed are his own.)

**Source: Financial Express**

## Aluminium business of Vedanta to bring two mines into operation



Vedanta's aluminium business, which has not been impacted majorly by COVID-19, would focus on backward integration in the next fiscal and would bring into production two of its mines in Odisha to provide raw material security for its plants, a top

official of the company said.

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The CEO of Vedanta's aluminium business Rahul Sharma in an interview with PTI said

→ that in the coming financial year, the company's "focus would be on backward integration. Second is the raw material. We have some mines. We would like to operationalise one or two mines so that our raw material security becomes captive raw material... We see them (Jamkhani and Radhikapur coal mines) coming into operation next financial year," Sharma said.

The expansion of the company's alumina refinery from the current 2 million tonnes per annum to 5 MTPA is going as per the schedule, he said further

"We are expanding our refinery which is alu-

mina, which is an intermediate product, from 2 to 5 million tonne ... That is going as per the schedule," the CEO said.

On the metal side, the capacity of Vedanta's group firm Balco will increase from 0.56 million tonne (MT) to 1 million tonne (MT).

Sharma further said that to cater to sunrise sectors like electric mobility, renewable energy and aerospace, the company is expanding its portfolio in terms of value-added products like billets and alloys.

"Nothing has been hampered. Rather we are on track from the product side, expansion side, backward integration side, value-added prod-

ucts," the CEO said.

Vedanta Aluminium currently produces one of the largest ranges of aluminium and its value-added product offerings. The company is a leading producer and exporter of aluminium billets.

Vedanta Aluminium Business, a division of Vedanta Limited, is India's largest manufacturer of aluminium, producing half of India's aluminium at 1.97 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) in FY'21.

**Source: Business Standards**

## Orissa HC directs state government to set up special courts for cases of illegal mining

Justice Sahoo also said Odisha benefits from the revenue generated by mining and an increasing number of cases reported under the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) (MMDR) Act, which remain unresolved, can adversely affect the revenues.

The Orissa High Court has asked the state government to establish special courts to conduct the speedy trials of offences related to illegal mining in the region.

Underlining the necessity of such courts, a single judge bench of Justice S K Sahoo said, "This court expects the state government to take necessary effective steps in that regard at the earliest in consonance with the provision under section 30-B of the Mines & Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 for constitution of special courts for speedy trial

of offences."

Justice Sahoo also said Odisha benefits from the revenue generated by mining and an increasing number of cases reported under the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) (MMDR) Act, which remain unresolved, can adversely affect the revenues.

The direction was given while adjudicating an anticipatory bail application filed in a case of theft of minor minerals, registered under the MMDR Act at the Jakhapura police station and pending in the court of the Judicial Magistrate First Class.

A report submitted by district judges pertaining to the pending cases under MMDR Act has said 943 such cases are pending in the subordinate courts. The highest number of cases are

registered in Sundargarh, Keonjhar, and Mayurbhanj.

Justice Sahoo that amendments brought in to the MMDR Act in 2015 had stricter provisions, but with the high numbers of cases pending in the state, the new provisions are not being implemented but the state must do so now. The amendments in 2015 to check illegal mining prescribed higher penalties up to Rs 5 lakh per hectare and imprisonment up to five years.

When contacted a senior official from the steel and mines department said, "The state government is positive on establishing a special court for illegal mining cases. This has been conveyed to the court as well. But it is too soon to discuss the modalities."

**Source: Indian Express**

## Coal Ministry receives 26 bids for auction of 11 mines

The ministry opines that multiple producers will drive competition and adopt best practices in mining as well as environ management

The government has received 26 bids for the auction of 11 coal mines with 21 companies

including JSW Steel, Jindal Steel & Power and Bharat Aluminium Company evincing interest. The coal mines Gare Palma IV/6, Utkal B1 & B2 as well as Chinora received the highest number of bids, Coal Ministry said on Wednesday.

"The process of the 4th tranche of auction of coal mines for sale of coal was launched by the Ministry of Coal on December 16, 2021. The last date of submission of technical bids

→ was February 28, 2022. As part of the auction process, technical bids consisting of online and offline bid documents were opened on March 2, 2022 in the presence of the bidders,” Coal Ministry said in a statement.

The online bids were decrypted and opened electronically in the presence of the bidders, the ministry said, adding that the sealed envelopes containing offline bid documents were opened in the presence of bidders. Entire process was displayed on the screen for the bidders. A total of 26 bids have been received (both online and offline) against 11 coal mines. Two or more bids have been received for 5 coal mines, it added.

