

Current Affairs - 11 October 2026

INDIA'S CRITICAL MINERAL STOCKPILING POLICY - KEY DEVELOPMENTS AND CHALLENGES

- Critical minerals are raw materials that are essential for economic development, technological advancement and national security, but whose supply may be vulnerable to geopolitical tensions, concentration of production or supply chain disruptions.
- Important critical minerals include:
 - **Lithium and cobalt:** Used in rechargeable batteries and electric vehicles.
 - **Nickel:** Important for battery manufacturing and industrial applications.
 - **Copper:** Essential for electricity networks, power infrastructure and renewable energy systems.
 - **Rare earth elements:** Used in wind turbines, advanced electronics and other strategic technologies.
- These minerals are increasingly important for the clean energy transition, electric mobility and the expansion of modern industrial infrastructure.
- **Challenges in overseas acquisitions**
 - India has attempted to secure mineral assets abroad through **Khanij Bidesh India Ltd (KABIL)**. However, proposed investments in mineral extraction projects in countries such as Australia, Vietnam, Mali and Chile have faced delays or setbacks.
 - Progress has been reported in Argentina, where KABIL has acquired five lithium brine blocks in Catamarca province.

About National Critical Minerals Mission (NCMM)

- The NCMM is a government initiative aimed at strengthening India's critical mineral supply chains and improving the availability of minerals required for domestic industries.
- The mission proposes the development of a **National Critical Mineral Stockpile Programme**.

Boosting Domestic Critical Mineral Processing

Current Affairs - 11 October 2026

- Stockpiling can provide short-term protection, but long-term supply security also requires

State	Proposed area of focus
Gujarat	Rare earth processing
Andhra Pradesh	Rare earth processing
Odisha	Nickel processing
Maharashtra	Lithium processing

domestic processing capabilities and technological self-reliance.

- The government has identified four states for promoting critical mineral processing plants.
- The government intends to develop each processing park as a complete ecosystem for a particular mineral.
- Indigenous technology development**
 - Access to processing technology remains a major challenge because countries with established capabilities may be reluctant to share their technological expertise.
 - The Ministry of Mines has therefore emphasised developing indigenous processing technologies or acquiring them wherever available. Nine Centres of Excellence have been identified for this purpose, with some reportedly making substantial progress.

Challenges and the Way Forward

- India's critical mineral strategy must address several interconnected challenges.
 - Limited processing capacity:** Establishing processing facilities requires specialised technology, infrastructure and skilled personnel.
 - Overseas project delays:** Diversifying mineral supplies through foreign acquisitions requires sustained investment and effective project execution.
 - Implementation of stockpiles:** The government must determine appropriate reserve levels, storage arrangements, replenishment mechanisms and procedures for releasing minerals during emergencies.
 - Private-sector participation:** Clear institutional responsibilities and commercially viable arrangements will be necessary to sustain collaboration between public and private entities.
 - Supply diversification:** India should pursue multiple international supply sources while developing domestic exploration, extraction and processing capabilities.

Current Affairs - 11 October 2026

MAKING CEMENT GREENER - DECARBONISING INDIA'S CONSTRUCTION SECTOR

- India aims to become a developed country by 2047 and achieve **net-zero** emissions by 2070.
- Decarbonising the construction sector is essential to meeting both objectives, as **construction** depends heavily on **energy-intensive** materials such as cement and steel.
- The construction sector accounts for an estimated **35–40%** of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, considering the broader built environment and its supply chains.
- **Cement** alone contributes approximately 7–11% of global CO₂ emissions, making it one of the hardest sectors to decarbonise.

Understanding Cement's Environmental Footprint:

- **Energy-intensive manufacturing:**
 - **Limestone** is extracted through mining, often involving the removal of vegetation and topsoil. It is then mixed with clay and heated in kilns to approximately 1,450°C.
- **Process emissions:**
 - During **calcination**, limestone (calcium carbonate) decomposes into lime (calcium oxide) and carbon dioxide. This chemical reaction releases CO₂ independently of the fuel used.
 - The resulting material is processed into clinker, which is ground with gypsum and, depending on the cement type, other supplementary materials.
- **Wider environmental impacts:**
 - **Land degradation:** Limestone mining can destroy vegetation, disturb habitats and alter landscapes.
 - **Air pollution:** Manufacturing releases nitrogen oxides, sulphur dioxide and particulate matter, affecting air quality and human health.

