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Current Affairs - 24 January 2026

ANNA CHAKRA



Recently, the Department of Food and Public Distribution (DFPD) has achieved a remarkable milestone by being named as finalist for the 2026 Franz Edelman Award for its Anna Chakra initiative.

Recently, the Department of Food and Public Distribution (DFPD) has achieved a remarkable milestone by being named as

- It is a **supply chain optimization tool** under the Public Distribution System (PDS).
- It is an operations **research–based decision support system** designed to optimise state-specific food grain logistics **under India’s Public Distribution System (PDS)**.
- The initiative was developed through a **Government–UN–Academia partnership**, involving:
 - The **Department of Food and Public Distribution**,
 - The **United Nations World Food Programme (WFP)** in India, and
 - **Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi**.
- It **leverages advanced algorithms** to identify optimal routes and ensure seamless movement of food grains across supply chain nodes.
- It is **integrated with the PM Gati Shakti platform and FOIS (Freight Operations Information System)** portal of the Railways through **Unified Logistics Interface Platform (ULIP)**.

What is Franz Edelman Award?

- It recognizes the world’s most impactful, **high-value applications of advanced analytics**.
- It is widely regarded as the “**Nobel Prize of Operations Research and Analytics**”.
- It recognizes and reward outstanding examples of **operations research**, management science, and advanced analytics practice in the world.
- **Award: Winner gets a \$10,000 prize.**



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SUBHASH CHANDRA BOSE AAPDA PRABANDHAN PURASKAR



Subhash
Chandra
Bose Aapda
Prabandhan
Puraskar

Recently, the Sikkim State Disaster Management Authority (SSDMA), in the Institutional Category, and Lieutenant Colonel Seeta Ashok Shelke, in the individual Category, have been selected for the Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar 2026.

- It is an **annual award** instituted to recognize and honour the invaluable contribution and selfless service rendered by **individuals and organizations** in India in the **field of disaster management**.
- The award is **announced every year** on the **23rd January**, the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose.
- **Eligibility**
 - **Only Indian nationals** and Indian institutions are eligible to apply for the award.
 - **Institutions, voluntary organisations, corporate entities**, academic/research institutions, response/ uniformed forces or any other institution may apply as an institution for the award.

The candidate for the award must have **worked in the area of Disaster Management** like Prevention, Mitigation, Preparedness, Rescue, Response, Relief, Rehabilitation, Research/ Innovations or Early Warning related work in India.

- **Selection Process:** A Screening Committee may be constituted by Member secretary/ member, NDMA to screen all the applications received.
- **Award:**
 - In case the winner being an institution, it shall receive a **certificate and a cash prize of Rs.51** This cash prize shall be utilized by the **winning institution for Disaster Management related activities only**.
 - In case of the winner **being an individual**, winner shall receive a certificate and a cash prize of **Rs.5.00 lakhs**.

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RAJASTHAN EYES GUJARAT-STYLE ‘DISTURBED AREAS’ LAW, REKINDLING DEBATE

Rajasthan is preparing to introduce a Bill to declare **certain localities** as “**disturbed areas**” to address what it describes as demographic imbalance and improper clustering. Though the draft is not public yet, it closely mirrors Gujarat’s 1991 Disturbed Areas Act.

While the state government presents the move as necessary to **preserve communal harmony**, the Gujarat law it draws from has faced sustained criticism over constitutional concerns and repeated judicial curbs on executive overreach in private property transactions.

Gujarat Disturbed Areas Act: An Overview

- Enacted in 1991 after repeated communal riots, the **Gujarat Disturbed Areas Act** was designed to prevent “distress sales” of property during periods of violence or intimidation.
- Its stated aim was to protect vulnerable property owners from being forced to sell assets below market value due to fear or coercion.
- **How the Act Works?**
 - Under the law, the state government can notify an area as a “disturbed area” based on a history of communal violence or mob unrest.
 - Once notified, any transfer of immovable property — including houses, shops or land — requires prior approval from the district collector.
 - Transactions carried out without this sanction are deemed void.
- **Role of the District Collector**
 - The collector is mandated to conduct a formal inquiry before granting approval, to ensure that the sale is voluntary and not the result of pressure, threat or inducement.
 - This administrative scrutiny is central to the functioning of the Act.
- **Constitutional and Legal Concerns**

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- Critics argue that by regulating property transactions, the Act effectively enables the state to influence the demographic composition of neighbourhoods.
- This raises concerns under **Article 19(1)(e)**, which guarantees the right to reside and settle anywhere in India, and **Article 15**, which prohibits discrimination on grounds such as religion or caste.
- **Relevance to Rajasthan’s Proposal**
 - The Rajasthan government’s stated objective of preventing “improper clustering” closely mirrors the language of the stayed Gujarat amendment, raising fresh constitutional and legal concerns.

