

India looks at Russia for rare mineral mining tech

Collaboration part of broader strategy to attract investment

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In a bid to secure critical mineral processing technology, the Ministry of Mines has initiated bilateral meetings with Russia, Business Standard has learned. The initiative aims to secure advanced technologies essential for the extraction and processing of key minerals, which are vital for various high-tech, automotive, and defence applications, officials said.

This collaboration forms part of a broader strategy to attract investment in the mining and metal sectors and foster cooperation in mineral exploration. "The first round of consultations was held earlier this month. We are seeking Russian technology and their collaboration in exploring and mining minerals in India," an official said. Official queries sent to the mines ministry seeking details of the deal remained unanswered until the time of going to press.

The collaboration comes at a time when India is intensifying its efforts to achieve self-reliance in the mining sector, particularly in the context of critical minerals. While major chunks of foreign capital will be needed to exploit the reserves, India will also require advanced exploration techniques used by Russian firms to discover new mineral reserves, the official said.

It is believed that this cooperation could uncover significant mineral deposits within India, enhancing the country's resource base and reducing dependency on imports for key minerals.

Officials pointed out that Russia is home to several leading mining companies. Among them, Norilsk Nickel (Nornickel) stands out as one of the world's largest producers of nickel and



■ **Critical mineral processing technologies involve extracting, separating, and refining essential minerals**

■ **Critical minerals are crucial for manufacturing high-tech devices, defense technologies, renewable energy systems, and maintaining stable supply chains**

■ **India has auctioned 38 critical mineral blocks so far**

■ **India is exploring critical mineral mines in Australia, South America, and Africa**

palladium, while Alrosa dominates as the world's largest diamond mining company.

Alrosa recently opened up its representative office in Mumbai on the territory of Bharat Diamond Bourse, according to Invest India.

Polys Gold is the top gold producer in Russia and ranks highly on the global stage.

Other notable companies include Severstal, a major steel and mining firm, and SUEK (Siberian Coal Energy Company), Russia's largest coal supplier and one of the largest coal producers worldwide. Last year, SUEK said it was in talks to open an office in India. Mechel and EVRAZ are major players in coal and iron ore mining, with EVRAZ also being a major steel manufacturer. Ural Mining and Metallurgical Company is a leading producer of copper and zinc, and

RusAL is one of the world's largest aluminium producers.

Quid pro quo

The mining partnership with Russia has major implications for India's foreign policy push to secure newer sources of energy and minerals. This is because, in return for the mining technologies, Russia is keen on attracting Indian investments in its resource-rich Far Eastern region comprising vast swathes of Siberia, officials at the Ministry of External Affairs said.

Talks have accelerated since Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Vladivostok in 2019 for the Eastern Economic Forum.

Back then, the region's government had said the trade turnover with India in the region increased by more than 20 per cent, a growth that translated into more than \$42 million.