

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY
(DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE)

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 5381
TO BE ANSWERED ON 05th APRIL, 2023

TRADE AGREEMENT WITH AUSTRALIA

5381. DR. PON GAUTHAM SIGAMANI:

Will the Minister of **COMMERCE & INDUSTRY** (वाणिज्य एवं उद्योग मंत्री) be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that India and Australia are committed to conclude negotiations for spending the scope of existing free trade agreement by the end of this year to push the bilateral trade to dollar hundred billion;
- (b) if so, whether it is a fact that India and Australia implemented an economic cooperation and trade agreement and are now negotiating to expand its scope for a comprehensive economic cooperation agreement;
- (c) if so, the details thereof;
- (d) whether it is a fact that India is in discussion with Australia on critical minerals which can be used in batteries for electrical vehicles and if so, the details thereof;
- (e) whether India and Australia have reached a major milestone in working towards investment in critical mineral projects to develop supply chains between the two countries; and
- (f) if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

वाणिज्य एवं उद्योग मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री (श्रीमती अनुप्रिया पटेल)

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY
(SMT. ANUPRIYA PATEL)

- (a) India and Australia are currently engaged in negotiations on the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) which builds on the foundation laid by the India-Australia Economic Cooperation & Trade Agreement (ECTA) signed on 02nd April 2022. Both sides are looking forward for swift progress in the discussions and for the early conclusion of the CECA negotiations;
- (b) Yes Sir. The India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) has been implemented w.e.f. 29.12.2022. Negotiations on the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA), have commenced, and the first round of discussions was held during 20-24 February, 2023.

(c) The details of India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) are available on the website of the Department of Commerce on link <https://commerce.gov.in/international-trade/trade-agreements/ind-aus-ecta/>. With respect to CECA negotiation, one round of negotiations on ECTA agreed subjects viz. Market access for goods and services, Product Specific Rules Schedule, Digital Trade Chapter and Government Procurement Chapter have been held between 20-24 February, 2023. Exploratory discussions on new areas of mutual interest were also held.

(d) Yes Sir. A Joint Venture Company named 'Khanij Bidesh India Limited' (KABIL) promoted by three CPSEs. i.e. National Aluminium Company Ltd. (NALCO), Hindustan Copper Limited (HCL) and Mineral Exploration & Consultancy Limited (MECL) under the aegis of Ministry of Mines, Govt. of India, is in discussion with Australia on critical minerals like Lithium and Cobalt which are used in batteries for electrical vehicles.

MoU between Ministry of Mines, Government of India and Government of Australia was signed in June, 2020 for cooperation in the field of Mining and Processing of Critical and Strategic Minerals of Australia.

A follow up MoU with detailed collaborative framework was signed on 10 March 2022 between KABIL, India and Critical Minerals Facilitation Office (CMFO) (now known as Critical Mineral Office (CMO)), Department of Industry, Science and Resources (DISER), Australia for carrying out joint due diligence and joint investment in Lithium and Cobalt mineral assets of Australia.

(e) Under the ambit of MoU, both KABIL and CMO, Australia are jointly working towards joint investment in the identified critical mineral i.e. Lithium and Cobalt projects in Australia.

(f) Both CMO and KABIL are taking steps towards shortlisting of projects for investment.
