

National Conference NE&CM-2026 on Nuclear Energy and Critical Minerals Inaugurated at CU

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Central University of Punjab, in collaboration with the Indian Nuclear Society and the Atomic Minerals Directorate for Exploration and Research,

inaugurated the two-day National Conference on *“Nuclear Energy and Critical Minerals: Exploration, Myths, and Societal Impact (NE&CM-2026)”* at its University Auditorium.

The conference brings together eminent scientists, academicians, policymakers, industry experts, and students to deliberate on India’s nuclear energy landscape, strategic mineral resources, and their societal significance. Rakesh Dhiman, IAS, Deputy Commissioner, Bathinda, graced the inaugural session as Chief Guest, while V.K. Manchanda, President of INS, attended as Guest of Honour.

Delivering the welcome address, Prof. Anjana Munshi, Director, Research & Development, emphasized that achieving net-zero emissions requires a balanced and diversified clean energy portfolio. She highlighted nuclear energy and critical minerals as essential pillars of sustainable development, with wide-ranging applications in healthcare, agriculture, and clean water technologies.

Presenting the conference overview, Prof. Smeer Durani, Convener of NE&CM-2026, outlined India’s progress in nuclear energy, safety systems, rare earth resource development, and emerging clean technologies. He noted that while renewable sources remain vital, nuclear power provides reliable baseload energy necessary for sustained economic growth and climate commitments, and highlighted India’s vision of achieving nearly 100 GW nuclear capacity by 2047, supported by innovations such as Small Modular Reactors.

In his address, Prof. V.K. Manchanda President Indian Nuclear Society, highlighted global nuclear energy trends, highlighting that over 400 reactors are operational worldwide, with several more under development. He emphasized nuclear energy’s complementary role alongside renewables in achieving climate goals and called for accelerating India’s

nuclear programme. He also highlighted recent national initiatives, including the National Nuclear Mission and SHANTI Bill, 2025, aimed at strengthening indigenous capabilities and enabling broader participation. He underscored the societal contributions of nuclear technologies in healthcare, agriculture, and food preservation.

Chief Guest Shri Dhiman appreciated the University for organizing a conference on a theme of national importance and expressed confidence that the deliberations would contribute meaningfully to India's vision of Viksit Bharat. He said that scientific research and innovation are essential for strengthening energy security and fostering national development.

In his presidential remarks, Prof. Raghavendra P. Tiwari, Vice-Chancellor, CU Punjab, emphasized that nuclear energy and critical minerals will play a decisive role in shaping the technological and economic future of the nation. Highlighting India's uranium, thorium, and strategic mineral reserves, he stressed the importance of multidisciplinary collaboration among geologists, physicists, chemists, and engineers. He also emphasized that academic reforms under the National Education Policy are promoting emerging disciplines such as nuclear science, and informed that the University plans to introduce new academic programmes in futuristic domains to enhance youth skills and employability. The inaugural session concluded with a vote of thanks by Vijay Sharma, Registrar, CU Punjab.

The conference features six technical sessions focusing on the National Nuclear Mission, critical mineral exploration, sustainable nuclear energy and waste management, advanced reactor technologies, nuclear medicine, societal applications of radiation, and mineral processing. Eminent scientists and experts from premier institutions such as Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd., PGIMER

Chandigarh, and Gujarat Mineral Development Corporation will be delivering expert lectures and participating in discussions.