

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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GORKHA STATEHOOD DEMAND AND THE ISSUE OF NEW STATE FORMATION IN INDIA

Context

- The Union Ministry of Home Affairs constituted a high-level committee following a key meeting of Gorkha leaders with the Union Home Minister and West Bengal government representatives in Siliguri.

What are the Roots of the Gorkhas' Demand?

- The Gorkhas' movement for a **separate administrative identity** is among the oldest of its kind in India.
- Darjeeling and its adjacent areas—including **Kalimpong, Kurseong, the Terai, and the Dooars**—are culturally, ethnically, and linguistically distinct from the rest of West Bengal.
- Because the region's population primarily **speaks Nepali and possesses distinct physical features**, residents frequently face racial profiling.
- This persistent alienation has fuelled a **deep-seated identity crisis**, driving the **demand for a separate state** to affirm their identity as Indian citizens.

Historical Roots

- The demand for a separate administrative identity for the Gorkhas dates back to **1907**, when the **Darjeeling Hillmen's Association**, led by **Sonam Wangyel Laden La**, petitioned the **Minto-Morley Reforms Committee** for the **separation of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri from Bengal**.
- The demand continued before the **Simon Commission (1929)** and later British officials, seeking a separate administrative arrangement.
- In **1947**, the undivided **Communist Party of India (CPI)** submitted a memorandum demanding "**Gorkhasthan**" to Jawaharlal Nehru and Liaquat Ali Khan.

Constitutional Framework for Creation of New States

- Article 3** of the Constitution empowers Parliament to form a new State by separation of territory from an existing State, unite two or more States or parts of States, or alter the area, boundaries or names of existing States.
- Key Requirements:** A bill for reorganisation needs to be introduced in Parliament **only with the President's recommendation**.

- If the proposal affects the area or boundaries of an existing state, the **President needs to refer it to that state's legislature** for its views.
- The **views of the legislature are not binding**; Parliament can proceed regardless.

Evolution of State Reorganisation in India

- Dhar Commission, 1948:** The S.K. Dhar Commission examined the question of reorganising provinces after Independence.
 - It gave greater importance to administrative convenience and economic viability rather than language as the sole basis of reorganisation.
- JVP Committee, 1948–49:** The JVP Committee, comprising **Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel and Pattabhi Sitaramayya**, reconsidered the question of linguistic states.
 - It opposed the creation of states solely on linguistic considerations, emphasising national unity, security and administrative requirements.
- States Reorganisation Commission, 1953:** It comprises Justice **Fazl Ali, K.M. Panikkar and H.N. Kunzru**. The commission recognised language and culture as important factors but rejected the idea that states should be reorganised on the basis of a single criterion.
 - Its recommendations contributed to the **States Reorganisation Act, 1956**, which reorganised the country into **14 states and 6 union territories**.

Why Do Demands for New States Arise?

- Linguistic and Cultural Identity:** Communities demand separate states to preserve their language, culture, traditions and distinct historical identity.
- Administrative Factors:** Large States with difficult terrain or geographically isolated regions may face challenges in effective administration.
 - Separate Statehood can be demanded to bring the government closer to citizens.
- Political Representation:** Statehood can provide regions with greater representation in State institutions, legislatures and decision-making processes.

Issues Associated with Demands for New States

- Proliferation of Statehood Demands:** Granting statehood to one region encourages similar demands elsewhere.

- ♦ Movements such as demands for **Vidarbha, Bundelkhand, Bodoland and Harit Pradesh**, among others, demonstrate the continuing nature of regional aspirations.
- **Economic Viability:** Creation of a new state also involves significant expenditure on **administrative infrastructure, legislatures, secretariats and public institutions**.
- **Inter-State Disputes:** Reorganisation of states generates disputes relating to boundaries, water resources, forests, government employees, assets and liabilities.
- **Identity-Based Politics:** Statehood movements based mainly on ethnicity or language create majoritarian and exclusionary tendencies, affecting minority communities within the proposed state.

Concluding remarks

- The demand for new states reflects India's "unity in diversity" and the continuing evolution of regional aspirations within a federal democracy.
- The challenge is to balance identity, development and political representation with administrative viability, national security and territorial integrity, ensuring that state reorganisation becomes an instrument of **responsive governance** rather than a source of prolonged regional conflict.

