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INDIA HAS LIFTED THE BAN ON LITHIUM MINING. WHY?

Lithium-ion batteries are majorly used in EVs. With the recently discovered lithium resources, India could be looking at a massive opportunity, but experts say environmental concerns must be kept in mind

The Centre announced that it has lifted the ban on lithium mining, along with five other minerals. The Cabinet approved the amendment in the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) [MMDR] Act. As a result, now private companies can also mine these six minerals.

Around February, approximately 5.9 million tonnes of lithium resources were found in the Salal Haimana area of Reasi district in Jammu & Kashmir, as per the Geological Survey of India. In May, media reports suggested that lithium resources were traced in Rajasthan's Degana as well. The lithium found in Jammu & Kashmir is supposedly of high quality—a grade of 500 ppm, compared to the normal grade of 200 ppm, claims India's mining secretary.

As the world moves towards more sustainable fuel options, the significance of lithium-ion batteries has increased dramatically. Lithium-ion batteries are known for their use in electric vehicles (EVs); reports suggest EVs will account for close to 60 percent of new car sales by 2030. The batteries used in EVs require a significant amount of lithium; for instance, the battery of a Tesla Model S uses around 12 kg of lithium. Additionally, lithium-ion batteries also have use cases in many other electronic products.

Industry experts reckon that the ability for private companies to sustainably mine lithium could be a game changer. "Allowing private companies to participate will result in best-in-class technologies being used for exploration, mining and further refining. The main benefit, though, will be the development of a local battery materials refining ecosystem, which will help lower costs and develop IP, along with other positive agglomeration effects," says Rajat Verma, founder and CEO, Lohum Cleantech.

So far, India has always been import-dependent, not only for lithium, but also other minerals such as nickel and cobalt. Now, in order to reduce dependency on imports and grow further in the EV manufacturing space, experts reckon the government has lifted the ban on lithium mining.

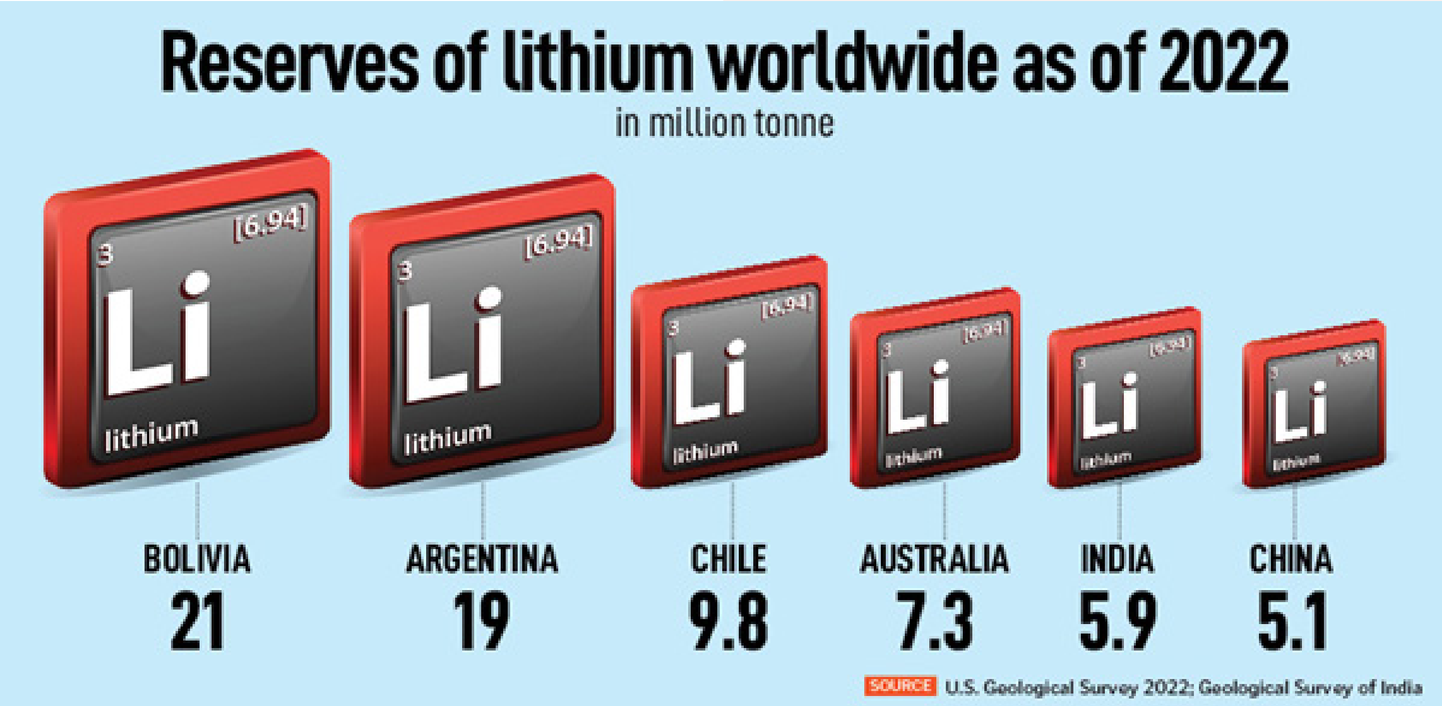
"Currently, due to the small size of the Indian EV market, Indian players lack the economies of scale to compete with Chinese players when bidding for resources. We believe this [lifting of the mining ban] can change with usage of domestic resources along with an export orientation to increase the addressable market for lithium-bearing finished products," adds Verma.