Free Consent and Fair Market Value: Limits on State Power

- **Collector’s Authority Under Judicial Review** - Although the Disturbed Areas Act declares the collector’s decision final, the Gujarat High Court has consistently exercised judicial review under **Article 226** to check administrative overreach and rights violations.
- **Narrow Scope of Collector’s Inquiry** - Through multiple rulings, the High Court has clarified that a collector’s role is strictly limited to verifying **two factors**: whether the sale reflects free consent and whether it is at fair market value.
- **Law and Order Grounds Rejected** - In a March 2020 case involving a Hindu seller and Muslim buyers in Vadodara, the High Court quashed a collector’s refusal based on police reports citing law and order concerns. The court held such inquiries irrelevant to the Act’s purpose.
- **No Role for Neighbours’ Objections** - The court has repeatedly ruled that neighbours have no legal standing in private property transactions.
- **Police Reports as Extraneous Considerations** - In October 2023, the High Court set aside another collector’s rejection that relied on police inputs. The court reiterated that relying on such extraneous grounds amounted to jurisdictional overreach.
- **Core Purpose of the Act Reaffirmed** - As recently as September 2025, the High Court emphasised that the Act’s sole objective is to prevent distress sales caused by coercion or fear — not to manage law and order or regulate demographic patterns.



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INDIA'S ACC BATTERY MANUFACTURING PUSH: PROMISE AND POLICY BOTTLENECKS

- Advanced Chemistry Cells (ACCs) are next-generation battery technologies, such as lithium-ion cells, that power electric vehicles (EVs), renewable energy storage systems, and consumer electronics.
- Unlike traditional lead-acid batteries, ACCs offer higher energy density, faster charging, and longer lifecycle performance.
- For India, domestic ACC Battery Manufacturing is strategically important for three reasons.
 - First, batteries account for nearly 40% of the cost of electric vehicles, making local production critical for EV affordability.
 - Second, India is heavily dependent on imports, mainly from China, for lithium-ion cells and battery components.
 - Third, battery manufacturing is central to India's clean energy transition and its commitments toward reducing carbon emissions and enhancing energy security.

The ACC Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme

- The ACC-PLI scheme was launched in October 2021 by the Ministry of Heavy Industries to catalyse domestic manufacturing of next-generation battery cells.
- With a total financial outlay of Rs. 18,100 crore, the scheme aimed to establish 50 GWh of battery manufacturing capacity by 2026.
- Under the scheme, selected manufacturers were promised incentives linked to actual battery sales, with a maximum subsidy of about Rs. 2,000 per kilowatt-hour.
- Companies were required to make a minimum investment of Rs. 1,100 crore and meet phased domestic value-addition targets, 25% within two years and 60% within five years.
- Beyond capacity creation, the policy intended to develop a complete battery supply chain covering cathodes, anodes, electrolytes, and cell assembly, while also generating over one million jobs.

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Current Status and Performance Gap

- Despite its ambitious design, the scheme's on-ground performance has been weak.
- As of October 2025, only 1.4 GWh of battery cell capacity had been commissioned on time, while 8.6 GWh was under development but delayed. This is far below the original 50 GWh target.
- Although bids were invited for the entire capacity, only 30 GWh was finally allotted.
- Importantly, none of the selected firms had prior experience in large-scale battery cell manufacturing.
- As no company has begun commercial battery sales, zero incentives have been disbursed so far, against a targeted Rs. 2,900 crore payout by October 2025.
- Job creation has also been minimal, with just over 1,100 jobs generated compared to the projected 1.03 million.