While Gare Palma IV/6 received the highest 8 bids, the Utkal B1 & B2 mines received 6 bids and Chinora (Chandrapur, Maharashtra) received four bids.

Under the commercial coal mining auction process, a total of 42 coal mines have been

successfully auctioned till date with a total cumulative PRC (peak rate capacity) of 86.404 million tonnes per annum (MTPA).

The ministry’s view is that a coal mine auction for the sale of coal would create a marketplace for the dry fuel with multiple producers to drive competition and adopt best practices in mining as well as environment management. Auction of coal mines for sale of coal in a transparent manner is expected to encourage transparent pricing of coal, based on market forces.

#### Demand-supply gap

Demand for coal is higher than the current level of domestic supply of coal in the country. The gap between demand and domestic supply of coal cannot be bridged completely as there is insufficient availability and reserve of prime coking coal in the country. Besides, coal imported by power plants designed on imported coal and high grade coal required

for blending purposes is also imported in the country as this cannot be fully substituted by domestic coal as the country has limited reserves of high grade coal.

In the current fiscal year, against the prorated demand of 439.37 MT by the Central Electricity Authority (CRA), up to January 26, 2022, CIL has already supplied coal to the tune of 432.90 MT.

The government has fixed a target of all India coal production of 1.2 billion tonnes up to 2023-24. Coal India (CIL) has envisaged a coal production programme of 1 billion tonnes from CIL mines.

CIL has planned to produce a quantity of 700 MT in FY23. Against the above planned production, the state-run miner is slated to supply 591.4 MT to the power sector in FY23 according to the projected demand given by the Ministry of Power.

**Source: The Hindu Business Line**

## India aims to reopen discontinued coal mines; seeks private participation

India is looking to partner with private companies to restart mines that have previously been shut or had their production discontinued by state-run Coal India Ltd., or CIL, on a revenue sharing model, according to a coal ministry statement issued Feb. 24.

The move, which has seen interest from top companies including Adani Enterprises, Tata Power, Essel Mining JSW and Jindal Steel, a stakeholders’ consultation is likely to see increase in production, lower import dependence and bring relief to domestic coal shortage in the country.

“There are many mines which were discontinued/closed in the past by CIL due to several

reasons and these could be reopened and productively brought into operation with the partnership of the private sector,” the statement said.

CIL is looking to offer more than 100 such mines to the private sector on a revenue-sharing basis in due course of time, the ministry said.

CIL’s production over April-December 2021 increased by 5.3% on the year to 413.60 million mt, according to data from the company’s website.

India aims to increase its domestic coal production to 1.2 billion mt by 2023-24 to reduce imports and bridge the demand-supply gap,

S&P Global Platts reported earlier. The government has rolled out a number of steps including the commercial auction of coal on a revenue share mechanism and single-window clearance to boost output and rolling auction. It also aims to add domestic production capacity through the approval of new projects and the expansion of those planned for the future.

CIL has also identified 15 projects with an expected annual output capacity of 160 million mt to boost production to 1 billion mt.

India’s coal demand stood at 905.88 million mt in 2020-21, with domestic supply contributing 690.89 million mt and imports at 214.99 million mt, according to ministry data.

**Source: hellenicshippingnews.com**

## 42 mines auctioned till date for commercial mining: Coal Ministry

The ministry said that the 10 blocks sold last week are projected to generate an annual revenue of Rs 2,858.20 crore, adding that the "annual revenue projected (is) based on the PRC (peak rate capacity) of mine."

A total of 42 coal blocks have been auctioned till date for commercial mining, the Coal Ministry said in a statement on Saturday. Of the said blocks, 10 coal mines were auctioned the past week under the third tranche, it added.

"Under the commercial coal mining auction process, a total of 42 coal mines, including... mines auctioned in tranche-3, have been successfully auctioned till date with a total cumulative PRC (peak rate capacity) of 86.404 million tonnes per annum (MTPA)," the statement said. The ministry said that the 10 blocks sold

last week are projected to generate an annual revenue of Rs 2,858.20 crore, adding that the "annual revenue projected (is) based on the PRC (peak rate capacity) of mine."

On the first day of the auction, five blocks were sold, with Dalmia Cement Bharat Ltd emerging as the highest bidder for two coal blocks in Jharkhand

While Mahanadi Mines and Minerals was the highest bidder for a coal block in Odisha, Yazdani Steel and Power was the highest bidder for another mine in the eastern state, the Ministry had said in a statement on Tuesday.

