

Export ban on four critical new energy metals on the table

Lithium, beryllium, niobium, tantalum on the list of ban

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New Delhi, 18 August

In a strategic move aimed at ensuring India's self-sufficiency in crucial minerals, which are vital for defence, aerospace, and battery storage industries, the government is considering imposing an export ban on four key metals — lithium (Li), beryllium (Be), niobium (Nb), and tantalum (Ta).

“The government is planning to introduce a ban on the export of these minerals because of their importance in powering sectors critical to national security and technological advancements,” a senior official said.

The move in discussion follows the government's decision to conclude the auction process for 5.9 million tonnes (mt) of lithium reserves discovered in the Reasi district of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) by the end of this year. The auction roadmap for the J&K reserves is likely to come by the end of this month, Business Standard reported on August 13. Following concerns raised by the

THE SMALL BIG



		2022-2023 (\$ mn)	% chg (Y-o-Y)
Lithium	Export	4.09	-47.4
	Import	31.31	41.33
Beryllium	Export	0.01	-88.57
	Import	0.46	32.54
Niobium and others	Export	0.01	6,000.00
	Import	2.65	-54.47
Tantalum and others	Export	0.78	98.23
	Import	9.56	22.46

Source: Ministry of Commerce and Industry

Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) about the export of atomic minerals extracted by private entities within the country, the Ministry of Mines proceeded with the idea to prohibit the export of the aforementioned domestically mined metals. Turn to Page 6 ▶

Airfares...

For this year's Diwali, airlines are currently scheduled to operate 33 per cent fewer flights on the Delhi-Srinagar route. "Go First used to operate about 72 flights per week on the Delhi-Srinagar route. No other airline has been able to fill that gap," an airline official explained. On the Bengaluru-Hyderabad route, the average one-way airfare for the Diwali week this year is ₹1,914, which is 63 per cent more than last year, shows the Ixigo data. This is despite the fact that aviation companies are scheduled to operate about 40 per cent more flights this Diwali.

SpiceJet this month is scheduled to operate overall 1,266 flights a week -- 41.5 per cent less than August last year, according to aviation analytics firm Cirium's data. The airline has been finding it difficult to make timely payments to its aircraft lessors. As on August 1, 26 of its total 62 planes were grounded, according to Cirium's data. SpiceJet earlier this week stated that it plans to revive 25 grounded planes back to service.

Export ban...

The Ministry of Mines, the driving force behind this decision, is set to formally communicate the policy change to the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT).

Though, at present, almost the entirety of India's reliance on these four minerals is met through imports, the country still exports some processed forms of these minerals. Whether the export of processed minerals will be allowed or not is yet to be determined.

"Most likely the ban will be on indigenously mined minerals. But a final decision will be taken by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry," another senior official said.

This decision comes hot on the heels of Parliament's landmark approval of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2023. The Bill passed on August 2 opens the door for private corporations to undertake the exploration and extraction of 29 rare earth and critical minerals.

The 2023 Bill allows private exploration and mining for the first time of six atomic minerals, including Li, Be, Nb, and Ta. Amid the increased focus on clean energy technologies to fulfil India's carbon emission reduction pledges, the inflow of these minerals is on the rise, draining of millions of dollars from foreign exchange reserves. The government's implementation of the ban is geared towards fostering the establishment of a domestic supply chain. These minerals hold critical status not only for India but are also designated as crucial by major global economies.