Source: **IE**

INDIA PROPOSES MEDICAL DEVICE RULE CHANGES TO BOOST EASE OF BUSINESS

Context

- The Union Health Ministry has proposed amendments to the Medical Devices Rules, 2017, to promote ease of doing business.

Key Proposed Amendments

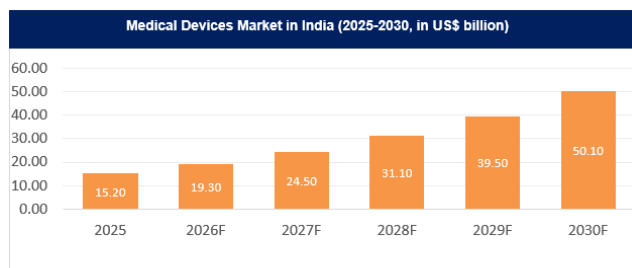
- **Simplification of Outsourced Sterilisation (Amendment to Rule 44):** Manufacturers outsourcing sterilisation to a facility, holding a valid licence under the Medical Devices Rules, 2017, will **no longer require a separate loan licence** for the sterilisation activity.
 - ♦ **Traceability will be retained:** manufacturers must mention the licence number of the sterilisation facility on the medical device label.
- ♦ **A six-month transition period** has been provided to allow companies to modify labels, packaging and related processes.
- **Standardised Testing Fees:** A **Ninth Schedule** is proposed to prescribe uniform fees for medical device testing laboratories. It will **reduce variations and uncertainty** in testing charges.
- **Recognition of the European Union (Amendment to Rule 63):** The European Union (EU) will be added to the list of **recognised stringent regulatory jurisdictions** for waiving clinical investigation requirements for certain medical devices without predicate devices in India.
 - ♦ The existing list includes the **US, UK, Australia, Canada and Japan**.
 - ♦ Medical devices approved in the EU that meet the eligibility conditions can benefit from the waiver provisions in India.

Significance

- **Reduces unnecessary licensing** and compliance requirements.
- **Enables quicker availability** of eligible and innovative medical devices.
- **Standardised testing fees** make compliance costs more predictable.
- Brings India's regulatory framework closer to **global practices**.
- A simpler and more predictable regulatory environment can **promote investment and innovation** in India's medical-device industry.

Medical Devices Sector in India

- The medical devices sector covers a wide range of products, including **diagnostic equipment, imaging devices such as MRI and CT scanners, implants, surgical instruments**, patient-monitoring equipment and in-vitro diagnostic (IVD) devices.
- India's medical devices market is projected to grow steadily from **US\$ 15.2 billion in 2025** to US\$ 50.1 billion by 2030.
- **FDI inflow** in the medical and surgical appliances sector between April 2000- December 2025 stood at **US\$ 4.24 billion**.



F: Forecast

Government Initiatives

- **The National Medical Devices Policy 2023** supports India's medical devices sector through regulatory streamlining, infrastructure, R&D, and investment promotion, boosting competitiveness and exports.
- **100% FDI is allowed** in the medical devices sector in India. Categories such as equipment and instruments, consumables and implants attract the most FDI.
- **The Scheme for Promotion of Medical Devices Parks** aims to create common infrastructure and testing facilities for increased competitiveness and cost reduction of medical device units through optimisation of resources.
 - ♦ Under the scheme, three parks have been approved and are at an advanced stage of development in **Greater Noida (Uttar Pradesh), Ujjain (Madhya Pradesh) and Kanchipuram (Tamil Nadu)**.
- **Regulatory Framework:** The **Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940**, and the Medical Devices Rules, 2017, control the import, manufacture, sale, and distribution of medical devices.
- **In 2026**, the India-EU FTA unlocked access to a **US\$ 572.3 billion EU pharma and MedTech market**, boosting export opportunities for Indian medical devices through liberalised tariffs and preferential market access

Challenges with Medical Devices Sector in India

- **India still imports around 70–80% of its medical devices**, particularly high-end and technologically advanced equipment.
- **Limited domestic manufacturing** of critical components and raw materials.
- **High cost of R&D and clinical investigations**, which can discourage innovation.
- **Inadequate testing and manufacturing infrastructure** in some segments.