According to the US Geological Survey (2022) data, Bolivia has the highest lithium resources at 21 million tonnes, followed by Argentina with 19 million tonnes, Chile at 9.8 million tonnes, Australia at 7.3 million tonnes, and now India at 5.9 million tonnes (as per the Geological Survey of India), and China at 5.1 million tonnes.

"China controls the bulk of the global supply of batteries not only because it is able to produce raw materials, but also because it is able to manufacture cells at scale," says Ronak Pol, team lead, strategy, Foundation for Economic Development (FED). With the newly discovered lithium in India—valued at Rs34 trillion—India is sitting on a massive opportunity. He adds, "The real opportunity here is for India to competitively tap the $300 billion+ global EV market that is growing rapidly. There is a lot of price sensitivity around lithium-ion cells, given the increasing demand, but if India can scale up production fast enough, it can compete with China and South Korea to supply lithium-ion batteries to the world."

Though lithium's main use is for renewable energy sources such as electric cars and solar panels, the extraction methods for minerals such as lithium can be energy intensive. Experts reckon that it could lead to air and water pollution, land degradation and groundwater contamination.

As per a report by Earth.org, "It is important to note



that fossil fuel mining, including lithium and cobalt mining, is estimated to be responsible for the emission of around 34 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO_2e) worldwide annually. About 45 percent of it is from coal, 35 percent from oil, and 20 percent from gas." However, of this, the carbon emitted from lithium mining is significantly lesser than fossil fuels. The report adds that it is estimated to be around 1.3+ million tonnes of carbon annually, with every tonne of mined lithium equating to 15 tonnes of CO_2 into the air.

Additionally, the production of lithium through evaporation ponds uses a lot of water—around 21 million litres per day. Approximately 2.2 million litres of water is needed to produce one tonne of lithium, according to the euronews. green's news report. For instance, in Chile—which has one of the largest lithium reserve in the world—over the years, lithium "mining consumes, contaminates and diverts scarce water resources away from local communities", adds the report.

While the government has lifted the ban on mining lithium, experts reckon these environmental concerns must be factored in.

BY NAINI THAKER,

SOURCE FORBES INDIA

INDIAN INTERLOPERS CAN DISRUPT GLOBAL MINING M&A

An Indian tycoon has a powerful motive to throw himself into some global mining M&A. Sajjan Jindal is looking to pull together a consortium to take a 75% stake in the coal unit of Canadian miner Teck Resources (TECKb.TO), according to Bloomberg. Such a move would pit his $23 billion Mumbai-listed JSW Steel (JSTL.NS) against a rival $8 billion bid by Swiss commodities giant Glencore (GLEN.L). As geopolitics heats up and the global energy transition gathers pace, industrialists sitting in the world's fastest growing market for the alloy are anxious to secure supplies.

India will need a lot of steel. Per capita consumption of the finished metal is only 81 kilograms, less than half the world average in 2022. The government aims to nearly double annual domestic production capacity to 300 million tons by 2030, and Jindal at the helm of the country's largest steelmaker by market capitalisation wants to grab a bigger piece of the industry. That points towards JSW and other domestic champions including Tata Steel (TISC.NS) and state-owned Steel Authority of India (SAIL.NS) setting up large plants that will need a lot of coal, much of which will need to be imported. Some 95% of metallurgical coal that India digs up contains a very high ash content making it less desirable and as much as 70% of India's coking coal imports come from Australia, leaving the South Asian nation highly dependent on one country for a critical raw material.

