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WHY INDIA'S EV BATTERY SCHEME IS FALLING SHORT

- Advanced Chemistry Cells are **next-generation** energy storage technologies that store electricity in chemical form and release it when needed.
- Lithium-ion batteries are the most widely used ACCs today, but India's ACC scheme is **technology-agnostic**, allowing alternatives such as nickel manganese cobalt, lithium iron phosphate, and sodium-ion batteries.

ACC PLI Scheme: Big Ambitions, Limited Outcomes So Far

- Launched in October 2021, the Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) PLI scheme aimed to build a **domestic battery manufacturing ecosystem** and cut India's heavy dependence on Chinese imports.
- However, various studies by experts show that progress has been minimal.
- As of October 2025, only 2.8% of the targeted 50 GWh capacity has been commissioned—1.4 GWh, all from Ola Electric.
- Despite a planned incentive payout of ₹2,900 crore by this stage, no funds have been disbursed, as none of the beneficiaries have met the required milestones.

How the ACC PLI Scheme Was Designed to Work?

- The ACC PLI scheme aimed to build domestic battery manufacturing capacity by incentivising private players to set up production of key components such as cathodes, anodes, and electrolytes.
- Companies were selected through an auction process, required to commit to **at least 5 GWh capacity**, meet minimum net worth criteria, and manufacture batteries domestically.
- In return, firms could claim subsidies of up to ₹2,000 per kWh for batteries sold.
- To ensure localisation, the scheme mandated 25% Domestic Value Addition within two years and 60% by the fifth year, with the broader goal of reducing battery costs and accelerating the adoption of electric vehicles and energy storage systems.

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- In the first auction round of the Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) PLI scheme, three companies were selected: **Ola Electric** (20 GWh), **Reliance New Energy** (15 GWh initially, plus 10 GWh in the second round), and **Rajesh Exports** (5 GWh).

Why the ACC PLI Scheme Has Struggled?

- **Unrealistic Timelines for Gigafactories** - The scheme requires beneficiaries to commission facilities within a two-year gestation period, which experts consider impractical for setting up complex battery gigafactories from scratch in a nascent ecosystem.
- **Challenging Domestic Value Addition (DVA) Norms** - Meeting 25% DVA in two years and 60% in five years has been difficult because India lacks adequate processing capacity for key minerals like lithium, nickel, and cobalt.
- **Selection Criteria Favoured New Entrants** - The evaluation prioritised DVA and subsidy benchmarks over proven manufacturing experience. As a result, established battery makers such as Exide Industries and Amara Raja did not qualify, leaving the programme largely with relatively inexperienced players.
- **Dependence on China for Inputs and Know-How** - India's heavy reliance on China for raw materials, technology, and expertise has slowed progress. Delays in visas for Chinese technical specialists—amid a shortage of domestic skilled labour for cell manufacturing—have become a major bottleneck.
- **Foundational Capability Gaps** - Many beneficiaries are still building basic technical and operational capabilities, further delaying commissioning and preventing the scheme from meeting its ambitious capacity, investment, and employment targets.

Recommended Fixes for Reviving the ACC PLI Scheme

- The report calls for immediate measures such as fast-tracking visas for technical experts and extending project timelines by at least one year to avoid penalising delayed facilities.
 - For the long term, it recommends building domestic capabilities through schemes for critical mineral refining and component manufacturing, along with sustained investment in R&D and skill development to strengthen India's battery ecosystem.
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SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INDIA - EU TRADE AGREEMENT

Why the India–EU FTA Is Called the ‘Mother of All Deals’?

- The India–EU FTA earns this tag due to the sheer scale of the economies and trade involved. It links the world’s second (EU) - and fourth-largest (India) customs blocs/economy, covering a combined market of about **\$24 trillion**.
- While India’s eight recent FTAs together accounted for around 16% of its trade in 2024–25, the EU alone made up nearly 12%.
- Bilateral merchandise trade reached \$136.5 billion, with Indian exports at \$75.9 billion, and services trade touched \$83.1 billion in 2024—underscoring the deal’s outsized significance.

What India Gains from the India–EU Free Trade Agreement?

