



## Potential investors in Chile's Maricunga lithium project being assessed

Reuters [reported](#) that it had seen a document that indicated that Rothschild & Co has formally started to assess candidates to partner with Chile's state-run miner Codelco to develop Maricunga, a major new lithium project. Codelco is aiming to begin construction in 2027 and launch production in 2030. In the first phase, production would be 20,000 tonnes of lithium carbonate equivalent (LCE) a year via evaporation ponds. A second phase will target 30,000 tonnes of LCE a year via direct lithium extraction, which is still being evaluated as a technology, which is perhaps why Codelco is planning for a decade of use of traditional evaporation ponds at the project. The Codelco Chairman, Maximo Pacheco, has indicated that 30 to 40 companies have shown interest in the Maricunga project.

With steelmaking accounting for 8% of global carbon emissions, Rio Tinto [announced](#) it will invest US\$143 million to develop an R&D facility to undertake further assessment of the effectiveness of its low-carbon ironmaking process, Biolron. The process uses raw biomass, e.g. wheat straw, barley straw, rice stalks, and microwave energy instead of coal to convert Pilbara iron ore to metallic iron in the steelmaking process. Rio Tinto indicated that Biolron process has the potential to reduce carbon emissions by up to 95% compared with the current blast furnace method. The plant, which is located south of Perth, Western Australia is expected to be commissioned in 2026.

The US Department of Energy (DOE) [announced](#) the first proposed projects selected under its Cleanup to Clean Energy initiative, which is focused on repurposing DOE-owned sites. The DOE will enter into lease negotiations with two solar energy developers, NorthRenew Energy Partners and Spitfire, for carbon-free electricity generation projects within the 890-square-mile Idaho National Laboratory site with a goal of producing 400 MW of solar power. [NorthRenew Energy Partners](#) is proposing to instal photovoltaics along with battery storage to produce more than 300 MW of electricity with Spitfire's proposal to cover the remaining 100 MW of electricity.

## Copper relative to Aluminium (LME Cash Official Prices in USD, five years to 7 June 2024)



Source: Bloomberg

**Metal prices**

Metal	Price USD (7 June)	Weekly change %	Year-to-date change %	Price vs 200 day moving average	Price vs 52 week high
Copper	9840	-1.5%	16.1%	113.7%	90.6%
Cobalt	25397.3	-1.5%	-13.0%	86.3%	70.2%
Nickel	17950	-9.5%	10.1%	101.1%	77.6%
Palladium	917	-3.4%	-19.3%	87.2%	65.0%
Platinum	981	-6.4%	-1.9%	105.5%	92.1%

Bloomberg codes: LOCADY, BYW1, LONIDY, PLDMLNPM, PLTMLNPM

Source: LME

Notes. All performance data to 7 June 2024. Past performance is not an indicator of future performance and the value of an investment may fall as well as rise. Investors take on currency risk when taking unhedged exposure to commodities.

**The week ahead**

10 June	JP: Current Account, GDP Growth; IT: Industrial Production
11 June	AU: NAB Business Confidence; UK: Unemployment; US: 10-Year Note Auction
12 June	CN, DE, US: Inflation Rate; UK: GDP, Goods Trade Balance; US: Fed Interest Rate Decision
13 June	AU: Westpac Consumer Confidence Index; DE: Wholesale Prices; EU: Industrial Production US: PPI, 30-Year Bond Auction
14 June	JP: BoJ Interest Rate Decision; FR: Inflation Rate; EU, IT: Balance of Trade US: Export Prices, Import Prices, Michigan Consumer Sentiment

**Further reading**

Bloomberg	<a href="#">China's Unusually Large Copper Stockpiles Fuel Demand Concerns</a>
Bloomberg	<a href="#">Trafigura Settles Billionaire Reuben Brothers' Nickel Fraud Suit</a>
Bloomberg	<a href="#">Chile Lithium Project Attracting Plenty of Interest, Enami Says</a>
Bloomberg	<a href="#">Long-Range EVs Now Cost Less Than the Average New Car in the US</a>
Reuters	<a href="#">Companies invest in EV battery factories in Europe</a>
Reuters	<a href="#">Nevada solar build surges but federal land brings political risk</a>
Reuters	<a href="#">India to spend up to \$385 bln to meet renewable energy target, Moody's Ratings estimates</a>

**Metal Research Major Exchanges Total Copper Inventories (MT)**



Data: as at 7 June 2024

Source: Bloomberg

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