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Centre Launches Eighth Tranche of Critical Mineral Block Auctions

15 July 2026 ·

ECONOMY

GS3

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15 July 2026 · 4 min read ·

Source: ujjyari.com — researched, fact-checked & UPSC-mapped

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WHY IN NEWS

On , the **Ministry of Mines** launched the **eighth tranche** of **critical and strategic mineral block auctions**, offering **20 blocks across nine states (13 new and 7 re-offered)**. The blocks cover minerals such as **rare earth elements (REEs), lithium, vanadium, gallium, tungsten, graphite, titanium, potash, cesium and rubidium**.

SECURING THE MINERALS THAT POWER THE FUTURE

Critical minerals (<https://ujjyari.com/terms/critical-minerals/>) are the raw materials of the **clean-energy, defence, fertiliser and semiconductor** economies. Lithium and graphite feed battery supply chains, rare earths are essential for magnets in electric motors and defence hardware, and gallium and tungsten underpin electronics and high-strength applications. India, which imports a large share of these minerals, is racing to build domestic sources and reduce strategic **vulnerability** (<https://ujjyari.com/vocab/vulnerability/>). The **eighth tranche** of auctions is the latest step in that effort.

Scale of the Eighth Tranche

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FEATURE	DETAIL
Blocks offered	20
States covered	9
New blocks	13
Re-offered blocks	7
Key minerals	REEs, lithium, vanadium, gallium, tungsten, graphite, titanium, potash, cesium, rubidium

THE AUCTION STORY SO FAR

Since these critical-mineral auctions began, the government has launched about **88 blocks**, of which roughly **56 have been auctioned**, a success rate of about **63 per cent**. The re-offering of blocks that failed to attract bids in earlier rounds reflects a persistent challenge: exploration data on many Indian mineral deposits is still limited, which raises risk for private bidders. Improving the quality of exploration and geological data is therefore central to lifting the auction success rate further.

THE ENABLING REFORM: MMDR AMENDMENT 2023

The auctions were made possible by the **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2023**. Its most consequential change was to **delist 24 critical minerals from the list of atomic minerals**. Previously, minerals such as lithium and beryllium were classified as atomic minerals and reserved for state entities, keeping them out of private-sector reach. Delisting these **24 minerals** allowed them to be **auctioned to the private sector**, unlocking private capital and technology for exploration and mining.

The Wider Institutional Architecture

India's critical-mineral push rests on more than auctions alone.

- The **National Critical Mineral Mission** (<https://ujiyari.com/schemes/national-critical-mineral-mission/>) (announced **2025**) coordinates the national strategy across the value chain, from exploration to processing.
- **KABIL (Khanij Bidesh India Limited)** is tasked with **securing critical-mineral supplies from abroad**, acquiring assets in mineral-rich countries to complement domestic mining.

Together, the domestic auctions, the Mission and KABIL form a two-track strategy: **build at home and secure abroad**.

WHY IT MATTERS

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The strategic logic is **supply-chain resilience** (<https://ujiyari.com/vocab/resilience/>) and **de-risking from Chinese dominance**. China controls a large share of global processing capacity for rare earths and several other critical minerals, giving it **leverage** (<https://ujiyari.com/vocab/leverage/>) over supply. By auctioning domestic blocks, India aims to reduce this dependence.

Yet mining a block is only the first step. India faces significant **processing and beneficiation gaps**: even where ore is mined domestically, the capacity to refine and process it into usable materials is limited. The economics also matter, as domestic mining must compete with cheaper imports. The long-term payoff depends on building the full value chain, from extraction through processing to manufacturing, not just extracting ore.

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 3: Infrastructure and resources; mobilisation of resources; and the security and resilience of supply chains critical to energy, defence and industry.

Prelims pointers:

- The **eighth tranche** (15 July 2026) offered **20 blocks** across **9 states (13 new, 7 re-offered)**.
- Minerals include **REEs, lithium, vanadium, gallium, tungsten, graphite, titanium, potash, cesium and rubidium**.
- About **88 blocks** launched and **56 auctioned** overall, roughly a **63 per cent** success rate.
- The **MMDR Amendment Act, 2023** delisted **24 critical minerals** from the atomic-minerals list, enabling private-sector auctions.
- The **National Critical Mineral Mission** was announced in **2025**.
- **KABIL (Khanij Bidesh India Limited)** secures critical minerals from abroad.
- These minerals are vital to clean energy, defence, fertilisers and semiconductors.

Mains question: “India’s critical-mineral auctions are central to its supply-chain resilience. Discuss the strategic rationale of reducing dependence on China and the processing and beneficiation gaps that India must close.” (15 marks, 250 words)

FACTS CORNER

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Event (15 July 2026): Ministry of Mines launched the eighth tranche of critical and strategic mineral block auctions.

Offer: 20 blocks across 9 states (13 new, 7 re-offered).

Minerals: REEs, lithium, vanadium, gallium, tungsten, graphite, titanium, potash, cesium, rubidium.

Cumulative: About 88 blocks launched, 56 auctioned, roughly 63 per cent success rate.

Enabling law: MMDR Amendment Act, 2023 delisted 24 critical minerals from the atomic-minerals list.

Institutions: National Critical Mineral Mission (2025) and KABIL (overseas supplies).

Uses: Clean energy, defence, fertilisers, semiconductors.

Sources: Ministry of Mines (<https://mines.gov.in/>), Press Information Bureau (<https://pib.gov.in/>), Business Standard

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