- There is a **shortage** of specialised, industry-ready **skilled manpower**.
- **Limited integration** of Indian manufacturers into global value chains.

Way Ahead

- India should reduce its import dependence on medical devices by promoting domestic manufacturing, R&D, innovation and medical-device infrastructure.
- A predictable and streamlined regulatory framework, while ensuring quality, safety and traceability, can attract investment and position India as a global medical-device manufacturing hub.

Source: TH

INDIA CAN BECOME GLOBAL SHIPBUILDING HUB: DEFENCE MINISTER

Context

- The Defence Minister said that a vacuum created by the **declining capacities of traditional shipbuilding industries across the world** presents a major opportunity for India to emerge as a global shipbuilding hub.

About Shipbuilding

- It refers to the **construction, repair, and maintenance of vessels** used for **transportation, defense, and trade**.
 - ♦ Shipbuilding is carried out in specialised facilities called **shipyards**, which are equipped to handle large-scale projects and complex assembly processes.
- **Asia-Pacific was the largest region** in the ship building and repairing market, accounting for 49% or \$118.12 billion of the total in 2023.
 - ♦ It was followed by **Western Europe, North America and then the other regions**.

Status in India

- India has a long history of shipbuilding and the **Indus Valley civilisation**, which built early ships and traded internationally, is the source of **India's rich maritime history**.
 - ♦ Gujarat, Maharashtra and Bengal were known for building massive wooden ships for trade and combat.

- **Indian shipbuilders** created cutting-edge vessels that were in high demand in the Middle Ages.
- India established significant state-owned shipyards because of prioritising naval and defence shipbuilding after achieving independence.
- Currently, **India holds only 0.06%** of the global shipbuilding market, a stark contrast to the dominance of China, South Korea, and Japan, which collectively control 85% of the industry.

DEVELOPMENT OF SHIPPING AND MARITIME SECTOR IN 11 YEARS



PARAMETER	2014	2025	% GROWTH
Cruise Passengers	84,000	4.92 lakhs	485%
Inland water cargo	18 MMT	146 MMT	700%
Operational waterways	3	29	870%
Investment in National waterways	Rs. 183 Cr	1,700 Cr	800%
Number of Seafarers	1.08 lakhs	3.2 lakhs	200%
Annual financial performance of ports	Rs. 11,172 Cr	Rs. 24,202 Cr	120%
No of new legislations	1 in 10 years	11 in 11 Years	

Source: Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways

Factors Favouring India's growth of shipbuilding industry in India

- **Strategic location:** India's extensive coastline and proximity to major shipping routes provide a natural advantage for shipyards, helping reduce transportation costs and turnaround times.
- **Competitive labour costs:** India offers a competitive edge with lower labour costs compared to other shipbuilding nations, making it an attractive option for international clients.
- **Focus on niche segments:** Indian shipyards are specialising in categories like offshore support vessels, dredgers, and ferries, targeting specific market demands.
- **Government support:** Policy initiatives such as the Scheme for Financial Assistance to Shipyards in India (SFAS) and a focus on enhancing indigenous shipbuilding capabilities are driving growth in the shipbuilding sector.

Importance

- **Shipbuilding is a capital-intensive industry** requiring advanced technology, skilled labour and strong policy support.

- It **creates jobs** in sectors such as electronics, steel, engineering, and maritime equipment.
- A robust local shipbuilding industry can improve **India's Blue Economy, a major focus area under the "Make in India" and "Atmanirbhar Bharat"** programs.
- It **improves the country's trade balance** and **reduces dependency on imports**.
- **Strategically, India's defence capability and marine security depend heavily on shipbuilding.**
 - India is investing in naval modernisation and building aircraft carriers, submarines, and warships to bolster its naval fleet considering the changing geopolitical environment in the Indo-Pacific region.