Acquiring coal mines is one way for steelmakers to reduce their exposure to potential supply shocks. High input costs following Russia's invasion of Ukraine led to a halving of JSW's EBITDA margin in the year to the end of March 2023. Volatility is a problem because of geopolitics. The problem may persist too as countries rush to lower emissions and adopt cleaner fuels, raising the prospects of further mismatches of demand and supply. In North America, JSW already has steel plants in Ohio and Texas, and coal mining facilities in West Virginia.

Jindal could dig deep to bid outright for the Teck unit. An $8 billion purchase entirely financed by borrowings would lower the enlarged JSW's ratio of net debt, and keep it below a stated limit of 3.75 times EBITDA. Yet, like other tycoons scarred by the country's recent bad debt crisis, he is wary of leverage. The deal would also amount to more than India has spent on outbound M&A in any year since 2018, per Dealogic. Anchoring a consortium bid makes sense but if push comes to shove, Indian tycoons can afford to be aggressive interlopers.

Source: News9 Live

LACK OF CONTROL ON REVENUE LEAKAGE CONTINUES IN GOA'S MINING SECTOR: CAG REPORT

Goa's mining sector continues to be plagued by the lack of controls and mechanisms to prevent revenue leakages that marked the period of unabated illegal mining which led to its stoppage back in 2012, a report on asset accounts on mineral energy resources by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has found.

The report, published in July 2023 and overseen by the Government Accounting Standards Advisory Board (GASAB), covered Goa's accounting practices for both minor minerals – basalt, laterite and sand, and major minerals – iron ore, manganese ore and bauxite.

"The lessees, based on their own assessment of quality of ore, declared the percentage of lumps and fines in ore and paid royalty at applicable IBM rate for the declared grade of the ore. There was no system for counter-checking the correctness of such declarations made by the lessees. As the onus of declaring the grade of the ore is on the lessees and they remitted royalty accordingly. Declaration of incorrect grade may impact the royalty revenue to the government," the report stated, adding that the Directorate of Mines and Geology (DMG) "needs to put in a mechanism for drawing samples from the extractions for assessment of the quality of the ore and verify the correctness of the percentage of lumps and fines declared by the lessees in order to ensure that royalty remitted by lessees are at an appropriate rate and there is no leakage of royalty revenue to the government."

The CAG in its report has called on the DMG to put in place an automated system to capture the data of supply/dispatch of resources linking the data for use of various agencies such as weigh-bridges, mobile checking, geo-surveillance, check-posts, exit gates, railway sidings, resellers, user agencies, industries, etc.

"The system should provide for drawing samples from the extractions of minerals for assessment of the quality and grade of minerals and verify the correctness of the percentage of lumps and fines declared by the lessees in order to ensure that royalty remitted by lessees are at appropriate rate," the report recommended.

Goa is set to resume mining after a gap of more than a decade, save for a brief period from 2016-18 when some mines that received 'renewals' resumed operations, with the government holding auctions for several blocks of iron ore leases since December last year.

Goa director of mines and geology Suresh Shanbhogue said the recommendations would be implemented no sooner mining restarts in the state.

"At the moment, there is no production in Goa. The report has made some general recommendations. When mining restarts, we will make sure they are implemented," Shanbhogue said.

Source: Hindustan Times

ODISHA: PROSPECT OF FINE RECOVERY FROM MINING COMPANIES BLEAK

Sources in the mining industry said the defaulters are in no position to pay the penalty after losing their mines which were auctioned after expiry of the lease period before March, 2020.

Even as the state government has assured the Supreme Court to recover penalty to the tune of Rs 2,622 crore from defaulting mining companies for extracting excess minerals, it will be well nigh impossible to accomplish as the miners have no assets worth seizure.

The Keonjhar district administration had made an attempt in 2021 to confiscate movable and immovable property of six mine owners under Odisha Public Demands Recovery Act, 1962 after they failed to pay the penalty within a reasonable time as per the Supreme Court order in 2017. Of the six defaulters, five mine owners owed Rs 2,215 crore to the state government towards penalty.

Sources in the mining industry said the defaulters are in no position to pay the penalty after losing their mines which were auctioned after expiry of the lease period before March, 2020. After auction of the mines and transfer of all assets to the new leaseholders, the defaulting firms have no tangible assets that can be attached by the state government.

A report submitted by the central empowered committee (CEC) in January 2018 to the apex court, had pegged the total compensation to be paid by illegal miners towards violation of environmental clearance at Rs 17,417.99 crore and further compensation for violation of forest clearance at Rs 1,756.39 crore making a total of Rs 19,174.38 crores from 131 mining lease holders.