Assam Mineral Development Corp Ltd was the highest bidder for a mine in Assam.

On the second and the third days of auction, Jindal Steel and Power bagged Utkal-C coal

mine in Odisha while Hindalco Industries made the highest bid for Meenakshi mine in the eastern state.

BS Ispat Ltd emerged as the highest bidder for Majra mine in Maharashtra, and Assam Mineral Development Corporation bagged Garampani coal block in Assam.

Platinum Alloys Pvt Ltd bagged Namchik Namphuk mine in Arunachal Pradesh. WITH PTI

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Platinum Alloys Pvt Ltd bagged Namchik Namphuk mine in Arunachal Pradesh.

-Source : NDTV

## India should focus on procuring minerals crucial for powering EVs: study

- India is pushing for rapid adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) but it does not have certain minerals that are required for batteries that are crucial to powering this transition.
- A latest study by the World Resources Institute suggests that India should focus on ensuring adequate long-term arrangements with other countries to procure such minerals and ensure a smooth path for EVs.
- Experts working in the sector suggest that Indian companies should invest in mines outside India that are producing such minerals and focus on other crucial components of EVs such as motors.

Batteries are a crucial requirement for electric vehicles (EVs) and minerals such as cobalt and lithium are crucial for making these batteries.

Even as India is aggressively pushing for the faster adoption of EVs, it lacks reserves of these crucial raw materials. A recent study by the World Resources Institute (WRI) has said that India should make adequate arrangements for procuring such minerals from other countries to ensure a smooth path for electric vehicle growth in the country.

Even though there is no national target for electric vehicles in the country, the government of India is increasingly pushing for policies to encourage a comprehensive eco-system that will encourage the use of electric vehicles. These policies and initiatives span various central ministries, including the Department of Heavy Industries (DHI), NITI Aayog, Ministry of Power (MoP), Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD), Ministry of Road Transportation and Highways (MoRTH), and the Department of Science and Technology (DST).

For instance, the FAME-II scheme (by the DHI), which gives subsidies for EVs, and the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme by NITI Aayog, which subsidises the setting up of Li-ion cell-manufacturing gigafactories, are aimed at fast-tracking the transformation in the transportation sector. NITI Aayog plans to transition three-wheelers to full EVs by 2023 and two-wheelers with an engine capacity of less than 150cc to full EVs by 2025.

The study, on electric vehicle battery technology, noted the challenges in India's demand for EVs so far. These include the high initial cost of vehicles, lack of charging and maintenance infrastructure, and consumer perceptions around battery performance. It said limited domestic battery-manufacturing capabilities and a non-existent supply chain is a hurdle to building EVs in India.



→ The good news, however, is that despite there being no national target, at least 15 states across the country have released detailed policies for encouraging EVs. “Several state governments, including Karnataka, Maharashtra, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, Uttarakhand, and Delhi, have also taken steps to further developments in this space. These state-led initiatives include various activities such as providing funding for setting up of CoEs (Centers of Excellence) for R&D, incubation centers for clean energy start-ups, tax exemptions for EVs, promotion of skill development activities, adoption of e-buses for intracity public transportation, and setting up of charging infrastructure,” said the study.

It further emphasised that these initiatives are in different stages of planning, and some of them have already been launched but the “picture varies from state to state”.

According to the report, batteries require eight key raw materials including manganese (Mn), nickel (Ni), cobalt (Co), copper (Cu), aluminium (Al), graphite and titanium (Ti). It said that India has existing reserves of Mn, Ni, Cu, and Al.

“For these ores, an attempt should be made to produce high-value battery components that local and international cell-manufacturing companies can use. In the case of graphite, existing reserves should be evaluated for availability of large-flake graphite content ... India has no reserves of the other raw materials (Co and Li), and for these, adequate arrangements for procuring ores or concentrates from other countries should be made. Localised processing of lithium concentrates is beneficial for the battery industry from a reliability and purity perspective. Purity of lithium raw materials is crucial for achieving long cycle life,” the study noted.

While talking about the lack of access to necessary raw materials as an obstacle, Anil Das-

gupta, who is the President and the Chief Executive Officer of the WRI, said in the report, “Resource availability could be a significant constraint in the future.”

“For the raw materials that India lacks, locking in arrangements now to procure ores or concentrates from other countries in the future would be extremely advantageous. Additionally, the early creation of a closed recycling loop, where all materials that go into a battery are re-used at the end of its life, can enhance resource security while creating a sustainable battery life cycle,” said Dasgupta in the report.