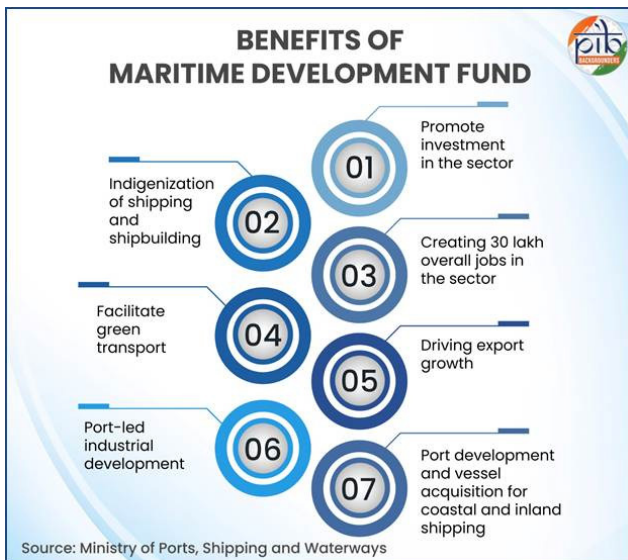
Challenges Faced by India

- **High cost of production:** Indian shipyards face higher costs compared with major shipbuilding countries such as China, South Korea and Japan, partly due to expensive inputs, financing and relatively lower economies of scale.
- **Limited access to long-term finance:** Shipbuilding is highly capital-intensive and projects have long gestation periods.
- **Technological gap:** India remains behind leading shipbuilding nations in advanced ship design, automation, marine engineering, specialised vessels and green-ship technologies.
- **Fragmented shipbuilding ecosystem:** The industry lacks sufficiently integrated clusters connecting shipyards, component manufacturers, designers, suppliers, ports, logistics providers and research institutions.
- **Strong global competition:** China, South Korea and Japan dominate global commercial shipbuilding through large-scale production, established supply chains, technological capabilities and substantial state support, making it difficult for Indian yards to compete on price and delivery timelines.

Government Initiatives

- **Shipbuilding Financial Assistance Scheme** with outlay of ₹24,736 crore provides financial support, ship-breaking credit notes, and steer domestic manufacturing through National Shipbuilding Mission.

- **Maritime Development Fund** with ₹25,000 crore outlay focuses on investment and interest incentivization.



- These measures aim to modernize infrastructure, enhance domestic manufacturing capabilities, and attract global investment, laying a strong foundation for long-term development.
 - By focusing on innovation, sustainability, and skill development, the sector is well-positioned to meet the strategic goals outlined in Maritime India Vision 2030.
- Source: TH**
- ## ILLEGAL MIGRANTS IN INDIA
- Context**
- The Union Home Minister directed the security agencies to **take strict measures against infiltration**, asking the police chiefs to detect and deport illegal migrants.
- ### Illegal Immigrants in India
- In the last three Censuses, roughly **94% of all India's Bangladesh-born residents lived in the five border States** (West Bengal, Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya, and Mizoram).
 - India and Bangladesh share a **4,096.7-km-long border**, which till recently was mostly porous.
 - In 2025, the Home Ministry **said 3,232 km of the Indo-Bangla border had been fenced**.
- ### Refugee Crisis in India
- **Afghan Refugees:** With the Taliban's resurgence in Afghanistan, there has been an influx of Afghan refugees into India seeking safety and asylum. Many of them are Sikhs and Hindus facing religious persecution.
 - **Bangladeshi migrants:** Historically entered India due to economic reasons; significant numbers have settled in West Bengal, Assam, Tripura, and other northeastern states.
 - **Rohingya Crisis:** Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar have sought refuge in India due to ethnic violence and persecution in Myanmar's Rakhine State.

Conclusion

- India's shipbuilding sector is entering a promising phase of growth, supported by a series of progressive initiatives and policy reforms.

- India has been grappling with their status, with the government taking a firm stance on their deportation.

- **Tibetan Refugees:** Tibetans have been living in India since the 1959 Tibetan uprising against Chinese rule.
 - ♦ They are granted refugee status and live primarily in settlements in states like Himachal Pradesh and Karnataka.
- **Sri Lanka:** In the case of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees, many of them are in camps in Tamil Nadu. The state government provides them an allowance and allows them to seek jobs, and their children to attend school.
 - ♦ After the end of the Sri Lanka civil war in 2009, India has encouraged return through the method of voluntary repatriation, if the situation back home is safe.

