

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF MINES
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 918
ANSWERED ON 11.12.2023

FOREIGN EXCHANGE SPENDING ON IMPORT OF COPPER

918. SHRI NARANBHAI J. RATHWA:
SHRI RAJMANI PATEL:

Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that India has become a net importer of copper for the first time in the last 20 years;
- (b) if so, the net outgo of our foreign exchange per annum for import of copper alone; and
- (c) reasons for the spurt in import bill of copper and efforts being taken or proposed to be taken to reverse this trend in the interest of country's economy?

ANSWER

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

- (a): No, Sir.
- (b): Per annum net import value (and hence, net foreign exchange outgo) during last two years given below:

Year	Net import (Rs. crore)
2021-22	21,985
2022-23	27,131

(c): 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. India, with a refined copper production of 5.55 lakh ton in FY 2022-23, is the 10th largest in the world. 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.

Copper is one of the 30 critical minerals identified by the Government. A new mineral concession namely, exploration licence, for 29 deep-seated and critical minerals including copper has been introduced through the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) (MMDR) 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 notified under the MMDR Act have been allowed to carry out exploration without prospecting licence 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.