The state government further informed the apex court that none of the defaulting firms were allowed to participate in the past auctions and will not be permitted to participate in future auctions too.On the Supreme Court seeking the Centre's view on a cap on iron ore production in Odisha as was done in Goa and Karnataka, sources in the Steel and Mines department said the Centre has targeted to increase the steel output to 300 million tonne by 2030. Odisha being a major iron ore producer has been given a target to ramp up the ore production to 100 million tonne. The apex court has given eight weeks time to the Centre to take a view on the issue and submit its response through an affidavit.

Source: The New Indian Express

BIDEN PLAN WOULD OVERHAUL 151-YEAR-OLD MINING LAW, MAKE FIRMS PAY ROYALTIES

Under terms of an 1872 law, the US does not collect royalties on minerals extracted from federal lands, a fact Democratic lawmakers and environmental groups have long lamented

The Biden administration is recommending changes to a 151-year-old law that governs mining for copper, gold and other hardrock minerals on US-owned lands, including making companies for the first time pay royalties on what they extract.

A plan led by the Interior Department also calls for the creation of a mine leasing system and coordination of permitting efforts among a range of federal agencies. This comes as The White House has been pushing to boost domestic mining for minerals needed for electric vehicles, solar panels and other clean energy.

Under terms of an 1872 law, the US does not collect royalties on minerals extracted from federal lands, a fact Democratic lawmakers and environmental groups have long lamented.

The White House plan would impose a variable 4 per cent to 8 per cent net royalty on hardrock minerals produced on federal lands. The proposal needs approval by Congress unlikely when the House is controlled by Republicans who have long opposed such fees.

Undeterred by such political reality, an interagency working group led by Interior touted the benefits of imposing royalties on about 750 hardrock mines on federal lands, mostly in the West. The figure does not include about 70 coal mines whose owners must pay federal royalties.

A royalty would ensure that American taxpayers receive fair compensation for minerals extracted from federal lands," the working group said in a report on Tuesday.

The fee also could pay for programs to boost mining permits, clean up abandoned mine lands and help states and tribal governments that provide infrastructure and services to mining-dependent communities, the report said.

The US stands out among other countries, such as Australia, Canada and Chile, that collect royalties on minerals. At least a dozen Western states also collect royalties on hardrock mining.

Although thoughtful concerns were raised by the mining industry regarding the existing hardrock leasing system that is used on certain federal lands," the working group did not receive any arguments as to why a properly designed leasing system could not be equally successful in the United States", the report said.

Deputy Interior Secretary Tommy Beaudreau, who chaired the working group, called the plan released Tuesday a modernized approach that would meet the needs of the clean energy economy while respecting our obligations to tribal nations, taxpayers, the environment and future generations".

Securing a safe, sustainable supply of critical minerals will support a resilient manufacturing base for technologies at the heart of the president's investing-in-America agenda, including batteries, electric vehicles, wind turbines and solar panels, said Joelle Gamble, deputy director of the White House National Economic Council.

Tribes and environmental groups welcomed the report but urged President Joe Biden to go further to protect communities, sacred places and water resources. The White House formed the working group last year as Biden pledged to boost production of lithium, nickel and other minerals used to power electric vehicles and other clean energy.

"These modest reforms are a good first step, but they're not enough to safeguard our water and communities, said Allison Henderson, southern Rockies director at the Center for Biological Diversity, an Arizona-based nonprofit.

The Biden administration should use its full authority to update these antiquated mining laws, prevent more mining industry devastation and preserve a livable planet for future generations.

Rich Nolan, president and CEO of the National Mining Association, said the report did little to advance Biden's stated goal to secure domestic mineral supplies while supporting responsible mining.

Creation of a leasing system, imposition of a punitive "dirt tax and proposed royalties as high as 8 per cent will throw additional obstacles in the way of responsible domestic projects, forcing the US to double-down on our already outsized import reliance from countries with questionable labour, safety and environmental practices, Nolan said in a statement.

Wyoming Sen. John Barrasso, the top Republican on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources panel, said Biden was "taking a sledgehammer to affordable, reliable energy." If enacted, the proposed mining reforms will force us to buy more critical minerals" from China and other countries that use forced or child labour "instead of harnessing our abundant resources here at home, Barrasso said.

Source: ET Energy World

EXAMINING CHINA'S IMPACT ON MINING IN AFRICA: CRITIQUES AND CREDIBLE RESPONSES

The increased demand for minerals driven by the renewable energy transition has put China's involvement in mining activities in Africa in the spotlight. But understanding the challenges posed by this activity means we need to situate it within broader contexts.

