

## THE CRITICAL RAW MATERIALS

# Now the government is opening up for Swedish uranium mining



Climate and Environment Minister Romina Pourmokhtari (L) wants to allow uranium mining again. Image: Samuel Steén/TT

Mines (TT)

**The Tidö parties appoint a rapid investigation to make uranium mining legal in Sweden again. Climate and Environment Minister Romina Pourmokhtari (L) calls the ban a stumbling block. "It doesn't make sense that we have to treat uranium as waste," she said.**

Since 2018, it has been forbidden to mine uranium in Sweden. The Tidö parties want to change that. An inquiry is therefore now being set up and will be completed as early as 15 May this year.

"It is not wise that we have to treat uranium as waste. It is costly and a stumbling block to the potential of Swedish deposits," says Romina Pourmokhtari.

Sweden is home to more than a quarter of Europe's known uranium deposits. Despite this, there has been no uranium mine since the 1960s. Mainly because it has not been considered profitable enough, but also because previous attempts have been met with strong local protests.

## **"Mines are crucial"**

Now that the government and SD want to lift the uranium ban, Romina Pourmokhtari does not primarily see new pure uranium mines in front of her, although she does not completely rule it out.

"I think there are municipalities in Sweden that see the benefits. Mines may not be such a cozy part of the climate transition, but it is absolutely crucial. If we don't have mines, we have no electric cars, no wind turbines and no nuclear reactors," she says.

According to Pourmokhtari, the most important effect of a lifted uranium mining ban is primarily that the heavy metal will be able to be recovered as a residual product from other, already existing, mining operations.

According to the minister, it would also make it more attractive to look for other minerals and metals needed for the green transition.

"You can choose to either pump up oil and import it, or to convert. And for the transition, Sweden needs to offer Europe the metals and minerals that we have in order to increase the degree of self-sufficiency," she says.

Romina Pourmokhtari says that there is a risk that we will otherwise end up completely in the hands of dictatorships in order to provide us with critical substances.

## **"Sharp situation"**

When it comes to uranium, however, Sweden imports most of it from unproblematic countries such as Canada and Australia. Regardless, the residual products from existing Swedish mines will hardly cover that need.

But Romina Pourmokhtari says that every little step is worth something.

"If you're going to be honest and refuse to have uranium mines, then you also have to say: Here's my energy system that's going to do without the uranium mines. Either the lamps, the factories or the Swedish economy go out, or we use the uranium we find. It's such a critical situation we're in.

Johanna Ekström/TT



Romina Pourmokhtari (L) with a piece of uranium. Image: Samuel Steén/TT



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### **THE CRITICAL RAW MATERIALS**

# **The "Mineral Hunt" is reborn – thousands at stake**



Ebba Busch, Minister for Energy and Business, can imagine having a mine in her backyard. Image: Rickard Kilström/Svemin

Politics (TT)

**The government is reviving an old stone-hunting competition. The "mineral hunt" gave the previous winner SEK 50,000, now people are**

## **being asked to go out into nature again. "Out with the dog, walk your soul," says Minister for Enterprise Ebba Busch (KD).**

Between 1967 and 2014, the "Mineral Hunt" took place in Sweden. According to both the government and the Geological Survey of Sweden (SGU), the competition was a minor success.

People were asked to go out into mountains, ridges and hills to find valuable stones, which they then sent to SGU's mineral office in Malå, where the finds were analysed.

Last time, sixteen mineral hunters became regular prize winners and another six received some kind of second prize. The first-place winner received SEK 50,000.

### **Three million SEK**

The government has now decided to award SGU three million kronor to revive the old competition. The aim is to contribute to increased understanding and knowledge of Sweden's major deposits, according to Director-General Annelie Wirtén. But also, in the end, to contribute to an increased supply of minerals through new discoveries that can lead to extraction.

"There are a few deposits that have been discovered thanks to the Mineral Hunt," she says, mentioning a lithium discovery in Bergby, north of Gävle.

The competition doesn't open quite yet and it will be up to SGU to develop the rules. Wirtén promises to get back to you about the arrangement.

"Sweden has a fantastic geology and is an old mining country, we need to get awareness back.

### **Busch: Great Power Nation**

Minister for Energy, Business and Industry Ebba Busch (KD) highlights the possibility of Sweden making the EU more independent of rare earth elements that currently come from countries such as Congo and China. The metals are needed, among other things, in solar cells and electric cars.

"I hope that the Swede will join in and actually find more deposits during their chanterelle and forest walks. Sweden is under-explored. Sweden is literally a gold mine.

She addresses both climate activists and prospectors.

"Sweden can become a major power nation in the Western world if we dare to use the deposits that we suspect are in the Swedish crust.

Opening a new mine also requires local acceptance, according to Ebba Busch, and she believes it can grow if you talk about the jobs a mine can create.

"I hope that more Swedes will feel: I want a mine in my backyard.

## Kan du tänka dig att ha det?

– Man kommer aldrig att ha den precis i sin trädgård bredvid rododendron, men ja.

Niklas Svahn/TT



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