GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF MINES
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1712
ANSWERED ON 03.08.2026

IMPORTS OF CIRTICAL MINERAL

1712. SHRI RAGHAV CHADHA:

Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) details on the total value of imports of critical minerals such as lithium, cobalt and nickel during the last three years, year-wise;
(b) the steps taken by Government to diversify sources of critical minerals and strengthen supply chain resilience; and
(c) the measures being taken by Government to enhance domestic exploration, production and processing of critical minerals?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR COAL AND MINES
(SHRI SATISH CHANDRA DUBEY)

(a): Details of critical minerals such as lithium, cobalt and nickel during the last three financial years are placed in Annexure-I.

(b) & (c): The Union Cabinet has approved the National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM) on 29 January, 2025 to secure a long-term sustainable supply of critical minerals and strengthen India's critical mineral value chains encompassing all stages from mineral exploration and mining to beneficiation, processing, and recovery from end-of-life products. Further, to diversify the sources of critical minerals, strengthen supply chain resilience, and enhance domestic exploration, production and processing of critical minerals, the Ministry has undertaken several measures, which inter alia include:

- Geological Survey of India (GSI) has intensified exploration of critical minerals. GSI carried out 195 critical mineral exploration projects in 2024–25, 230 projects in 2025–26 and took up 300 projects in 2026-27. Additionally, National Mineral Exploration and Development Trust (NMEDT) has sanctioned 62 projects for exploration of critical minerals during 2024-25, 84 during 2025-26 and 30 during 2026-27.
- The Ministry of Mines has successfully auctioned 56 critical mineral blocks. Additionally, the Central Government has also successfully auctioned 11 blocks of Exploration License, which include six blocks of critical minerals.
- The Union Cabinet approved a ₹1,500 crore Incentive Scheme to develop recycling capacity for the separation and production of critical minerals from secondary sources. The Scheme Guidelines were issued on 02.10.2025.

- The Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act (MMDR Act), 1957, was amended in 2023 to introduce the Exploration Licenses (EL) regime for deep-seated and critical minerals. The EL holder is entitled to a share in the auction premium payable by the mining lease/composite licence holder, as prescribed.
- Forty-eight Private Exploration Agencies have been notified for taking up exploration projects with 100% funding support from NMEDT.
- To encourage, and incentivize private-sector participation in mineral exploration, scheme for partial reimbursement of exploration expenses has been introduced for holders of Composite Licences (CL) (reimbursement of up to 50%, subject to a ceiling of ₹8 crore) and holders of Exploration Licence (EL) (up to 50% of expenses, with a maximum limit of ₹20 crore).
- Guidelines for funding Pilot Projects for Recovery of Critical Minerals from overburden/tailings/fly ash/ Red mud etc. issued on 14.11.2025.
- The Government has recognised nine premier institutes as Centres of Excellence (CoEs) under the National Critical Minerals Mission (NCMM) for R&D in the critical mineral value chain.
- During Union Budget 2024–25, customs duties were eliminated on 25 critical minerals. In Budget 2025–26, Basic Customs Duty (BCD) was exempted on cobalt powder and waste, scrap of lithium-ion batteries, etc. Further, in Budget 2026–27, BCD was exempted on the import of capital goods required for processing of critical minerals in India.
- MMDR Act, 1957 has been amended in 2025 whereby the scope of NMEDT has been expanded to support critical mineral exploration and mining overseas.
- To promote Indian public and private sector entities to undertake mineral exploration in overseas jurisdictions, the Ministry of Mines circulated "Overseas Mineral Exploration Promotion Guidelines" on 16 July 2026.
- The Ministry of Mines has launched a scheme for reimbursement of up to 50% of the eligible exploration expenditure incurred by Composite Licence (CL) holders on approved exploration activities in offshore CL blocks, subject to a maximum limit of ₹300 crore.
- Khanij Bidesh India Limited (KABIL), under Ministry of Mines, has signed an Exploration and Development Agreement with CAMYEN, a state-owned enterprise of Catamarca province of Argentina, for exploration and mining of five Lithium Brine Blocks in Argentina covering an area of 15703 Ha.

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Annexure-I

The total value of imports of critical minerals such as lithium, cobalt and nickel during the last three financial years is given below:

(Value in ₹ Cr)

Minerals	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26 (P)
Cobalt	936.7	812.6	1099.3
Lithium	451.7	300.5	339.0
Nickel	11181.0	10520.7	10630.6

Source: DGCIS, Kolkata. (P)- Provisional