

ADVERTISEMENT

News / Explained / Explained Global / Why US wants Ukraine's minerals, 4 reasons it will have trouble getting them

Premium

Why US wants Ukraine's minerals, 4 reasons it will have trouble getting them

Trump Wants Ukraine Mineral Resources: What are critical minerals, and how much of these does Ukraine possess? Why does the US want them? How much can one country be allowed to use another's natural resources? We explain.

Written by [Yashee](#)

New Delhi | Updated: February 21, 2025 06:55 IST



5 min read



EXPRESS Shorts



US President Donald Trump has recently slammed Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. (Photo: AP)

Trump Wants Ukraine Minerals: US President Donald Trump has accused Ukraine of "breaking" a deal over the use of its mineral resources. While the deal had never been signed, Trump on Wednesday (February 19) told reporters, "They broke that deal."



2 Class 10 board exams next year, CBSE may shrink schedule to under 2 weeks

Education 2 hr ago

CBSE is considering compressing the Class 10 board exam period to less than two weeks to accommodate a two-exam system starting next year. The Education Ministry has asked for a draft schedule to be shared for feedback, with a goal of declaring results by June. The new syste...

More Explained [VIEW ALL SHORTS >](#)

EXPLAINED

What is the MPID Act under which the Torres scam is being investigated in Maharashtra?



Khalistani terrorist Kashmir Singh likely hiding in Nepal: How he



He claimed that when US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent travelled to Kyiv last week, the Ukrainians "agreed to it more or less" but then Bessent "was treated rather rudely because essentially they told him no."

The US has proposed that it be allowed access to 50 per cent of Ukraine's important mineral resources in return for support against Russia. While Ukraine's President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, is open to the deal, he wants more favourable terms.

What are critical minerals, and how much of these does Ukraine possess? Why does the US want them? How much can one country be allowed to use another's natural resources? We explain.

STORIES YOU MAY LIKE

It's not surprising that Rekha Gupta is BJP's choice for Delhi Chief Minister

Congress' Alka Lamba turns back the clock, shares 30-yr-old photo of her and Rekha from DUSU days

SC on Ranveer Allahbadia: When protector turns prosecutor, citizens should be afraid

Why are Ukraine's mineral resources important?

Ukraine has rich resources of minerals that are critical in manufacturing a variety of products, from high-end weapon systems to clean energy solutions like Electrical Vehicles to electronic gadgets and semiconductors. These minerals are not found widely and are also difficult to extract, making them valuable. What makes them even more important for the US and the West is that China has large sources of them. Mineral resources are part of the reason Trump wants to buy Greenland, too.

Two classifications are important when talking about these resources — rare earth elements, and critical minerals.

There are 17 rare earth elements, including 15 Lanthanides (atomic numbers 57 — which is Lanthanum — to 71 in the periodic table), Scandium (atomic number 21) and Yttrium (39).

STORY CONTINUES BELOW THIS AD

escaped from Nabha jail in 2016

EXPLAINED

Ranveer Allahbadia bail condition: SC's gag order and the question of free speech



EXPLAINED

What is deposit insurance, and how will raising it help you?



Must Read

SPORTS

Shubman Gill, Mohammed Shami, and spinners star as India beat Bangladesh in spin-friendly conditions



SPORTS

What lies behind Mohammed Shami's march to 200 ODI wickets? A romantic heart with a sadist's skill



SPORTS

Shubman Gill scores maiden Champions Trophy century, his 8th overall, to guide IND to victory vs BAN



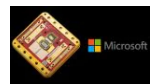
TECHNOLOGY

From budget to premium: Best Motorola phones you can buy in 2025



TECHNOLOGY

What makes Microsoft's new quantum computing chip 'Majorana 1' different?