India's Policy on Refugees

- India has welcomed refugees in the past, with nearly **300,000 people categorised as refugees**.
 - ♦ This includes the **Tibetans, Chakmas from Bangladesh**, and refugees from **Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, etc.**
- But **India is not a signatory to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention or the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugee**. Nor does India have a refugee policy or a refugee law.
- **All foreign undocumented nationals** are governed as per the provisions of The Foreigners Act, 1946, The Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939, The Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920 and The Citizenship Act, 1955.
- As per the MHA foreign nationals who enter into the country **without valid travel documents are treated as illegal immigrants**.

Reasons for India's Policy on Refugees

- **Resource Strain:** Hosting refugees puts pressure on resources, especially in areas where infrastructure is already stretched thin.
- **Social Cohesion:** Large numbers of refugees can strain social cohesion, potentially leading to tensions with host communities.
- **Security Concerns:** There are security concerns related to refugee influxes, including the potential infiltration of extremist elements or challenges in monitoring movements across porous borders.
- **Diplomatic Relations:** Hosting refugees strain diplomatic relations with neighboring countries or countries of origin.

- **Economic Impact:** Refugees compete for low-skilled jobs, affecting the local job market, while their potential contributions to the economy through entrepreneurship or labor may not be fully realized.

Conclusion

- India's approach to refugees is shaped by a **tradition of humanitarianism, regional geopolitics, and national security concerns**.
- Though India is not a signatory to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol, it has historically provided refuge to various displaced communities.
- As global displacement continues to rise, there is an **increasing need for India to establish a clear and consistent national refugee policy** that balances humanitarian obligations with security and demographic concerns.

Source: TH

IN-PRINCIPLE NOD FOR AIRPORTS' PRIVATISATION

Context

- Recently, the **Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA)** gained **in-principle clearance** for the third wave of airport privatisation for **privatising 11 Airports Authority of India (AAI) airports**.

About Airport Privatisation in India

- Airport privatisation in India is predominantly through **Public-Private Partnership (PPP)** arrangements with **private concessionaires operating, managing and developing** airports for a defined concession period.
- The **Airports Authority of India (AAI)** is responsible for key functions such as **aviation infrastructure, air navigation services and airport development**.
- The **new proposal** is for the privatisation of 11 airports in **five bundles for a period of 50 years**. It aims to enable **cross-subsidisation**, pairing commercially stronger airports with smaller or less profitable regional airports.
 - ♦ These include Amritsar and Kangra; Varanasi, Gaya and Kushinagar; Bhubaneswar and Hubballi; Raipur and Aurangabad; and Tiruchirappalli and Tirupati.

PPP Model & PPP Appraisal Committee (PPPAC)

- **'Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Model:** A PPP is a **long-term arrangement** between the government and a private entity for providing public infrastructure or services.
 - ♦ The private partner may contribute **finance, technical expertise, construction, operation and maintenance**, while risks and responsibilities are allocated between the public and private sectors.
- **Key features of PPPs include:**
 - ♦ Long-term contractual relationships;
 - ♦ Sharing of risks between the public and private partners;
 - ♦ Service delivery based on performance;
 - ♦ Mobilisation of private finance and skills; and
 - ♦ Lifecycle management of infrastructure assets.

PPP Appraisal Committee (PPPAC)

- It is an **inter-ministerial appraisal mechanism** for examining PPP projects before their approval.
- It functions under the **Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), Ministry of Finance**, and appraises major Central-sector PPP projects.
- Its broad purpose is to ensure that PPP projects are **financially viable, appropriately structured, transparent and consistent with public interest**.

Reasons for Recent Privatization Announcements

- India's **rising passenger traffic** and growing infrastructure requirements have increased the need for substantial investment.
- Under the proposed model, concessionaires would undertake operation, management and development, including sanctioned capital expenditure and subsequent capacity expansion.
- Allowing bidders with relevant **cross-sectoral infrastructure experience**, rather than only aviation-sector experience, may widen the investor pool.

Significance of Airport Privatisation

- **Improved Efficiency and Service Quality:** The private sector involvement can bring in managerial skills, technology and customer focused operations which could improve the passenger experience.

- **Faster Infrastructure Development:** Private funding can supplement public resources and support terminal expansion, capacity augmentation and city-side infrastructure.
- **Fiscal & Developmental Benefits:** PPP models can ease the immediate fiscal load on the government and facilitate the use of public resources for other developmental priorities.
- **Regional Connectivity:** A mix of lucrative and weaker airports can facilitate operating regional airports and supplement greater connectivity objectives.

