

Editorial of the Day – 15.01.2026

Index

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. An Exploration of India's Minerals Diplomacy (TH) | -1 |
| 2. US exit from several climate bodies can mean both reliefs, challenges for India (IE) | -3 |

1. An Exploration of India's Minerals Diplomacy (TH)

General Studies 2 & 1- IR & Geography

International Relation- Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests; Distribution of key natural resources across the world.

Geography- Critical Minerals Diplomacy, Energy Security, India's Bilateral & Multilateral Relations (Australia, Japan, USA, Africa, etc.).

1. Introduction

India's transition to clean energy is fundamentally dependent on securing a steady supply of critical minerals and rare earth elements. With global supply chains tightening due to China's export controls, the need for access has become urgent. India is currently executing a strategy focused on diversifying trade linkages, promoting sustainable production, and building transparent markets to secure its energy future.

2. Strategic Approach- Balancing Domestic & Global Needs

India employs a two-pronged strategy-

Global Access- Forging bilateral and multilateral partnerships to secure immediate resources. Over the past five years, nearly a dozen partnerships have been established across continents.

Domestic Capability- Strengthening internal mineral policies to support long-term self-reliance.

The Crucial Question- The current focus is evaluating what these engagements have delivered and whether a strategic recalibration is necessary.

3. Country-Specific Analysis of Partnerships

A. Australia- The Dependable Anchor

Status- The most reliable partner due to political stability, vast reserves, and strategic clarity.

Progress- Moved beyond mere intent to long-term supply discussions, joint research, and targeted investments.

Key Initiative- Under the India-Australia Critical Minerals Investment Partnership (2022), five specific lithium and cobalt projects have been identified for potential investment.

B. Japan- A Model for Resilience

Approach- Focuses on institutional planning rather than reactive deal-making.

History- Successfully diversified supply, stockpiled resources, and boosted R&D after China restricted rare-earth exports a decade ago.¹

Scope- Cooperation extends beyond Indian Rare Earths Limited to joint extraction, processing, and stockpiling, including operations in third countries (via a cooperation agreement signed last year).

C. Africa- Opportunity with Conditions

Potential- High mineral abundance with a growing local demand for value addition. India leverages historical trade ties here.

Recent Deals

1. Namibia- Agreements on Lithium, Rare Earths, and Uranium.
2. Zambia- Acquisition talks for Copper and Cobalt.

Challenge- India must adopt a long-term industrial mindset to compete with more coordinated global rivals.

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D. United States- Potential Amid Volatility

Status- High potential for technology and downstream innovation, but engagement is largely limited to dialogue.

Hurdles- Policy volatility (e.g., Inflation Reduction Act incentives), tariffs on Indian goods, and shifting trade rules.

Initiatives- TRUST and the Strategic Minerals Recovery Initiative focus on collaboration in rare-earth processing, battery recycling, and clean separation technologies.

E. European Union- Standards-Driven Alignment

Focus- Intertwines regulation, sustainability, and industrial strategy (e.g., Critical Raw Materials Act, European Battery Alliance).

Requirement- For meaningful progress, India must align with EU expectations on transparency, lifecycle standards, and environmental norms.

F. West Asia- Midstream Promise

Potential- Emerging as a key midstream processing partner.

Investments- UAE and Saudi Arabia are investing heavily in refining capacity, battery materials, and green hydrogen, with sovereign funds acquiring mining assets abroad.

Limitation- The region currently lacks deep institutional frameworks for long-term mineral cooperation.

G. Russia- A Hedge, not a Base

Assets- Substantial reserves of rare earths, cobalt, and lithium; strong scientific ties with India.

Limitations- Sanctions, financing constraints, and logistical uncertainty reduce dependability.

Role- Acts as a strategic hedge for diversification but cannot serve as the foundation of India's strategy.

4. New Frontiers and Emerging Partners

A. Latin America- Strategic Focus

Regions- Argentina, Chile, Peru, and increasingly Brazil (central for Copper, Nickel, Rare Earths).

Action- Increased public and private sector investment in exploration.

Key Milestone- Khanij Bidesh India Limited (KABIL) signed a ₹200 crore exploration and development agreement with Argentina.

Requirement- Strategy must move beyond extraction to include local processing and value-chain partnerships to counter intense competition.

B. Canada- The Emerging Partner

Status- Re-emerging as a key partner following the restoration of diplomatic ties.

Reserves- Significant holdings of Nickel, Cobalt, Copper, and Rare Earths.

Cooperation- A recent Trilateral Agreement (India-Australia-Canada) strengthens potential, though political stability remains crucial for long-term success.

5. The Way Forward- Developing Integrated Partnerships

A. Value Chain Strategy (Country-by-Country)

India must move beyond "ore securing" to a segmented strategy-

Upstream (Extraction)- Focus on Africa, Australia, Canada, Latin America.

