

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF MINES
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1720
ANSWERED ON THE 18.12.2023

CRITICAL MINERALS

1720. SHRI NARANBHAI J. RATHWA:

Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that according to the Government Report “Critical Minerals of India”, Government has emphasized the significant of copper in the country’s landscape;
- (b) if so, the details thereof with the reasons the country is becoming a net importer of copper;
- (c) whether Government has made any efforts to enhance the capacity of copper to re-commence closed copper plants and if not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF MINES, COAL AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS
(SHRI PRALHAD JOSHI)

(a): Ministry of Mines had constituted a Committee on 01.11.2022 to identify the critical and strategic minerals. The Committee, in its report, identified 30 minerals as critical and strategic minerals considering their economic importance and supply risk vis-a-vis India's priorities and future requirement for energy transition. Copper is one of these 30 minerals identified by the Committee given to its high economic importance.

The Central Government has recently launched the first tranche of e-auction of 20 blocks of critical and strategic minerals on 29.11.2023 which include blocks of Copper, Lithium, REEs, Platinum Group of Minerals, Nickel, Potash etc.

(b): Critical and deep-seated minerals such as Copper, Gold, Silver, Cobalt, Lithium and Nickel are difficult to explore and mine as compared to surficial or bulk minerals. Due to low availability of copper reserves/ resources in the country, India has always been an importer of copper ore & concentrate. Copper Concentrate is used as raw material in the production of refined copper, in which India has a robust capacity. The spurt in imports in last two years is due to increased demand in copper refining reflecting a post pandemic recovery, especially the growth in user sectors such as infrastructure, construction, telecom, electrical, renewable energy and electric vehicles.

(c): A new Mineral Concession namely exploration licence for 29 deep seated minerals and critical minerals including copper has been introduced through the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2023. Under this the licensee is permitted to undertake reconnaissance and prospecting operations for critical and deep-seated minerals, which are otherwise difficult to explore and mine. Exploration license is aimed at encouraging the participation of private agencies so as to bring advanced technology, finance and expertise in exploration of Critical Minerals. Further, accredited private exploration agencies without prospecting license and are made eligible for funding under the National Mineral Exploration Trust. The above measures are intended to boost domestic availability of copper mineral and reduce its import.