First, there is the overall global legacy of resource extraction. Chinese companies are not alone in having a poor record on environmental and human rights abuses. This is particularly the case in Africa—where colonial powers and transnational mining companies wreaked havoc during much of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Even in contemporary settings, extractive industries continue to exact a high price on local communities in places where social and environmental safeguards are lacking or not enforced. Regardless of the urgency of the climate crisis and the importance of minerals to power a clean energy future, this is a point that cannot and should not be ignored. All actors working in this space must do better.

It's also worth noting that while Chinese investments in Africa are significant, Chinese mining companies represent only 8 percent of Africa's total output in the sector. Anglo-American alone accounts for more than double that share. "We have a tendency to inflate the importance of the Chinese in the mining sector [in Africa]," said Eric Olander, co-founder of the China-Global South Project, at a recent event hosted by the United States Institute for Peace.

Olander also said that using the broad terms "Africa" and "China" can sometimes be misleading. Referring to "Africa" can obscure vast differences across the continent—including in terms of countries' engagement with Chinese companies. "'Africa' flattens this very large and diverse continent," he said. The Chinese mining presence in Africa is concentrated in just five countries: Guinea, Zambia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Similarly, it's overly simplistic to assume that Chinese companies act on the orders of their government—or that there isn't a diversity in approach across China's mining operations.

On the evidence, however, China is the top destination for minerals exported from Africa. In 2019 alone, mineral exports from Sub-Saharan Africa to China reached $10 billion. And China's presence in Africa's mining sector involves entities associated with bad practices. So what are the most specific areas of concern—and how can they best be addressed?

This question is made more urgent because China has a 20-year head start on minerals in Africa. A 2019 New America report articulated clearly how China aligns its trade, investment, and national engagement strategies with strategic resource-rich countries. The United States is playing catch up. And when John Podesta addressed a question about working with mineral-producing countries at a recent Wilson Center appearance, one of the main thrusts of his response was that the United States needs to start by showing up.

Assessing Labor and Human Rights Abuses

The prevalence of child labor in mining is at the forefront of any discussion of labor and human rights in this sector. And China's investments in the DRC, where more than 40,000 children work in artisanal cobalt, lithium, and REE mining, have only exacerbated child labor issues.

At a congressional hearing in 2022, a prominent Congolese civil rights attorney testified that children are working at mines—like the Kasulo deposit—that are owned or effectively operated by Chinese companies. Children work seven days a week and for more than 12 hours a day, using rudimentary tools. They are also exposed to radioactive minerals, injuries, and disease.

Yet the problems are both deeper and more pervasive. There is also a prevalence of worker safety and pay violations, including threats of violence for speaking up. Research done by the UK NGO Rights and Accountability in Development found that workers at Chinese-owned mines in the DRC have faced discrimination almost daily – including physical violence and verbal abuse.

The Rights and Accountability report specifically mentions the deep indignities forced upon workers there, including "a "colonial era" level of discrimination—being kicked, slapped, beaten with sticks, insulted, shouted at, or sometimes pulled around by their ear, when they were not able to understand instructions in Mandarin, made errors or refused to undertake dangerous tasks." The report goes on the note that most of the people who spoke up in response were dismissed without pay.

And after one mine in the DRC was bought by a Chinese company from an Arizona-based entity in 2016, employees said that worker safety had declined dramatically and that workers had been assaulted after raising concerns.

Zimbabwe offers another example of these practices. Africa Daily has reported the extensive ill-treatment of local workers by Chinese-run mining companies. This exploitation includes extremely low wages and delayed payments (sometimes for several months), poor food and living conditions, and being forced to work without protective equipment.

There is also retaliation and harsh consequences for those who try to assert their rights. The Zimbabwe Environmental Lawyers Association says that in the context of Chinese mining operations, "if a worker attempts to assert their rights and demand what is fair, they risk being shot or beaten."

Accelerated Environmental Degradation

By its very definition, mining is going to have an impact on the environment. But while there has been progress in extractive technologies and environmental safeguards, Chinese companies often don't carry out adequate environmental impact assessments or uphold those safeguards.

The result? There is deforestation and habitat destruction as forests are cleared to make way for mining infrastructure. Water contamination is also an issue. Improper handling of mine tailings and wastewater often means the release of toxic substances into rivers and streams that local communities depend upon.

Mining activities can also lead to soil erosion and degradation—as well as reduced agricultural productivity in surrounding areas. And a lack of air quality control measures means that air pollution and dust emissions, including fine particulate matter, can have adverse effects on community health and the surrounding environment.