Midstream (Processing Hubs)- Focus on West Asia (The Gulf) and Japan.

Downstream (Tech & Recycling)- Focus on the European Union and the United States.

Diversification- Maintain Russia as a hedge.

B. Processing Capacity

The Choke Point- Securing ore is insufficient; refining and midstream capacity is the real bottleneck.

Vulnerability- Without domestic refining, India remains vulnerable to supply-chain disruptions.

Focus- Prioritize technology, innovation, and on-ground execution over mere announcements.

C. Domestic Framework & ESG

Standards- Outcomes will be limited unless India strengthens its domestic framework for Responsible Mining.

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Global Norms- Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) standards and transparency are becoming decisive factors in global partnerships.

Conclusion

India has successfully built an impressive network of critical minerals partnerships, signaling strong strategic intent. The priority now must shift from expansion to execution—deepening effective arrangements, reassessing underperforming ones, and prioritizing technology acquisition and processing capacity. Only by ensuring supply certainty through the entire value chain can India translate its minerals diplomacy into durable energy security.

Source- https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/an-exploration-of-indias-minerals-diplomacy/article70510652.ece#google_vignette

2. US exit from several climate bodies can mean both relief, challenges for India (IE)

General Studies 3 - Environment

Topic- Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment; Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Sub Topic- Climate Change Negotiations, Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR), Clean Energy Transition, India & China's Role in Climate Action.

Climate Change and Global Responsibility

1. Introduction

Climate change stands as a defining challenge of the 21st century. While the global community has set ambitious targets for greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction and clean energy transition, progress is uneven due to disparities in historical emissions, financial resources, and technological capacity. The narrative centers on the tension between developed nations, who bear historical responsibility, and developing giants like India and China, who must balance rapid economic growth with environmental sustainability.

2. The Global Divide- Developed vs. Developing Countries

The core friction in global climate progress lies in the differing responsibilities and capabilities of nations.

Historical Responsibility vs. Current Contribution

Developing Nations (India/China)- Have limited historical responsibility for past emissions but are becoming major contributors due to rapid industrialization and urbanization.

Developed Nations- Bear high historical responsibility and possess superior financial/technological resources.

Expectations from Developed Economies

Fossil Fuel Phase-out- Must lead in reducing reliance on coal and expanding clean energy.

R&D Investment- Expected to invest heavily in advanced clean technologies.

Support Mechanisms- Crucial obligation to provide Climate Finance and Technology Transfer to the Global South.

The Action Gap

1. A significant lag exists in developed nations fulfilling financial commitments to poorer countries.
2. This gap forces developing nations to choose between accelerating clean energy adoption and maintaining economic growth stability.

3. India and China- Progress Amid Challenges

Both nations are pivotal to the global energy transition, facing the "twin tasks" of sustaining growth and curbing emissions.

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A. India's Strategic Approach

Ambitious Targets- India has set aggressive renewable energy targets, steadily increasing solar and wind capacity.

Innovation- Focus on distributed renewable systems and expanding energy access in both rural and urban sectors.

Diplomatic Stance- Champions the principle of Equity in global forums. India links climate mitigation with development rights, arguing for fairness in responsibility and support.

B. China's Climate Actions

Commitments- As the world's largest emitter, China has pledged to peak carbon emissions earlier than previously anticipated.

Manufacturing Leader- dominates the global supply chain for renewable technologies, specifically Solar Panels and Batteries.

Proof of Concept- China demonstrates that economic development and clean energy expansion can proceed concurrently.

C. Common Structural Challenges

Coal Dependence- Both nations continue to rely on coal for energy security and baseload industrial power.

Infrastructure Bottlenecks- Investment gaps in Energy Storage and modern Grid Infrastructure hinder the full integration of renewables.

Energy Efficiency- A pressing need exists to improve efficiency to reduce consumption without stifling growth.

4. The Role of Developed Countries

The text emphasizes that individual action is insufficient; collective responsibility is key.

Mitigation & Support- Developed nations must strengthen domestic mitigation while fulfilling promises of assistance.

CBDR Principle- The principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) remains the bedrock of international negotiations. It dictates that contributions must align with a country's capabilities and historical culpability.

5. Way Forward for India

To successfully navigate this transition, India must adopt a multi-pronged strategy-

Renewable Expansion- Continue the aggressive push for solar and wind capacity addition.

Adaptation- Enhance strategies to protect vulnerable communities from climate impacts (adaptation vs. mitigation).

Global Advocacy- Push internationally for fair finance and equitable technology flows.

Conclusion

The transition to a green economy is not solely about emission reduction; it is fundamentally about supporting sustainable economic development globally. India and China play critical roles by sustaining their renewable transitions and pushing for equitable frameworks. Success depends on the international community recognizing the duality of this challenge—ensuring that climate action does not come at the cost of the developmental needs of the Global South.

Source- <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-climate/us-exit-climate-bodies-relief-challenges-india-10462603/>