

China becomes the top importer of rare earths; Imports are primarily from the United States and Myanmar

IN A SURPRISING development, China has emerged as the world's largest importer of rare-earth elements. China is already the top producer of rare-earth elements in the world.

Reuters reported that China has for years been the world's biggest rare earths exporter, raising shipments overseas by 4 percent year-on-year to more than 53 kt (58,000 st) in 2018, and its emergence as the top importer as well in a sudden and surprising development.

Adamas Intelligence reported that China imported 41.4 kt (45,600 st) of rare earth oxides and oxide equivalents in 2018, up 167 percent year-on-year, as a crackdown on illegal production reduced domestic output.

Shipments were primarily in the form of mineral and chemical

concentrates from Myanmar and the United States, Adamas managing director Ryan Castelloux said.

In the case of at least seven key rare earths — including praseodymium, used in magnets, and yttrium, used in ceramics — China was a net importer in 2018 for the first time in more than 30 years, Castelloux told Reuters.

"It is definitely the first time since at least 1985 when China emerged as a major producer of rare earths," he said.

The United States, a major market for Chinese rare earths, ships ores rich in lanthanum, used in oil refining, to China and then buys back the oxides and chemicals, Castelloux said.

The United States had last year proposed slapping tariffs on rare earth imports from China before reversing

its decision.

Myanmar, meanwhile, last year became a vital source of dysprosium, terbium and gadolinium for China's magnet and alloy manufacturers, according to Castelloux, whose numbers are based on customs data and Adamas' own research.

If Beijing ends up banning rare earth imports from Myanmar this year China could temporarily revert to being a net exporter of the seven key rare earths in 2019, Castelloux said.

But rising Chinese imports look set to be a long-term trend, he added. Other than Lynas Corp, a rare earth producer that operates in Malaysia and Australia, "any company that's reached production in recent years has done so by selling rare earth concentrate to China," Castelloux said. ■

TAKRAF Crushing Plants

In current volatile commodity price environments, it's all about cutting costs and increasing efficiency with a view to maximizing profitability across the mining and minerals value chain.

TAKRAF is able to provide solutions focused on minimizing the high costs of truck transport and offers a complete suite of in-pit and ex-pit crushing plants able to size Run-of-Mine (RoM) material to conveyable lump sizes. Depending on our client's specific requirements and best-fit solution, our plants are equipped with either gyratory, sizer, double-roll or jaw crushers and our plants boast throughput rates from 300 t/h to 14,000 t/h, either fully mobile, semi-mobile or stationary.

Come and see how we can add value to your business at the bauma fair in Germany.

bauma
MINING INSIDE

Let's meet in Munich!
Hall C2, booth 349
April 8-14, 2019

TAKRAF
TENOVA



TAKRAF GmbH
Torgauer Straße 336
04347 Leipzig, Germany
takraf.sales@tenova.com
www.takraf.com

Tenova, a Techint Group company, is a worldwide partner for innovative, reliable and sustainable solutions in the mining and metals industries.
www.tenova.com