Plenary Lecture

Present Status and Future Prospects of Mining Industry and Mining Policy in Japan

by

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1. Introduction

In the past, one of the most important industries in Japan was mining. In many cases the basis of the present industries or firms of Japan has been formed owing to the accumulation of capitals and/or technologies by mining industry.

But the change of the social and industrial circumstances has compelled this basic industry to restrict its activities in a great extent. There remain today only 24 non-ferrous metal mines, while more than 600 mines were in operation just about 30 years ago.

On the other hand, the demand for the mineral products has been growing year by year attaining to 10-15% of the world consumption according to the metals. The stable supply of these metals for a long term and also the contribution to the development for the world economy and especially for the developing nations are the main purposes of our mining policy.

2. Prospect of Future Demand for Basic Metals and Japanese Mining Industries

Last April, the Council for Mining Industry, advisory organization to the Minister of MITI elaborated the report entitled "Mining Industry and Mining Policy to 2000". In this report the detailed study was made for the estimation of the world demand of copper and zinc (see Table. 1). This table shows that the steady increase of demand of these two metals might be expected up to 2000, and the share occupied by Asian NIES world will increase greatly. Although domestic demand in Japan is supposed to be saturated in a coming few years, Japanese smelters, which are now very important for stable supply of mineral products, feel very hungry for the relevant concentrates in medium and long terms. Our smelters buy them with outstanding share from "world free concentrate market", which sometimes makes them feel uneasy for stable purchase and also gives some uneasiness to overseas competitors especially in case of tight market. Under these circumstances,

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Table 1. Forecast of World Demand of Copper and Zinc up to 2000

[1000 tons]

Region	Copper			Zinc		
	1988	2000	average growth rate	1988	2000	average growth rate
North America	2,507.8	2,599.6	0.3	1,256.5	1,256.5	0.0
Middle & South America	497.6	560.1	1.0	401.6	586.1	3.2
West Europe	2,881.9	3,445.7	1.5	1,805.9	2,159.2	1.5
Africa	104.6	187.8	5.0	149.9	149.9	0.0
Japan	1,330.7	1,385.8	0.3	774.2	812.2	0.4
Asia	851.1	1,859.6	6.7	722.4	1,295.2	5.0
Oceania	130.6	130.6	0.0	105.1	105.1	0.0
Old Planned Economy Area	2,373.3	2,489.8	0.4	1,940.1	2,347.2	1.6
Total	10,677.6	12,659.0	1.4	7,155.7	8,711.4	1.7

many smelting companies are now making more progressive effort to secure the concentrates with such measures as participation or financing to the development of new or existing mines. The activities are expected to contribute not only for stable supply of mineral resources but also for the development of economic cooperation.

3. Principal Mining Policies

The basic idea of our mining policy is to fully utilize market mechanism. So our policy measures are limited to the fields where this mechanism doesn't function satisfactorily, the case is oftener seen in mining section

The main measures which government are putting emphasis on are :

- 1) promotion of domestic prospection by "three step method"-large area and detailed prospection and support for industrial prospection and also promotion of overseas prospection by using supporting measures.
- 2) the stockpile of important seven rare metals such as Cr, Co, Ni, V etc. for preparation to the emergency in view of economic security.
- 3) R & D for prospection technology.
- 4) technical cooperation for developing countries on geological survey, mineral prospection and treatment etc.
- 5) collection of information and exchange of ideas through world network of Metal Mining Agency of Japan.
- 6) rational exploitation of industrial minerals and crushed granulates.