What are the Concerns?

- The primary worry is **market concentration**. Excessive concentration of ownership in a few corporate groupings can stifle competition and pose systemic dangers.
- Another risk is **over-leverage**: financial difficulties in one project might possibly have knock-on repercussions across many airports held by the same firm.
- Other issues are:
 - ♦ Longer timeframes for concessions and proper regulatory scrutiny;
 - ♦ Protection of public interest and low cost airport services;
 - ♦ Not leaving commercially weaker airports behind; and
 - ♦ Finding a balance between profitability and regional connectivity.

Way Forward

- Airport privatisation should be undertaken under a **competition sensitive and transparent PPP framework**.
- Concentration limits, robust financial due diligence, strong regulatory supervision and regular performance monitoring are required.
- The government should ensure that private investment improves capacity and quality of service, but without creating monopolistic structures or threatening regional connectivity.

Source: TH

POTENTIAL OF FLOATING SOLAR SYSTEMS IN INDIA**In News**

- The recent approval of the **Pradhan Mantri Surya Sarovar Yojana (PM-SSY)** signals the Indian government's intent to promote land-neutral solar applications.

Background and Need

- India's solar capacity has grown from **3 gigawatts (GW) in 2016 to more than 160 GW in 2026**, mostly through utility-scale projects.
- But with solar having to compete with urbanisation and agriculture for space, and ecological conservation a priority, **land is becoming increasingly difficult to find for new projects**.
- Therefore Policymakers are discovering **ways to increase solar without requiring additional land**.

Floating solar systems

- It involves the **mounting of solar modules on floating platforms** over water bodies such as reservoirs and lakes.
- The platforms are moored to the bed or shores of the reservoir to hold them in position.
 - ♦ Depending on the system design, inverters and other electrical equipment may be located on floating platforms or onshore.
- Floating solar systems produce electricity which is sent to **land by electrical cables**.
 - ♦ Because they do not require land for installation, industrial ponds, reservoirs, and inland water bodies are ideal for the deployment of floating solar.

Benefits

- **Land conservation:** Floating solar is an effective land use and economic advantage by reducing the demand on limited land.
- **Water Conservation:** Solar panels can help reduce water evaporation, yet the amount of water saved will be dependent on the level of coverage, climate, and reservoir characteristics.
- **More efficiency:** The panels are cooled with water, which means better performance and efficiency, especially during hot summers.

India's Progress

- NTPC Limited commissioned two of India's largest floating solar projects in 2022: the **100 MW Ramagundam project in Telangana** and the **92 MW Kayamkulam project in Kerala**.
 - ♦ Another milestone project is the **600 MW Omkareshwar Floating Solar Park in Madhya Pradesh**, with 278 MW capacity operating as of now.
- India has currently around **700 MW of floating solar electricity with a potential of 102 GW** (only 20 per cent of the reservoir area being exploited).

Challenges to handle

- **Weather-related vulnerability:** Floating solar systems are exposed to extreme winds, waves, and rapidly changing water levels, making climate-resilient system design crucial.
- **Cost:** Floating solar is generally more expensive than traditional ground-mounted solar because of the cost of floating platforms, anchoring systems, specialised electrical equipment, and installation.
 - ♦ The inclusion of energy storage systems will further increase overall capital costs.
- **Coordination** among multiple institutions (including state agencies, municipal authorities, electricity utilities, water resources and irrigation departments, environmental authorities, and industries) is complex.

Pradhan Mantri Surya Sarovar Yojana (PM-SSY)

- The Union Cabinet approved the **Pradhan Mantri Surya Sarovar Yojana (PM-SSY)**, a ₹5,070 crore scheme to accelerate the development of **floating solar photovoltaic (FSPV) projects** integrated with energy storage systems across the country.
- The scheme aims to develop 5,000 MW of floating solar capacity along with 10,000 MWh of co-located energy storage, providing a minimum storage duration of two hours.
- Projects will be sanctioned between FY 2026-27 and FY 2030-31, while financial assistance will continue to be disbursed until FY 2032-33.
- Under the scheme, the Centre will provide Central Financial Assistance (CFA) of ₹1 crore per MW for eligible floating solar projects after successful commissioning.