### Set up infrastructure for recycling batteries

The report suggested that infrastructure for recycling Li-ion batteries should be set up in parallel with the development of Gigafactories and other battery-industry-related efforts.

“Recycled batteries from EVs will become a prominent source of raw materials via urban mining. The initial setups could be in the form of pilot plants for recycling small volumes of Li-ion batteries. These can be great tools for skill development and for recycling process optimisation. Refurbishment centers could also be established prior to recycling to enable second life use in stationary applications,” the study said.

Rahul Lamba, who is the founder of The Energy Company, a company that is working on the development of batteries, said, currently, India is in the same position as it was in 2010 when the mobile phone industry witnessed huge growth. “Right now, we know that the electric vehicle market is set for huge growth ... so to avoid old mistakes we should have a clear focus on battery development.”

“India does not have raw materials. For batteries, what we need to do is to finalise strategic sourcing. What the Indian companies need to do is invest in mines and secure the supply

chain of raw materials for the next 15-20 years. Efforts are already being made towards this. In addition to batteries, we need to focus on motors as well, which is another crucial component in EVs. Motors require rare earth elements and we have resources of such minerals,” Lamba told Mongabay-India.

He also highlighted that Indian companies need to focus on increasing the budget for R&D (Research and Development) to make rapid advances in battery technologies. “We need to ensure that the products being used in India suit the Indian climate because it is quite different from the one in the countries where such battery technologies are being developed.”

The study, meanwhile, also stressed on the importance of encouraging R&D in battery development. It said a “strong and mutually beneficial collaboration between industry and academia is needed to develop advanced technologies in India”.

“Many of the innovations created in universities and research institutes are not able to move to the next stage of the development phase. A healthy network of incubation centers and COEs can help bridge the gap between industry and academia and foster the creation of a new start-up ecosystem in the field of clean energy technologies,” it recommended.

It also said that central and state governments have to take various measures and help create an ideal environment so that India can attract next-generation technologies from the global R&D community as well.

The study suggested that “acquiring technologies for recycling batteries should also be given prominence along with the actual storage technologies” while noting that skill development in the space of Li-ion cell manufacturing will be critical for supporting large-scale manufacturing.

- Source: Mayank Aggarwal on  
MONGABAY

## Sarda Mines moves SC to direct Odisha govt to execute mining lease deed in its favour

The CJJ also slammed the Odisha government for its inaction, asking “it to be fair” as it took away 2,000 acre of land from the company.

Sarda Mines (SMPL) has moved the Supreme Court seeking a direction to the Odisha government to execute mining lease deed in its favour for the remaining 10 years out of the 30 years renewal that it was entitled to in terms of the Orissa High Court’s earlier orders of 1991 and 1998 and the state mining authorities’ February 1999. The mining lease is sought in respect of over 947.046 hectare Thakurani B-Block Iron Ore Mines in Keonjhar district, Odisha.

The company alleged that the state government had been denying and failing to comply with the central government’s and the HC’s repeated directions to renew the mining lease.

A Bench led by Chief Justice NV Ramana while seeking response from the state government have asked it to maintain status quo with regard to mining auction and not to take any coercive action against the mining company till the next date of hearing.

The CJJ also slammed the Odisha government for its inaction, asking “it to be fair” as it took away 2,000 acre of land from the company.

The state government had on January 13 asked SMPL to handover possession of the mines,

including stock of minerals, plant and machineries, building structures, etc, to the mining officer.

Senior counsel Kapil Sibal and counsel Ankur Saigal, appearing for SMPL, argued that there was a settlement which had received the HC’s nod in July 1998 under which its predecessor had surrendered one bigger block (measuring 2,590.4 acres of Thakurani Iron Ore Mines, Keonjhar) of the two mining leases and was granted the other block for 30 years. Even the orders of the court clearly establish that Sarda had received a crystallised and firm grant of mining lease for 30 years from the date of execution of the lease deed in December 1991, they stated.

According to the mining company, the state government towards the end of 20 years had started to circumvent its rights for the remaining period of 10 years on one or the other pretext. “The state government took a somersault and took a stand that the lease was only for 20 years and the HC by an erroneous interpretation has come to conclusion that the lease was for 20 years and not 30 years,” it stated, adding that the state government should be restrained from taking any coercive action or precipitative action against it during the pendency of the appeal in the apex court.

“The lease was executed with an express

written understanding that the mining lease shall be executed for 20 years to start with and the balance 10 years will be executed after expiry of the said period,” SMPL said in its appeal.

