

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

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 856
ANSWERED ON 09/02/2024

CAPTURE OF INDIA'S COPPER MARKET BY CHINA

856. SHRI NARANBHAI J. RATHWA:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE & INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that closure of Copper Plant in Thoothukudi in Tamil Nadu, the shipments of copper from Pakistan to China has increased to more than \$1000 million and Chinese firms are vying to capture India's market;
- (b) if so, the details thereof with the total imports of copper from China and other countries during the last three years, country-wise; and
- (c) whether in order to make India "AtmaNirbhar Bharat" Government would take judicious call to initiate measures to re-open and operate the copper plant in Tamil Nadu and if not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (c) 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 the 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 licence 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.

Smelter plant in Tuticorin, Tamil Nadu, which has annual capacity of 2.34 lakh tonnes of refined copper, is closed since May, 2018 on order of Govt. of Tamil Nadu and the matter is presently sub-judice in Hon'ble Supreme Court.

The imports of copper from China to India have decreased by 6.43% in 2022-23 as compared to 2021-22. The official trade data for import of copper is available at <https://tradedstat.commerce.gov.in/meidb/cntcom.asp?ie=i>.