Suggestions

- Ecologically sensitive water bodies, as well as areas important for biodiversity, bird habitats, and fisheries, should be treated with caution and approved for floating solar development only after thorough assessments.
- Developing clear frameworks for identifying and allocating suitable water bodies, defining institutional responsibilities, and streamlining approvals will therefore be vital for successful implementation.

Source: IE

NEWS IN SHORT

VAISHYA TEKRI

Context

- The Madhya Pradesh government has begun restoring Buddhist monuments linked to the Mauryan emperor Ashoka, starting with a **fresh excavation at Vaishya Tekri in Ujjain**.

About

- The largest stupa, popularly called **Vaishya Tekri**, is about 350 feet at its base and 100 feet high. Nearby is a smaller stupa, called Kumbhar (or Kumhar) Tekri.
- Initial excavations by the Department of Archaeology of the erstwhile Gwalior State in 1938–39 unveiled **large bricks and punch-marked coins**, prompting archaeologists to **date the structures to the Mauryan period**.
- A stupa is a dome-shaped structure** traditionally used as a Buddhist religious monument, symbolizing the burial mound of the Buddha.
 - The term “stupa” originates from Sanskrit**, meaning “to heap” or “pile up,” reflecting the mounded design of these monuments.

Ashoka's years in Ujjain

- Ujjayini** (modern Ujjain), on the banks of the **Sipra**, a tributary of the Chambal, was the **capital of Avanti** and an important commercial centre.
- Historians note that Ujjain was a major crossroads, linking trade routes to western coastal ports such as Broach and Sopara, as well as to Pataliputra.
- Ashoka was sent to Avanti as viceroy by his father, Bindusara.
 - He is believed to have spent about a decade in Avanti, with Ujjain as his headquarters.
 - He was then appointed to the viceroyalty at Ujjain in recognition of his work.

Source: IE

RIGHT TO WALK: STRENGTHENING PEDESTRIAN SAFETY IN INDIA

Context

- After the Supreme Court's order recognising the right to walk on footpaths as a fundamental right, Andhra Pradesh became the first state in the country to **formulate a dedicated Pedestrian Safety & Universal Accessibility Policy in 2026**.

About the Policy

- The policy mandates a **three-step system** to address the issue — road safety audits, fixing footpath infrastructure (including removal of encroachments) and behavioural change.
 - Footpath Audits:** At least 15–20 pedestrian black spots with frequent injuries or deaths during the previous 2–3 years will be prioritised.
 - Authorities must survey **20% of roads** within **one year** to identify additional pedestrian-crossing requirements.
- The policy will **apply to all local body areas**, including urban fringes, peri-urban areas, satellite towns and rural areas.
- The policy invokes **section 198A of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988**, under which officials, contractors, and consultants can be fined **Rs 1 lakh** if infrastructural or design failures cause pedestrian death or disability.

Status of Pedestrian Safety in India

- In 2024, pedestrians accounted for 36,526 of the **1.77 lakh road accident** deaths in India, constituting around **one-fifth** of all road fatalities.
- Around 31%** of pedestrian deaths occur on National Highways, highlighting the risks associated with high-speed corridors and inadequate pedestrian infrastructure.
- Two-wheelers accounted for more than **28%** of pedestrian fatalities, followed by cars and taxis at around **25%**, while trucks/lorries and buses also contributed significantly.

Right To Walk

- The Supreme Court of India formally declared the “right to walk” on safe, well-maintained, and demarcated footpaths a fundamental right in the case of **Maniyar Iliyaz @ Shaik Riyaz v. P. Ayyappan & Ors.**
- The right to walk flows from **Article 19(1)(d) (freedom of movement)** and **Article 21 (right to life and personal liberty)**.

Source: IE

GARBHINI MITRA COURSE

In News

- The All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA) has introduced the **Garbhini Mitra Course** for the 2026–2027 academic session.