Such impacts often outlive the mine itself. In the Central African Republic (CAR), for example, Amnesty International reported that in the wake of the departure of four Chinese gold mining companies in 2020, seven people died at the abandoned mining sites. The Ouham River, a source of food and water for the local community, was dangerously polluted with mercury due to mining-related contamination.

Getting a Grip on Governance

In many of the places where critical minerals are found and mined, governments struggle with weak institutions, corruption, and ongoing conflict dynamics. This weakness complicates their ability to ensure that mining operations benefit local communities—as well as keep track of mining company and operator compliance with existing legislation. Many of the communities in which these resources are located also lack access to essential health services, education, and employment.

Chinese investors and operators have been heavily criticized both for inadequate investment in local development and for undermining local employment. Research published by the German Institute of Global and Area Studies found that while non-Chinese mining operations are associated with higher employment rates in surrounding areas, proximity to Chinese-controlled mines was not shown to lower unemployment risk.

The DRC offers an example of how these dynamics play out. Mining sector investments and exports are key drivers of its growth, and yet that nation is ranked among the top five poorest countries in the world. (In 2022, 62 percent of the DRC population lived below the international poverty line.) The country also has a long history of conflict and instability and an ongoing humanitarian crisis. Its first peaceful transition of power after 62 years of independence came in 2019. There has been progress, yes, but insecurity persists in some parts of the country.

The complexity of mining operations and the fluidity of mine ownership also complicate tracking and enforcement. Improving transparency across the supply chain is a key consideration for the US and its partners in tackling governance issues. One cannot take action without knowing the actors involved.

Showing Up and Making a Difference

More and more, there is a recognition that climate change is shaping our future. But population trends are also changing. Populations are more mobile and urbanized than ever. There is aging in some parts of the world, and there is a high proportion of youth in other regions. As the renewable energy transition shifts investments and trade, how we prepare for shifting population trends will determine how sustainable, equitable, peaceful, and prosperous our future is.

Africa will play an outsized role in these discussions. The global population has now reached eight billion—nearly double what it was in 1980. But over the last several decades, population trends have shifted. Africa is now the last remaining region with a rapidly growing population. It's also the most rapidly urbanizing part of the world and the least energy-consuming region per capita. And the continent is on the frontlines of climate change.

In a forthcoming Wilson Center paper, Jack Goldstone and John May write that between 2020 and 2040, the world's population of 15-to 49-year-olds will increase by 428 million. Of this number, 420 million will be African—accounting for 98 percent of global net labor force growth. That's an astounding number.

Goldstone and May also argue that investments in education and providing African countries with the financing and technology to achieve clean development mean that Africa's youth could transform the global economy. Which raises the question of what opportunities exist to show up and do better in Africa's mining sector.

Investments in this sector (among others) can create co-benefits in employment and revenue generation, infrastructure, education, technology transfer, peace, and security. In mining, these opportunities seem especially clear: Minerals needed for the renewable energy transition are mined in 70 countries where USAID has a presence. A path exists for the United States to show up and leverage tools across agencies, as well as partner with private industry, country leaders, and civil society, to meet global demand and ensure its benefits are felt at the local level.

Mining investments are long-term investments. With the right guardrails and protections, they can support development while minimizing harm. And African governments are beginning to demand more. Through the Minerals Security Partnership, the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment, and the Energy Resource Governance Initiative, there has been progress in US policy, but we have a ways to go. In a recent policy brief, the Wilson Center's Sharon Burke and Claire Doyle articulated some key recommendations.

US mining investments on the continent should go beyond addressing core human rights, environmental, and governance concerns in the sector to address deeper structural issues. For instance, the United States should look for opportunities to partner in ways that create value-added processes within sourcing countries, as well as support livelihood diversification programs to build resilience to market shocks within mining communities. Scale is also crucial. While governance schemes across the globe tend to heavily favor large-scale mining, the US can play a role in promoting regulatory regimes and policies that build cooperation between large-scale mining and artisanal and small-scale mining. Policymakers can also urge that the U.S. build on current policies and programs that seek to eliminate child labor in the mining industry and provide alternative income opportunities.

It is easy to point out the problems with China's presence in Africa's mining sector. US policy is being shaped now in many ways as a response. But let's not forget that the US and China also have a shared interest in a reliable and affordable global supply of critical minerals. As we formulate and implement policies to improve US presence in the sector, we should also continue to look for ways to cooperate with China to raise global standards.