SMPL had moved the HC seeking a direction to the state government to execute a lease deed for the remaining 10 years out of the 30 years renewal. However, the Orissa HC had rejected its plea on the grounds that the orders of HC in 1991 and 1998 do not operate as constructive res judicata, SMPL had waived its right for grant of lease of 30 years by executing a lease for 20 years and the 2015 MMDR Act provisions operated as a bar to seek any renewal beyond 20 years.

SMPL, which was a supplier of high-quality ore to the Naveen Jindal-led JSPL plant had acquired a mining lease for over 947.046 hectare for 20 years from August 2001 to 2021 for Thakurani iron ore mine in Keonjhar in Odisha, but the environment clearance was granted only in 2004. However, the mining operations were stopped for want of the environmental clearance beyond March 2014. Later in January 2020, SMPL had paid Rs 933.60 crore for excess production of iron ore and had finally resumed its mining operations.

**-Source : Financial Express**

## GSI stumbles upon lithium reserves in Anantapur

Anantapur: For several months now, an unremarkable patch of earth in the district, located a mere 60 kilometre away from here at Dadithota village in Lingala panchayat under Tadimarri mandal in the district has sent several arms of the Indian government into a tizzy. Geological Survey of India(GSI) officials had stumbled upon lithium deposits in the district said to be the 6th largest in the country.

Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Arunachal Pradesh, Jharkhand and Karnataka are the other states where the deposits are in abundance. About 10 villages in the Chitravati Balancing reservoir region face prospects of displacement if the Centre goes ahead with its plan for lithium mining. The lush green area, a horticulture hub is likely to be eclipsed if villagers are to be relocated elsewhere.

Lithium and its compounds have several industrial applications, including heat-resistant glass and ceramics, lithium grease lubricants, flux additives for iron, steel and aluminium production and lithium batteries. The ancient igneous rock deposits in the region (a by-product of large scale volcanic activity in the Deccan plateau millions of years ago) holds the first traces of lithium ever to be discovered

in India.

With a potential to produce 66,000 tonne a year of battery-grade lithium carbonate, the

Anantapur mine may cause groundwater contamination with metals including antimony and arsenic, according to experts.

On February 18, a Central team visited Dadi-thota and five more villages in Lingala mandal to study the quantum of lithium reserves and the ramifications of its mining.

## The trials of Goa's mining industry: A problem of politics, people and private industry

Iron ore mining is a lifeline industry in the state, and it becomes a hot-button topic during every election season.

It was noon on a sunny day in February. Driving through the villages in the assembly constituency of Sanklim in north Goa, we reached Pissurlem constituency, where chief minister Pramod Sawant will contest in the upcoming election.

On the way, we passed trucks parked on the roadside. Ten years ago, these trucks transported iron ore from Goa's iron mines. Now, thousands of them sit unused, growing layers of rust in the open air.

At the other end of Pissurlem village is a large iron mine. Owned by Damodar Mangalji and Co. Ltd, it's been defunct for 12 years, like most of the iron mines in this part of the state. The mine's massive crater, formed through the mining process, is now filled with rainwater. The entire area is cordoned off with barbed wire, while security guards are posted around the water body.

A few kilometres away, we met Shivaji Parab, who owns a dhaba in Navelim-Myna village. Shivaji's is a riches to rags story: He once owned more than 20 trucks and was in the business of transporting iron ore. In 2011, he bought a new fleet of eight trucks after taking a hefty loan from a friend.

Business was booming, he said, and his family was happy. His largesse extended to helping poor girls in his village with their weddings and organising festivals at the local temple.

But in 2012, things took a turn.

In October that year, the Supreme Court banned iron ore mining and exports in Goa, though this was conditionally revoked in

2014. But as the *Wire* reported, as of today, "no entity holds a valid lease to mine iron ore in Goa".

Shivaji struggled to repay the loan to his friend, especially considering mining stopped and, therefore, his income too.

He could have sold his trucks but there was now a problem of plenty; too many truck owners like Shivaji were suddenly unemployed and trying to sell off their vehicles. So, many of them lined the roads, gathering rust over the years.

"Fate took a turn for the worse after 2019," he said, his voice filled with emotion. "I once had a gold chain worth Rs 10 lakh around my neck and wore a bracelet worth Rs 1 lakh. All the police stations in this area were in my pocket. Only a call was enough to get the work done." Desperate, Shivaji finally sold some property to pay off a portion of the loan. When one of his cheques bounced, his friend filed a case against him. He was jailed in 2019, he said, before he got bail.

