

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF MINES  
**LOK SABHA**  
**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2105**  
ANSWERED ON 02.08.2023  
**IMPORTS OF CRITICAL MINERALS**

2105. SHRIMATI SANGEETA KUMARI SINGH DEO:  
SHRI SUBBARAYAN K.:  
SHRI BHOLA SINGH:  
DR. SUKANTA MAJUMDAR:  
SHRI RAJVEER SINGH (RAJU BHAIYA):  
SHRI VINOD KUMAR SONKAR:

Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

- (a) whether India has been depending on imports for critical minerals such as lithium, nickel, copper and cobalt;
- (b) if so, whether the Government has approved amendments to the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, to allow commercial mining of lithium and other critical minerals;
- (c) if so, the details thereof;
- (d) whether the Ministry is also in the process of working out the reserve price for lithium, if so, the details thereof;
- (e) the time by which auction of these declared reserves is likely to be held; and
- (f) the other steps being taken by the Government for becoming self-reliant in critical minerals?

**ANSWER**

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

(a): Yes, Sir. India has been depending on imports for critical minerals such as lithium, nickel, copper, and cobalt. The details of import of Critical Minerals in 2022-23 are as under:

#	Critical mineral	HS Code(s)	Import (2022-23)		% import reliance
			Quantity in Tonne	Value in Rs. Crore	
1	Cobalt	2605	0.25	0.18	100%
		81052020	171.36	72.02	
2	Copper ore & concentrates	2603	11,78,919.88	27,374.43	93%
3	Lithium	28252000	1,119.78	552.53	100%
		28369100	1,025.03	179.01	
4	Nickel	2604	20	0.04	100%
		7502	32,298.21	6,549.34	

Source: Department of Commerce

(b) & (c): Ministry of Mines has proposed to amend the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 to introduce exploration licence in the Act for deep-seated and critical minerals such as gold, silver, copper, zinc, lead, nickel, cobalt, platinum group of minerals, diamonds, etc. which are mentioned in the proposed 7th schedule of the MMDR Act. Exploration licence granted through auction shall permit the

licencee to undertake reconnaissance and prospecting operations for critical and deep-seated minerals mentioned in the new Seventh Schedule to the Act. The blocks explored by the Exploration Licence holder would be auctioned for mining lease within the prescribed timeline. The exploration agency shall be entitled to a share in the auction premium payable by the mining lease holder. The proposed exploration licence would facilitate, encourage and incentivize private sector participation in all spheres of mineral exploration for critical and deep seated minerals.

The Ministry has further proposed to omit certain minerals including Lithium bearing minerals from the list of atomic minerals specified in Part-B of the First Schedule to the Act. These minerals have various applications in space industry, electronics, communications, energy sector, electric batteries and are critical in net-zero emission commitment of India. Due to their inclusion in the list of atomic minerals, their mining and exploration is reserved for government entities. Upon removal of these minerals from Part-B of first schedule, exploration and mining of these minerals will be opened up for the private sector as well. As a result, exploration and mining of these minerals is expected to increase significantly in the country.

(d) & (e): Yes, Sir. Ministry of Mines has invited comments / suggestions on 19.05.2023 from the general public, State Governments and Union Territories, mining industry stakeholders, industry associations, and other persons and entities concerned on the methodology for calculation of Average Sale Price and Value of Estimated Resources of lithium blocks to be auctioned.

(f): Ministry of Mines has recently released a list of 30 minerals that are critical to our country. Identification of these critical minerals will help to strategically prioritize the development of the country's mineral resources. Over the last few years, the Geological Survey of India (GSI) has shifted its thrust from bulk commodities to deep-seated and critical minerals. From FS 2015-16 to FS 2021-22, GSI executed 503 mineral exploration projects on deep-seated and critical minerals. In FS 2022-23, 123 projects have been taken up in response to the increased thrust on exploration of deep-seated minerals. In the current field season 2023-24, GSI has taken up 122 exploration projects on deep seated and critical minerals.

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