Vedanta Plans Saudi Spending Boost in Push for Copper, Gold

By Christine Burke and Yassmin JabriNovember 19, 2025 at 2:18 PM GMT+5:30 ⁝ 4-5 minutes ⁝ 11/19/2025

Vedanta Ltd. is planning to boost investments in Saudi Arabia as the Indian conglomerate bets on the kingdom's ambitions to become a metals and mining hub as part of its massive economic transformation.

The company intends to start digging for copper and gold in western Saudi Arabia in six to eight months, in what would be its first official mission to explore for minerals in the desert nation. It formally received a license on Tuesday, alongside other global firms including China's Zijin Mining Group and Australian metals magnate Gina Rinehart's Hancock Prospecting.

Vedanta is targeting more licenses in an effort to create a Saudi supply chain from mining to processing, a senior executive said in an interview. The kingdom, which has touted about $100 billion in investment opportunities but has been slow to draw big miners on a large scale, will be hoping the latest plans bolster its mining push.

The company has created a metals value chain "in India so we know what has to be done and how it has to be done," said Puneet Khurana, chief executive officer of copper and nickel for India and Gulf Cooperation Council countries. They're now prepared to "do it for the Saudis also."

Vedanta plans to award a contract by mid-January for exploration and development of its first mine in the Jabal Sayid belt, Khurana said.

The firm, controlled by Indian billionaire Anil Agarwal, has already agreed to invest $2 billion to build copper processing facilities in Saudi Arabia — the strongest vote of confidence from an international miner to date in the kingdom's metals and mining strategy.

Saudi Arabia has made the industry the so-called third pillar of its Vision 2030 plan to diversify the historically oil-reliant economy. The government estimates the kingdom has $2.5 trillion in untapped resources including phosphate, copper and bauxite, minerals that are crucial for the global energy transition.

The broader Saudi goal is to quadruple mining's economic contributions by 2030 and draw in companies to help the country become a hub for the sector. Canada's Barrick Gold Corp. operates a copper mine in Saudi Arabia while Hancock Prospecting recently won the right to dig for metals in the kingdom.

China's Zijin is also planning to ramp up exploration through a local partnership and told Bloomberg News on Tuesday that it could be producing copper and gold from Saudi Arabia in five years.

Vedanta broke ground on a copper-rod facility in Saudi Arabia in September that's expected to start production in 2026 and aims to start a copper smelter in 2028, according to Khurana. It will source supply for that site from countries including Chile and Peru until it can start successfully extracting a stream of raw copper from Saudi Arabia, he said.

The company is holding internal discussions around raising funding for its Saudi projects but has yet to make any final decisions, Khurana said.

Vedanta has also held conversations with a handful of Saudi companies on collaborations. State-backed Maaden and Manara Minerals are the two key entities in the kingdom tasked with growing the domestic industry and buying international assets.

Khurana doesn't expect Vedanta's planned demerger to have any impact on the company's ability to boost investment. "Funding for these budgets is not going to be a big issue."