- **Major Tariff Elimination on Indian Exports** - Under the deal, the EU will immediately remove duties on 70.4% of tariff lines, covering about 90.7% of India’s export value once the FTA comes into force.
- **Phased Tariff Cuts on Sensitive Products** - Another 20.3% of tariff lines—covering 2.9% of exports—will see tariffs eliminated over 3–5 years, including selected marine products, processed foods, and arms and ammunition.
- **Partial Reductions and Quota-Based Access** - Around 6.1% of tariff lines, accounting for 6% of exports, will see reduced (but not zero) tariffs or quota-based concessions. These apply to items such as poultry, preserved vegetables, bakery products, automobiles, steel, shrimp, and prawns.
- **Near-Complete Coverage of Indian Exports** - Taken together, EU tariff concessions apply to over 99% of the total value of India’s exports to the bloc, making it one of the most comprehensive market-access packages India has secured.
- **Improved Access for Services** - Beyond goods, the EU has offered broader and deeper commitments in services across 144 sub-sectors, including IT/ITeS, professional services, education, and other business services.

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Sectors Set to Gain Most from the India–EU FTA

- **Big Wins for Labour-Intensive Manufacturing** - The FTA's potential gains for labour-intensive sectors are about \$35 bn, with \$33.5 bn moving to zero duty on Day 1.
 - Beneficiaries include textiles and apparel, marine products, leather and footwear, chemicals, plastics/rubber, sports goods, toys, and gems and jewellery—sectors that currently face 4–26% EU tariffs.
- **Relief Amid US Tariff Pressures** - These gains are especially significant as many of the same labour-intensive sectors have been hit by high U.S. tariffs on Indian imports, making preferential access to the EU market a timely offset.
- **Agriculture and Processed Foods Get Preferential Access** - The government said tea, coffee, spices, grapes, gherkins and cucumbers, dried onion, fresh fruits and vegetables, and processed food products will receive preferential access, improving their competitiveness in the EU.
- **Opportunities for Traditional Medicine (AYUSH)** - The FTA is also expected to benefit AYUSH services. In EU countries without specific regulations, AYUSH practitioners can offer services using qualifications earned in India, expanding professional opportunities abroad.

Which Sectors Are Excluded from the India–EU FTA?

- India kept several sensitive agricultural sectors out of the deal, including beef, poultry, dairy, fish and seafood, cereals (especially rice and wheat), fruits and vegetables, nuts, edible oils, tea, coffee, spices, and tobacco.
 - **EU's Exclusions and Limited Quotas**
 - The EU, for its part, excluded beef, sugar, rice, chicken meat, milk powder, honey, bananas, soft wheat, garlic, and ethanol.
 - It offered quota-based access (not full liberalisation) for sheep and goat meat, sweetcorn, grapes, cucumbers, dried onions, and rum made from molasses and starches.
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UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



The Minister of State for Women and Child development to lead the Indian delegation at the 64th Session of the United Nations Commission for Social Development (CSocD).

- It is a functional **commission of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)**.
- It was formerly known as the **Social Commission**.
- It focuses on advancing **international cooperation on social development issues**, including social inclusion, equity and welfare-oriented policies.
- **Purpose:**
 - Its primary purpose is to **advance social development and formulate policies** and recommendations to address global social issues.
 - It focuses on **topics such as poverty eradication**, social inclusion, and the promotion of equitable and sustainable development.
 - Since the 1995 World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, the CSocD has been the key UN body in charge of the follow-up and implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action.

Membership of United Nations Commission for Social Development:

- Originally 18, membership has been increased several times, most recently in 1996, and now stands at 46.
- Members are elected by ECOSOC based on equitable geographical distribution for four-year terms.

Meetings: The CSocD meets every year at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, typically in February.



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NEW RAMSAR SITES



Recently, the Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change has announced the addition of two new wetlands to India's Ramsar network, ahead of World Wetlands Day.

Patna Bird Sanctuary:

- **Location:** It is located in Uttar Pradesh.
- It consists of **freshwater marshes, woodlands and grasslands**, and is surrounded by agricultural landscapes.
- Together, these different landscapes create a wide range of habitats and support a high level of biodiversity.
- It has been designated an **Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA)** by Birdlife International.

