

Bill allowing pvt cos to mine lithium gets Parliament nod

Opens Up 5 More Atomic Minerals For Private Sector

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New Delhi: India's lithium and semiconductor dreams got a shot in the arm, with the Parliament Wednesday clearing the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill 2023 to ensure India's mineral security and safeguard the energy transition pathway by allowing private sector to hunt for atomic and deep-seated minerals.

The bill also introduces exploration licences for such minerals and gives the Centre exclusive power to auction mining concessions as well as composite licence.

Coal and mines minister Pralhad Joshi moved the bill in Rajya Sabha, which passed it by a voice vote amid walk-out by the opposition demanding discussion on the Manipur ethnic strife. Lok Sabha had passed it on July 28. The bill will become law after the President's assent.

Government officials said the bill goes beyond lithium. "Only 30% of the Indian land mass has been explored. Introduction of exploration licence and the Centre taking on the burden of auctioning blocks will attract small explorers from overseas, who till now had no incentive to enter India," a top mines ministry official told TOI.

He said only 19 mineral bl-



A villager shows lithium stones in J&K's Reasi district. The bill will help expedite exploration of resources. Only 19 mineral blocks out of the 107 given to states so far have been auctioned, a government official said

ocks out of the 107 given to states so far have been auctioned. This will change and exploitation of resources will be expedited as the bill will check squatting on blocks with timelines prescribed for auction after completion of exploration.

According to Deloitte India's Rakesh Surana, the amendment will pave the way for accelerated discovery of critical minerals and private sector participation will lead to rapid establishment of larger proven reserve base. "This strategic shift catalyses India's transition towards a cleaner and more sustainable energy paradigm."

The bill opens up six of the 12 atomic minerals, including lithium and deep-seated minerals for the private sector. The others are beryllium,

niobium, titanium, tantalum and zirconium. Deep-seated minerals include gold, silver, copper, zinc, lead, nickel, cobalt, platinum group of minerals and diamond.

The bill is timely in the backdrop of the recent lithium deposit discovery in Jammu & Kashmir's Reasi district. Lithium plays a strategic role in energy transition due to its application in batteries for electric vehicles, energy storage devices, right up to laptops and mobiles. The deep-seated minerals covered by the bill have application in medical, space and defence sectors.

The bill envisages the exploration licence-holder getting a share of the premium to be paid by the mining leaseholder. This model will ensure better revenue for states.

3 bills to boost ease of doing biz cleared

New Delhi: Parliament on Wednesday passed three bills connected to promoting the ease of doing business by decriminalising minor offences, exempting land within 100-km of a border from forest conservation laws and allowing private sector to mine some atomic and deep-seated minerals, with Rajya Sabha putting its stamp of approval on them after an opposition walkout.

The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill and the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill were all cleared by Lok Sabha earlier. In the absence of the opposition that walked out over the Manipur issue, the three bills were passed through voice votes in Rajya Sabha, paving the way for them to become laws. Leader of the House and commerce minister Piyush Goyal said there were three dissent notes against the bill from Congress, TMC and DMK in the joint committee that examined the provisions. "Their dissent shows they do not trust common people or small businessmen," he said. TNN