

OPINION

Why mining matters for India's self-reliant future

Hindustan Zinc becomes the first Indian company to join ICMM

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Every solar panel, electric vehicle, railway network, and digital system begins with minerals extracted from the earth. Far from being just a background activity, mining is the foundation of India's push for self-reliance, making secure and sustainable access to critical resources essential to achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat.

The significance of mining extends well beyond producing volumes of metals. As the prime minister has underscored, India is intensifying efforts to achieve self-sufficiency in critical minerals, with exploration campaigns already underway across more than 1,200 sites nationwide.

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Charting a new course

Reinforcing this ambition is the Mines and Minerals Development & Regulation Amendment Bill, 2025 — a reform landmark that aligns with the National Critical Minerals Mission. By enabling deep-seated mineral exploration, advancing zero-waste mining, and accelerating approvals, the Bill seeks to expand India's reserves while ensuring the sustainability of underground operations.

The manner of mining is as important as the scale of mining. Nations and corporations that can demonstrate care for the environment, ensure safety, uphold transparency, and build community trust will be the ones to attract investment, technology collaboration, and premium markets.

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It is in this context that Hindustan Zinc's entry into the International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM) takes on significance far beyond a single company.

ICMM comprises a select group of 25 of the world's leading miners, united by the most stringent sustainability and performance standards. To be admitted, companies must demonstrate independent, verifiable compliance with rigorous principles at the mine level.

For India, the inclusion of Hindustan Zinc represents a milestone moment, proof that Indian mining can stand shoulder to shoulder with the best globally and even shape global benchmarks.

Creating credibility

Such global recognition is not symbolic alone. It carries tangible value. As investors increasingly channel capital toward companies with strong ESG credentials, Indian miners that align with international standards will benefit from lower financing costs, higher investor trust, and improved market positioning.

Mining should no longer be seen merely as resource extraction but as a strategic pillar of national growth.

Domestically, India already has credible frameworks such as the Star Rating system and the Sustainable Development Framework. Yet, aligning these with globally respected standards amplifies their impact, giving Indian mining a sharper competitive edge.

Mining should no longer be seen merely as resource extraction but as a strategic pillar of national growth. Encouraging more companies to adopt global standards, building resilience against climate and safety risks, and driving innovation in sustainable practices will be key.

If the sector can integrate responsibility as firmly as it pursues productivity, it will not only power India's infrastructure and industries but also position the country as a global leader in sustainable mining. By 2047, at the heart of every stride India takes toward becoming a developed nation, mining will remain the indispensable starting point, the very foundation of a self-reliant and globally respected Bharat.

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