Source: wilsoncenter.org

GATI SHAKTI TO HELP SPEED UP AUCTION OF CRITICAL MINERALS

The central government has expedited the auctioning of vital minerals like lithium to the private sector by authorizing states to use their own records as well as the online resources of PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan for demarcating mining areas.

Around 90 mining blocks, comprising minerals such as lithium, cobalt, copper, nickel, titanium, phosphorus, gold and silver, are set to be auctioned by the Centre by the end of the year.

The revised land demarcation and classification rules are also expected to streamline the identification of well-defined mining zones, which will further facilitate the auction process.

"Through the amendment made on 1 September 2023, in the Mineral (Auction) Rules, 2015, it is provided that where details of the land is available on the PM Gati Shakti-National Master Plan for Multi-modal Connectivity platform or land record portal of state governments or other government authority, the state government may use such details for classification of land," a mines ministry spokesperson said in a reply to Mint's queries.

"It will help in expediting the process of land demarcation and classification, and preparing blocks for auctions faster, as searching offline records takes considerable time."

Earlier, the 2015 mineral auction regulations mandated identification and demarcation of the proposed mineral blocks using total station and differential global positioning system (DGPS) technology, before the mining leases were granted.

The demarcated areas were then categorized into forest land, state-owned land, and non-state-owned land. This information on demarcation and classification was provided in tender documents for the bidders' reference.

However, considering that this process was conducted offline, it often led to delays in the auctions of mines. By using the online records from states and PM Gati Shakti initiative, the demarcation process is expected to become simpler as well as more efficient, reducing the time required to initiate the auctions, said experts.

PM Gati Shakti seeks to bring all relevant ministries and departments of the central government together, and create a digital platform for comprehensive and integrated project planning. This includes dynamic mapping of all infrastructure projects with real-time updates. The data from all individual ministries will be integrated into a single platform, facilitating planning, review, and monitoring.

"The amendments to the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, carried out in the monsoon session have given powers to the Centre to auction critical and strategic minerals and pass on all revenue, surpluses and royalty to the states. As states depend on geological studies approved by the states for auctioning a mineral block, specific provision has now been made seeking states to even consider their own land records or that of any other government authority, and those available in PM Gati Shakti Master Plan before designating the mining areas for auction of critical minerals," the official said.

The new Act also empowers the government to exclusively auction mining leases as well as composite exploration licences for critical high-value minerals, and the changes in rules would make the process far more transparent and attract investors, the official added.

In July, the government had released a list of 30 critical minerals for India, including antimony, beryllium, bismuth, cobalt, copper, gallium, germanium, graphite, hafnium, indium, lithium, molybdenum, niobium, nickel, PGE, phosphorous, potash, REE, rhenium, silicon, strontium, tantalum, tellurium, tin, titanium, tungsten, vanadium, zirconium, selenium and cadmium. Some minerals are rare, while a few others have wide use, especially in batteries for electric vehicles and other mobility needs.

The Centre has carried out a series of reforms by amending the MMDR Act, 1957. The changes seek larger participation of the private sector in mineral exploration and production, including lithium. The reform initiative removes lithium from the list of highly regulated atomic minerals, for which mining permissions were exclusively granted by the Centre to government entities.

The move also opens the door for private sector participation in the auction of this crucial mineral, widely utilised in production of electric vehicle batteries.

Besides, the Act allows the government to grant composite exploration licence for specific high-value minerals, including gold, silver, platinum and copper.

Source: live mint

GREENS SMELL A 'SETTING' WITH MINERS IN NEW ORE DUMP HANDLING POLICY

Goa Foundation alleges new policy would benefit only those parties that had been habitually influencing the government, the 'biggest thieves' of mineral ore for the past 15 years; the draft policy was not notified earlier for objections and suggestions.

Criticising the 'Policy for Regulating Iron Ore Dump Handling in the State of Goa', which was notified on Friday, environmentalists on Saturday flayed the State government's move for contemplating to seek approval from the Union Ministry for Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) for handling iron ore dumps lying within the forest areas, including wildlife sanctuaries.

Goa Foundation Director Claude Alvares said, "The government has come out with a policy, which has three pages of preamble. The government has not explained anything but just announced that this is the policy. Now under the Right to Information Act, the government is supposed to disclose the opinions and documents based on which the policy was framed."

He said the Goa Foundation had written to the government requesting it to notify the policy for objections and suggestions, but the latter refused to do so. "They are interested in doing business. There is some setting going on. Some provisions have been drafted for former leaseholders. The government will allow the same people, who were responsible for putting up those dumps, to remove and sell them," he said.