Garbhini Mitra Course

- It is a structured healthcare skill-development programme aimed to create trained personnel to provide appropriate health education, lifestyle guidance, and community-level support to women during pregnancy and the postnatal period.
 - It admits 20 students per batch.
- It is rooted in the traditional Ayurvedic concepts of **Garbhini Paricharya (antenatal care)**, **Sutika Paricharya (postnatal care)**, and **Garbhadhana Vidhi (pre-conceptual care)**.
- It equips participants with practical skills in trimester-specific dietetics, lifestyle modifications, pregnancy-safe yoga, emotional support during labour, newborn massage, and basic life support protocols.
- It is offered at the AIIA campus in Sarita Vihar, New Delhi

Eligibility

- Candidates who have passed the Senior Secondary (10+2) examination from any recognized board in India and are at least 18 years of age are eligible to apply.
- Candidates currently awaiting their 12th-grade results may also submit provisional applications.

Source: **PIB**

POLYSILICON MANUFACTURING IN INDIA

Context

- The government is considering a new Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for polysilicon manufacturing to develop an integrated domestic solar PV supply chain.

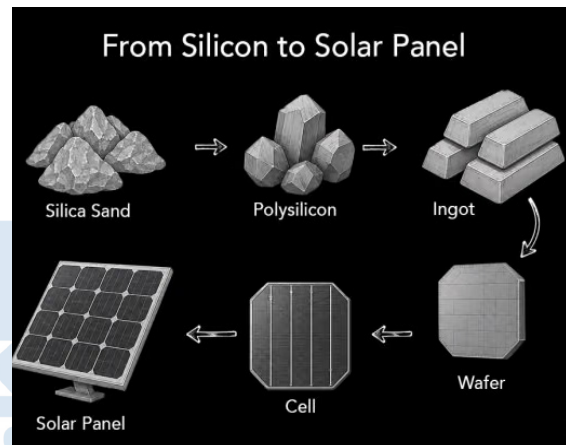
India's Solar Manufacturing Position

- India has around **163 GW** of installed solar power capacity, making solar the country's largest source of renewable energy.
- India has developed substantial downstream manufacturing capacity, with around **173 GW** of solar module capacity and **25–30 GW** of cell manufacturing capacity.
- However, domestic manufacturing remains incomplete because producers largely depend on imported polysilicon, ingots and wafers.

- China accounts for more than **85% of global PV supply capacity** and has an integrated presence across the entire solar manufacturing chain.

What is Polysilicon?

- Polysilicon is a highly **purified form of silicon** used as the basic material for manufacturing **crystalline silicon solar cells**.
- It is produced from **silicon-bearing raw materials** such as **quartz/silica** through energy-intensive purification processes.
- Solar-grade polysilicon** requires very high purity, as impurities can affect the performance of solar cells.



India's Solar Manufacturing Capacity Across the Value Chain

Supply Chain Stage	Operational Capacity	Primary Government Benchmarks & Schemes	Key Details
 Polysilicon	Limited Commercial Production	 Expected PLI Scheme	Large-scale fully integrated facilities are currently under construction/commissioning by Adani Solar, Reliance, and Lanco Solar.
 Ingots & Wafers	Limited Commercial Production	 Expected PLI Scheme	Large-scale fully integrated facilities are currently under construction.
 Solar PV Cells	25 -30 GW	 ALMM List-II / PLI Scheme	MNRE released ALMM List-II to enforce domestic content requirements (DCR).
 Solar PV Modules	172 - 190 GW	 ALMM List-I / PLI Scheme	Exponential expansion under ALMM List-I, self-sufficiency in domestic module assembly.

Source: **The Print**

INS MANGROL

Context

- ‘**Mangrol**’, the **third Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft** built by Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL), Kochi, was delivered to the Indian Navy.

About

- **Mangrol** derives its name from the **coastal town and minor port of ‘Mangrol’**, located in Gujarat, which is a prominent harbour for the marine fishing industry.
 - ♦ The ship also encapsulates the **legacy of erstwhile INS Mangrol**, an Indian Naval Minesweeper which remained in service till 2004.
- The ship comprises **over 80% indigenous content** and is equipped for underwater surveillance, Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) operations in coastal waters, Low-Intensity Maritime Operations (LIMO), along with mine warfare capabilities.
 - ♦ The ship is propelled by waterjets and equipped with state-of-the-art Torpedoes, Anti-Submarine rockets, along with advanced radars and sonars.
- The delivery of Mangrol is yet another milestone in the Indian Navy’s indigenous shipbuilding journey and a reaffirmation of the Government’s vision of ‘Aatmanirbhar Bharat’.

Source: PIB