"Now, I can't even send my daughter to a good school," he said. "I had not committed any crime but I had to go to jail, and no one was coming to bail me out."

He finally set up the dhaba in his home in the village. But he believes god is on his side.

"He [god] has brought me up so far and he will take care of me in future too," Shivaji said. "Now, I don't even want to take the name of mining...But what happened to me should not happen to anyone."

### A multi-layered problem

Across villages like Kudne, Amona, Surla, Pali and Navelim are similar stories of locals who depended on iron mining for their livelihoods. Villagers told *Newslaundry* that if mining

resumes, their lives will change.

This is why the issue is central to politics in the state. In their election manifestos, all the major parties – including the Trinamool Congress and Congress – have promised to resume mining if they are elected to power.

Intriguingly, so has the Bharatiya Janata Party, even though it's already been in power in Goa for the last 10 years. During an event at Ponda assembly constituency, home minister Amit Shah announced that if the BJP wins in Goa, mining will start at "double force" through a transparent auction process.

Of course, the fact of the matter is that the decision to suspend mining was taken by the Supreme Court. None of the parties are offering up action plans on how to proceed.

Another aspect of the mining issue is whether it's a sustainable model from an environmental point of view. Additionally, Goa's mining industry had been monopolised by a handful of companies, whose work was arbitrary and whose profits ran into thousands of crores. A small part of it went to the government.

While the Supreme Court allowed the conditional resumption of iron ore mining in the state in 2014, there was still a bar on illegal mining, and there was "no change in the status of the mining leases which have been declared illegal earlier".

This includes several private mining companies that continued their work regardless.

*Newslaundry* reached out to Rahul Basu, research director of the Goa Foundation, which has helmed the fight against illegal mining in the state, to ask him what this means.

"The issue of mining has to be understood in five points," Basu said. "First, the owners of

→ the natural minerals are the common citizens of Goa. The government is only a trustee. Second, minerals are inherited by us. We have not created them, so it is our responsibility to pass them on to future generations. Third, we have to ensure zero loss in mining. Fourth, the mineral sale proceeds will have to be saved in a fund for the future generations of Goa – this happens all over the world. Fifth, the fund

income should be distributed as a dividend among the citizens in Goa.”  
On a sustainable mining model, Basu said, “The people dependent on mining should benefit. The people affected by mining should benefit as well. The government of Goa should benefit. The citizens of Goa should benefit. We have to save something for the coming generations too, so that they also get benefits. The

mining company can be allowed to keep 20 percent of profits, but they cannot be allowed to loot freely.”

As things stand, the issue of mining is torn in multiple directions. This is why the wait continues for political parties to come up with a transparent, legalised mining model.

*With inputs from Meghnad S and Lipi Vats.*

**Source : News Laundry**

## SWASTHA

A GEMCOKATI EMPLOYEES INITIATIVE

### Navigating from one problem to the next gracefully in the best possible way.....

A very common scenario experienced by each and everyone in this live's journey is that, as soon as we solve one problem, another one pops up in its place. Sometimes we are fortunate enough to get a problem free day in between. The key is to take these challenges in stride and sail through them gracefully.

Following the principle of not seeing problems as roadblocks or interruptions, instead dealing with them just like life's other day to day chores, we realize that they aren't as big as they seem.

Problems are inevitable, irrespective of one's personal or social status, but what we can avoid is the sudden emotional turbulence that arises within ourselves when we perceive them as a threat.

We need to start learning that whatever goes wrong every time in our lives is not a catastrophe.

Coping with problems in itself is an uphill task as it involves dealing with emotions and feelings arose due to the uncomfortable situation.

The answer here lies in taking on one blow at a time, as life only occasionally punches so severely, where bouncing back may take a little bit time.

Another approach to tackle problems is to divide it into two categories -one that could kill us or is a threat to our existence and the other one that cause inconvenience or damage to our achievements and belongings. Regarding the first category, we could accept it as our providence and move ahead. If it's about inconvenience or damage to things we own , we can remind ourselves that it can be regained , thus maintaining a peaceful and calm state of being.

Human beings expect life to be like a smooth road without a single curve or bump. The good



news is, if we have problems, it means we are alive, participating and contributing through life on this planet Earth. No matter what, it's always better than the alternative. These speed breakers are there to prolong our journey of life, otherwise we would end up very fast at the finishing line.

Sharing with someone trustworthy truly helps in bailing out ourselves from the current circumstances and eventually finding an altogether new perspective about life.

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