Key Challenges Affecting Implementation

- One major bottleneck is the lack of a mature battery manufacturing ecosystem in India.
- Critical inputs such as lithium refining, cathode materials, and specialised machinery remain import-dependent, largely sourced from China.
- Delays in visa approvals for foreign technical experts, especially Chinese specialists needed for equipment installation, have further slowed plant commissioning.
- Additionally, strict localisation norms and aggressive installation timelines have posed challenges for companies without prior technical expertise.

Implications for Electric Mobility and Energy Transition

- The EV sector accounts for nearly 70-80% of lithium-ion battery demand in India.
- Slower progress in ACC Battery Manufacturing directly affects EV affordability, supply chain resilience, and the pace of clean mobility adoption.
- While EV sales continue to grow, the pace has been lower than earlier projections, partly reflecting supply-side constraints in battery availability and pricing.
- Continued reliance on imports also exposes India to geopolitical risks and trade disruptions.



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BETI BACHAO BETI PADHAO SCHEME



Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme

- Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) initiative, meaning “Save the Girl Child, Educate the Girl Child,”
 - It is a flagship initiative of the Government of India launched in 2015.
- It is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** and is component of SAMBAL sub-scheme under Mission Shakti.
- **Aim:** It aims to **address the declining child sex ratio**, prevent gender-based discrimination, and promote education and empowerment of girls across the country.
- **Objectives of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme**
 - **Prevent Gender-Based Discrimination:** Combat societal norms and practices that lead to discrimination against the girl child.
 - **Improve Child Sex Ratio (CSR):** Address the declining number of girls per 1,000 boys by curbing practices like female foeticide.
 - **Promote Education for Girls:** Ensure access to quality education for girls, thereby empowering them to lead independent lives.
 - **Enhance Participation of Girls:** Encourage the active participation of girls in various spheres, including sports, arts, and leadership roles.
 - **Strengthen Existing Schemes:** Integrate and reinforce existing government schemes aimed at the welfare of the girl child.
- It was initiated as a **tri-ministerial effort** of **Ministries of Women and Child Development, Health & Family Welfare and Ministry Of Education**.
 - From 2021-22, the **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship** and **Ministry of Minority Affairs** have also been added as partners.



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PLI SCHEME FOR WHITE GOODS



- It aims to create a **robust domestic component ecosystem** for the **Air Conditioners and LED Lights industry** and position India as an integral part of the global supply chains.

Objectives: It proposes a **financial incentive** to boost domestic manufacturing and attract large investments in the White Goods manufacturing value chain.

Incentives: The scheme will extend an **incentive of 4-6% on incremental turnover** over base year (2019-20) of goods sold in India and exported to global markets, to eligible companies for a period of 5 years.

Eligibility:

- Applicants can be any company that should be incorporated in India **under the provisions of the Company Act, 2013.**
- Eligibility shall be subject to the **achievement of thresholds of net incremental sales** of Eligible Products for the respective financial year over the base year and cumulative incremental investment in the preceding financial year.
- Any entity availing benefits under any other PLI Scheme of Govt. of India will not be eligible under this scheme for the same products.

Duration: It is to be implemented over FY 2021-22 to FY 2028-29

Nodal Ministry: The scheme was notified by the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)**, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.



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ASC ARJUN



- It is a **humanoid robot introduced by the Indian Railways.**
- The robot will operate **alongside Railway Protection Force (RPF)** personnel to assist in station operations, particularly during periods of heavy passenger movement.
- It is **designed and developed** entirely in Visakhapatnam using **home-grown technology.**

Features of ASC Arjun:

- It is equipped with a **Face Recognition System (FRS)** for intrusion detection, AI-based crowd monitoring and real-time alert generation for RPF control rooms.
 - It can also make automated public announcements in **English, Hindi and Telugu** to assist passengers and promote safety awareness.
 - It also features **semi-autonomous navigation with obstacle-avoidance capability,**
 - It can patrol station platforms round the clock, supporting surveillance and optimising manpower deployment.
 - It is also **fitted with fire and smoke detection systems** to aid timely response during emergencies.
 - It has been **designed for passenger interaction,** offering gestures such as a 'Namaste' for passengers and salutes for RPF personnel, along with an interface to provide information and assistance.
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