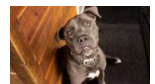
TECHNOLOGY

From Airtel to Jio: Best broadband plans you can get for around Rs 500 per month



LIFESTYLE

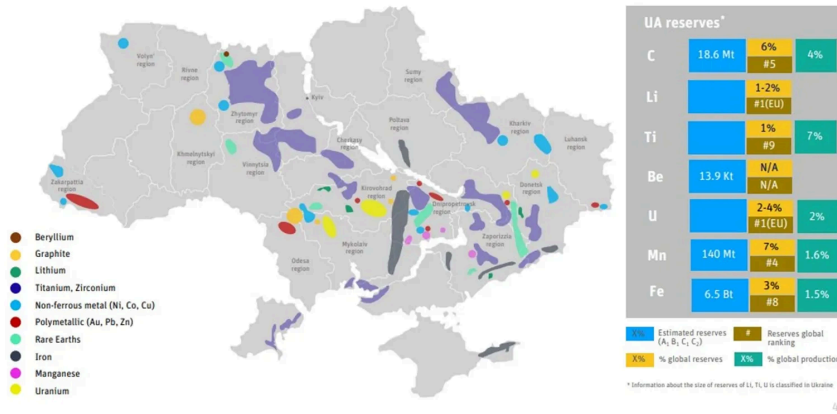
Will banning pitbulls and rottweilers bring down dog aggression issues in Goa? Here's what veterinarians from the state have to say



Minerals are defined as 'critical' by countries based on their needs, broadly using two parameters: their importance for economic development and national security, and their lack of availability. **India in 2023 identified 30 critical minerals.**



Map of Critical Raw Materials of Ukraine



Source: Ukrainian Geological Survey and Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Ukraine

According to a report by Ukraine's Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources and the Ukrainian Geological Survey, "Ukraine holds 22 of the 50 strategic materials identified by the US as critical, and 25 out of the 34 recognised by the EU as critically important. Particularly, Ukraine holds very competitive positions in five key ones: graphite, lithium, titanium, beryllium and uranium."

What has the US proposed?

While the details of the deal are not in public domain, broadly, while Ukraine sees the deal as a means to secure future assistance, Trump wants payment for the help the US has already provided.

According to a *Financial Times* report, Trump has said the US is owed \$500 billion worth of Ukraine's resources (including mineral deposits, fuel, and infrastructure such as ports) in exchange for military assistance provided against Russia. "That is significantly more than the total \$69.2bn in military assistance Washington has given since 2014, according to State Department statistics," the report says.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW THIS AD

The deal was discussed on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference last week, after which Zelenskyy told news agency AP, "I didn't let the ministers sign a relevant agreement because in my view it is not ready to protect us, our interest."

American officials have said that if the US were to get economic stakes in Ukraine — like a mining licence or other arrangements to extract minerals — that in itself would be a security guarantee, as the US would defend its interests against an attack. However, Zelenskyy wants a more concrete assurance of military and economic aid.

Can the US use up to 50% of another country's resources?

It might not be that simple. Trump is likely to run into four major problems.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW THIS AD

First, any deal will have to be in accordance with Ukraine's laws, and as Kseniia Orynychak, founder of the National Association of Mining Industry of Ukraine, told AP, "Subsoil belongs to Ukrainians under the constitution."

Second, there is very little clarity on the exact quantity and quality of the mineral resources. They remain underexplored and little extraction is happening right now. The *FT* report quoted Gracelin Baskaran, a director at the US Center for Strategic and International Studies, as saying, "The data is not modern, we have very little information about what's there." In fact, many of the geological surveys were done by Russia's predecessor state, the Soviet Union, when Ukraine was a part of it pre-1991.

Third, Ukraine already has a deal to extract these resources with the European Union. A 'strategic partnership on raw materials' was signed between the EU and Ukraine in July 2021, months before Russia's invasion on February 24, 2022.

EXPRESS INVESTI



Ragging dea system stucl guidelines or



Want to go beyond the news and understand the headlines? Subscribe to Explained by The Indian Express

strugglingforexistence@gmail.com

Subscribe

Fourth, a significant portion of these minerals are in areas under Russian occupation currently. According to a *Reuters* report, "Russian forces, which have already seized a fifth of Ukraine including reserves of rare earths, are now little more than 4 miles from the Shevchenko lithium deposit."

More Premium Stories



New Delhi's Qatar opportunity, in trade and geopolitics



Opposition needs to carve out space for itself



Three approaches to measuring GDP and why they matter



Yashee

Follow

Yashee is an Assistant Editor with the indianexpress.com, where she is a member of the Explained team. She is a journalist with over 10 years of experience, sta ... Read More

Expand

TOP CATEGORIES