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♦ Chief Editor's Voice

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**Chief Editor's Voice****TOWARDS ACHIEVING SELF RELIANCE IN CRITICAL MINERALS****Dr. C.V. Jayamani**

The beautiful line in Vandemataram of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee "sujalam, subhalam...sasyasyalam" depicts India's resourcefulness. As Gandhiji rightly pointed out, "we have everything here to satisfy the needs of every one but nothing to satisfy the greed of a single person". His words signify the need of utilizing our resources economically, effectively and judiciously. Our country is bountiful in natural resources. India has already become the global destination for the best human capital. We are the pharmaceutical hub of the world. Through the policies of Make in India, the country aims to become the manufacturing hub of the world. Our mountains are rich in a number of minerals, our forests are full of trees and medicinal plants, we have rich rivers flowing and fertilizing the lands. Our coastlines are rich in critical minerals. Self-reliance in critical minerals and semiconductors will lead the country towards the Vikasit Bharat in 2047. Vikasit Bharat through Atmanirbhar Bharat is our dream.

The Narendra Modi government is taking significant steps toward self-reliance in critical minerals by establishing a domestic ecosystem for Rare Earth Permanent Minerals (REPMs). REPMs are among the strongest types of permanent magnets known for their high magnetic strength and stability. Their compact size and powerful performance make them indispensable for advanced engineering applications. These high-performance magnets are essential for electric vehicles, wind turbines, electronics, aerospace and defense. To support

this goal, the government approved Rs 7280 crore scheme to develop 6000 MTPA of integrated REPM manufacturing capacity covering the full value chain from rare-earth to finished magnets

Complementing this, the Union Budget 2026-27 has announced the creation of Dedicated Rare Earth Corridors in Odisha, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu to promote mining, processing, research and manufacturing. These initiatives align with the national priorities of Atmanirbhar Bharat, Net-Zero 2070 and Vikasit Bharat @2047. It helps the government in positioning India as a key player in global advanced materials value chains. As India expands its manufacturing footprints in clean energy, advanced mobility and strategic sectors a reliable domestic supply of REPM is critical. Besides reducing the import dependence, it also strengthens India's competitiveness in global value chains for advanced materials. We need to achieve energy sufficiency and energy efficiency. It is not possible through conventional energy sources. We have to tap the clean energy sources maximum. Atomic energy is one.

Widespread availability of these critical minerals in several states of India is beneficial towards achieving self-reliance in advanced materials. The coastlines of Odisha, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Jharkhand are the rich source of this critical resource. Although India has a strong rare-earth resource base, domestic production of permanent magnets is still at a developing stage. The domestic demand we meet by importing these minerals mainly from China.

The consumption of rare-earth permanent magnets is expected to double by 2030 mainly due to drastic growth in electric mobility, renewable energy, electronic and defense applications. It is essential for India to expand domestic capability and invest in this sector to reduce import dependence and achieve long-term self-reliance. To strengthen India's self-reliance in critical minerals the government approved a major scheme REPM, which provides financial support and incentives to build a fully integrated domestic manufacturing ecosystem, with new corridor-based initiatives

India's recent policy measures reflect how rare earth development being aligned with broader national priorities. The focus is not only on industrial growth but also on clean energy, defense and strategic resource security, self-reliance (Atmanirbhar Bharat) India aims to strengthen its domestic capability and secure critical supply chains. This is critical to India's renewable energy expansion and its Net Zero 2070 vision. India's primary renewable energy target is to achieve 500 GW of installed electricity capacity from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030, with a broader goal of meeting 50% of its energy requirements from renewables and reaching Net Zero emissions by 2070. Domestic corridors and manufacturing capacity ensure secure access for strategic applications, reducing vulnerability to global chain disruptions.

The Union Budget 2026-27 has placed strong emphasis on building India's self-reliance in critical minerals by complementing the Dedicated Rare-Earth Corridor. The corridor connects the state of Kerala also. IREL (India) Limited operates a flagship Rare-Earth Division at Udyogamandal in Aluva, Kerala. Operational since 1952, the plant is a dedicated chemical refining facility that processes mixed rare earth concentrates into high-

purity (99%+) individual rare earth elements. The plant refines mixed rare earth chlorides sourced from other IREL extraction facilities (such as those in Odisha) to produce separated rare earth oxides and carbonates. In addition to commercial rare earths, RED processes strategic materials required by the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE). Aluva about 700 km away from Kalpakkam is providing the critical minerals for making atomic energy. Kalpakkam, the hub of DAE and BHAVINI facilities in Tamil Nadu regularly procures materials, particularly processed rare earths and nuclear grade components from IREL's Rare Earth Division (RED) in Aluva. These ultra-pure chemicals are vital for advanced industries like electronics, optics and green energy technologies. We aim to achieve 100 GW nuclear energy production by 2030.

India's rare-earth strategy is moving decisively toward self-reliance by combining strong domestic resource potential with targeted policy and financial support. India's Dedicated Rare Earth Corridors integrate the entire critical mineral ecosystem to reduce reliance on foreign monopolies and support clean energy and defence manufacturing. India's nuclear program is a unique, three-stage roadmap designed to achieve long-term energy independence by utilizing the country's vast thorium reserves. With an installed capacity of 8.78 GW, the program has reached a historic milestone as the indigenously built Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR) at Kalpakkam attained criticality. Coastline, Corridor (Rare Earth Corridor), Critical Minerals, Criticality and Clean Energy are the 5Cs of development. Such measures reduce import dependence, strengthen clean energy and align with Atmanirbhar Bharat, Net Zero @2070 and Vikasit Bharat @ 2047.