Alvares claimed that the new policy would benefit only those parties which had been habitually influencing the government and according to the Goa Foundation, were the "biggest thieves of mineral ore for the past 15 years as they were associated with the illegal mining".

He further said the policy was in contravention of the first, second and third judgments of the Supreme Court.

"What is the use of putting up a preamble stating that we respect this judgment, that judgment but actually putting up a diversion," Alvares said.
Criticising the government further, he said, "Basically the policy says we are not going to accept anything. The first judgement of the Supreme Court was based on the Goa Mineral Policy 2013, but today the government is saying it is not going to follow that policy. The government had submitted in the Supreme Court that it would implement the 2013 policy and based on that Supreme Court had passed the judgment. Now it says it cannot implement the policy. If it is so then it should inform the Supreme Court which may change its judgment and make it more difficult for the Goa government."

Speaking on the iron ore dumps, he said, "These are not dumps. Everybody knows in July 2012, large scale illegal mining and concealment of iron ore took place all over the mining leases. A lot of ore was taken outside, and concealed, and a lot of things happened. They thought that they would get the leases back and sell it, but their expectations were belied. Now they want to take the ore back, somehow or the other."

"The question is if the iron ore can be marketed now, then why was it not done in 2013 when there were the same conventions? As per the Supreme Court judgement any ore, which can be marketed, can go for e-auction because it is confiscated. Now if it is confiscated how can you give it to the parties?

Environmentalist Ramesh Gauns said, "The State government is not looking at the tragedy of Goa but at the tragedy of the mining lobby. There is very good understanding between the mining lobby and the government. Permission to handle iron ore dumps lying within the forest areas, including wildlife sanctuaries, will be a special privilege granted to the State of Goa, if the central ministry allows, and the money shall not exclusively go to the concerned dump holders but probably will be used for the 2024 general elections."

Speaking further, he said, "The Central government does not seem to go by the rule of law. They will do whatever they want. It is sad that the State government is only looking for the betterment of mining leaseholders, instead of recovering Rs 35,000 crore, as per the Shah Commission."

Gauns pointed out that it was necessary to check whether the iron ore was legally dumped or not.

“If not legally dumped then the government has to confiscate the entire iron ore dump and manage on its own,” he said.

The environmentalist alleged that the government wanted to favour the mining lobby as they did not get a chance to operate mines for the last six years.
“Since there is a backlog of earnings by the mining lobby the government wants to favour this kind of tactic. You did not get a chance to operate mines for the last six to seven years. Have this benefit we are giving you. This is the attitude of the government. It is not for the welfare of the people,” he said.
Gauns also questioned the legality of iron ore dumped in the forest or private land.

“We do not know whether the iron ore was dumped legally or illegally. The mining plan says that iron ore should be dumped within the mining area, including the waste material. If these dumps are within the mining lease area, it means there was much more than what was shown in the mining plan or the environment clearance or the environment impact assessment,” Gauns said.

He raised another crucial point: “If the iron ore dumps are in a forest area then who allowed the iron ore to be dumped there? Was permission sought from the MoEFCC to dump that in the forest area? The very first responsibility of the government is to declare that such dumps are illegal and proceed with legal action. If the dump is on private property then the private landowner may challenge and stop the State government from lifting it.”

The State government had notified the policy for Regulating Iron Ore Dump Handling in the State on Friday. The policy was approved by the cabinet last week.

Source: heraldgoa.in

TREASURE YOUR FEELINGS, WEALTH BEYOND MEASURE

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Scientific research has proved that superficial happiness generally yields a poor return on investment that only leads to unhappiness.

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Happiness is always equated to having fun,comfortable,carefree life, but on the other hand emotional happiness is not depended on neat, tidy life with standardized stories to tell, or crossing a lengthy bucket list post on social media.

Its an illusion that controlled happiness is a sign of rigidity,monotony,or stagnation.but there is a tremendous value in embracing a wide spectrum of experiences and emotions.

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3) Dichotomy of control- understanding that even if we become the most powerful, the richest, most influential, most qualified, most talented, there will be some thing or other that will be out of our control, power, buying capacity, influence, or talent.understanding this philosophy is an amazing way of creating wealth beyond measure.

Happiness can never be achieved when we limit ourselves to thinking that all has to go well to be well. When we aim to live a emotionally abundant life , we remain invested in the pursuit of wealth that drives true growth, not through superficial happiness, but by embracing the uncertain life experiences, that actually enrich our perspective and add colour to the gift of our lives.

ABOUT AUTHOR

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