

# NMDC to start viability study on Oz lithium mines in April

**DIGGING DEEP.** The CPSE expects to complete the exercise by Oct-Nov 2025

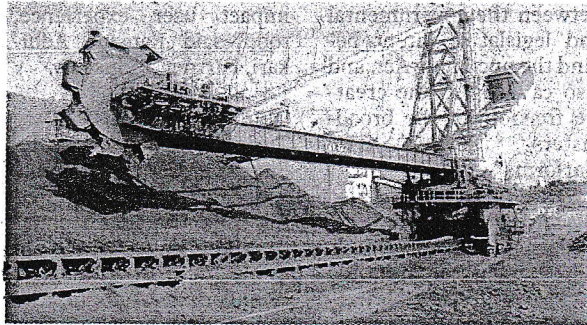
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NMDC, the country's largest iron ore miner, will initiate preliminary feasibility studies (PFS) for its lithium mines in Australia, beginning April 2024, its Chairman, Managing Director (Additional Charge) and Director (Finance), Amitava Mukherjee has said. The mines are currently at the pre-PFS stage.

According to him, there are working lithium mines just above the terrain (where its mines are located in Australia) and also below its terrain. And NMDC should be able to complete the preliminary feasibility studies around October-November 2025.

## PRE-FEASIBILITY STUDY

"... so we are just exploring right now. We are at the pre-PFS stage and will hopefully undertake the preliminary feasibility studies starting next April ... It should take around 18 months to do the PFS," he said during a recent



**GETTING THE BASICS RIGHT.** A pre-feasibility study gives an overview of a mining project's logistics, capital requirements, key challenges and other information deemed important to the decision-making process

earnings call. A pre-feasibility study or PFS is an early stage analysis of a potential mining project. These studies are conducted by a small team and are designed to give company stakeholders the basic information they need to green-light a project or choose between potential investments.

They typically give an overview of a mining project's logistics, capital requirements, key challenges and other information deemed important to the de-

cision-making process, such as whether the operation will be open pit or underground.

A pre-PFS on the other hand includes sufficient mineral exploration work, including drilling, to inform a mineral resource report, a potential model of the orebody and a scoping study.

"Of course if the results are encouraging, we will fast-track everything. So let us see how the results come," Mukherjee added.

NMDC, a CPSE under the Ministry of Steel, through its

Australian subsidiary, Legacy, and local partner, Hancock Mining — the fifth largest mining company in the world — is already carrying out pre-feasibility studies of magnetite iron ore (and also lithium) mining in Australia.

"They (Hancock) are partnering with us in developing that (magnetite iron ore deposits) so we are in the PFS stage for the magnetised project and the pre-PFS stage for the lithium project," he said.

## GOLD RUSH

NMDC had earlier this month commissioned its gold mine in Australia. According to Mukherjee, "right now (it) is a very small gold mine"; but the CPSE plans to ramp up operations there. Plans are afoot to increase production to "about a tonne in about a year's time or within 15 months".

If its Kirandul projects in India work out on expected lines, Mukherjee said, "the company will have significant gold presence over the next 24 months".