About Chhari-Dhand Wetland:

- **Location:** It is located in Kutch, Gujarat.
 - It is a **seasonal saline wetland** situated between the famous **Banni grasslands** and **salt flats of Kutch**.
 - It is an **important wintering site for waterfowl**.
 - **Fauna:** It supports species such as critically endangered **sociable lapwing**, the vulnerable common **pochard**, and, notably, **common cranes** (*Grus grus*) annually.
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GRAIN ATM



Recently, the Bihar state government approved the installation of the first set of three grain ATM machines in Patna as a pilot project.

- A grain ATM or Annapurti (meaning “provider of grain”) is an **automated machine that dispenses food grains (wheat and/or rice)**.

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- The **World Food Programme (WFP)** developed the **technology** behind the machine and has worked in collaboration with the Food Corporation of India and various state governments.
 - **Key Features of Grain ATM:**
 - The machines **can work 24×7** like ATMs, and can be **powered through solar energy**.
 - They also require **internet connectivity** to access the PDS database and the individual profile of a Below Poverty Line (BPL) cardholder.
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PM-POSHAN SCHEME



- It was formerly known as the **Mid-Day Meal Scheme**, is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme**.
- It is **implemented by the Ministry of Education**.
- The Scheme is implemented across the country covering all the eligible children without any discrimination of gender and social class.
- It aims to provide one hot cooked meal per school day to children studying in **Balvatikas** (pre-primary), and **Classes 1 to 8** across government and government-aided schools.

Objectives:

- **Enhancing nutritional status** of school-going children
 - **Improving enrollment**, retention, and attendance in schools, especially among disadvantaged children
 - **Funding Pattern under POSHAN Abhiyan:**
 - 60:40 between Centre and States/UTs with legislature
 - 90:10 for the Northeastern and Himalayan States
 - 100% central funding for UTs without legislature
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'CHAKRA' – CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE (COE)

C	Cell Chemistry
H	Hydrogen (Green)
A	Advanced Computing (Data Centers)
K	[R] Charismatic Living (Smart Infrastructure)
R	Renewable Energy & Vehicles (E-mobility)
A	Advanced Electronics / Semiconductors

• It was launched by the **State Bank of India (SBI)** aimed at **financing sunrise sectors** critical to India's economic transformation.

- The Centre will function as a **knowledge-driven platform** to facilitate funding for **next-generation, technology-led and sustainability-focused industries**.
- CHAKRA will focus on **eight sunrise sectors**:
 - **Renewables**
 - **Data Centres**
 - **E-Mobility & Charging Infra**
 - **Advanced Cell Chemistry / Battery**
 - **Semiconductors**
 - **Green Hydrogen and Ammonia**
 - **Decarbonization**
 - **Smart Infrastructure**.
- The **CoE will work towards enabling this investment**, enhancing India's integration into the global value chain, and accelerating progress toward the country's sustainability and Net Zero goals.
- Additionally, the CoE will **drive technology & AI innovation** and **play an advisory role**, supporting not only the SBI's Project Finance & Structuring team but also the broader financial ecosystem in India.
- It will **engage actively with external stakeholders - with policymakers and regulatory bodies**, to shape a robust manufacturing ecosystem that supports investment, innovation, and sustainability.
- The Centre will **facilitate structured engagement with development finance institutions, multilateral agencies, banks, NBFCs, industry bodies, corporates, start-ups, academia, and policy think tanks**.



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KEY FACTS ABOUT INDIAN COAST GUARD (ICG)



- It is a **maritime armed force** operating under the **Ministry of Defence**, Government of India.
- It is a **multi-mission organization**, conducting round-the-year real-life operations at sea.
- It was envisioned to address emerging maritime challenges and safeguard India's expanding marine interests.
- It was **formally established** by the **Coast Guard Act, 1978** as an **independent Armed force** of India.
- The **Headquarters** of the ICG is located in **New Delhi**, and is under the command of the **Director General Indian Coast Guard**.

Moto: "VAYAM RAKSHAMAH" - WE PROTECT

Mission:

- To **protect our ocean and offshore wealth**, including **oil, fish, and minerals**.
 - To **assist mariners in distress** and **safeguard life and property** at sea.
 - To **enforce maritime laws** with respect to the sea, **poaching, smuggling, and narcotics**.
 - To **preserve the marine environment** and ecology and protect rare species.
 - To **collect scientific data** and **back up the Navy during war**.
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