Current Affairs - 11 October 2026

- **Transportation emissions:** Moving raw materials and finished cement over long distances adds to the carbon footprint.
- **Loss of carbon sinks:** Deforestation and vegetation loss reduce natural carbon sequestration.
- **Resource depletion:** Intensive extraction places pressure on mineral resources and local ecosystems.

Existing and Proposed Solutions:

- **Cleaner fuels and energy:**
 - Electrification, renewable energy and alternative fuels can reduce dependence on fossil fuels in cement manufacturing.
- **Reducing clinker content:**
 - India's clinker-to-cement ratio is around 67.5%, already below the global average of 77%, but further reductions remain possible.
 - **Green cement adoption** can be encouraged through government procurement, revised construction specifications, performance-based standards and awareness among developers.
- **Sustainable building design:**
 - Reducing cement demand through better architectural planning can complement cleaner manufacturing.
 - **Climate-responsive buildings** that minimise heat gain and heat storage can reduce cooling requirements and operational energy consumption.

Way Forward:

- **Strengthen circular economy practices:** Improve waste segregation and utilise suitable industrial by-products, including fly ash and slag (Example, **PPC** and **PSC**).
- **Improve regulatory and market incentives:** Encourage low-carbon building codes, green public infrastructure and transparent disclosure of embodied carbon.
- **Balance sustainability with affordability:** Ensuring that low-carbon materials remain accessible and using cement more efficiently.

Current Affairs - 11 October 2026

NANDA DEVI BIOSPHERE RESERVE



- **Location:** It is one of India's most important protected mountain ecosystems located in the Western Himalayas of Uttarakhand.
- It includes the **Nanda Devi National Park** and the **Valley of Flowers National Park**, both of which are designated as UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

The reserve is recognised under UNESCO's **Man and the Biosphere (MAB)** Programme.

Geographical Features:

- It consists of rugged mountain ranges, deep gorges, glaciers and snow-covered peaks.
- **Glaciers:** Numerous glaciers, including the **Uttari Rishi, Dakshini Rishi, Trisul and Ramani**

Vegetation: Alpine meadows (Bugyals), temperate forests and **sub-alpine vegetation** dominate the landscape.

Rivers: The **Rishi Ganga River** originates from the glaciers within the Nanda Devi Sanctuary. It joins the **Dhauliganga River**, which is a tributary of the **Alaknanda River**.

Flora: Temperate forests contain oak, deodar, blue pine, fir, spruce and rhododendron.

Fauna: Snow Leopard, Himalayan Musk Deer, Himalayan Tahr, Bharal (Blue Sheep), Asiatic Black Bear and Common Leopard.

Current Affairs - 11 October 2026

PRIME MINISTER DHAN-DHAANYA KRISHI YOJANA



- It was launched in **2025** to support farmers.

The **objective of the scheme** is to:

- Enhance agricultural productivity
- **Increase adoption of crop diversification** and sustainable agricultural practices
- **Augment post-harvest storage** at the panchayat and block levels
- Improve irrigation facilities
- Facilitate availability of **long-term and short-term credit**.
- It **bridges developmental gaps** by integrating **schemes from different departments**, ensuring convergence in efforts and efficient resource utilisation.
- It focuses on transforming agriculture and allied **activities across 100 Aspirational Agricultural Districts**.
- These districts were identified using three key indicators: **low productivity, low cropping intensity, and less agricultural credit disbursement**.
- The selection also considered the **share of net cropped area** and operational holdings in each State and Union Territory. **Each State** has at least one selected district.

Administrative Structure for Implementation

- The PMDDKY scheme follows a three-tier implementation structure-
 - **District Level:** The **District Dhan Dhaanya Krishi Yojana Samiti**, headed by the District Collector/DM, **prepares and implements** the District Action Plan.
 - **State Level:** The State Dhan Dhaanya Krishi Yojana Samiti, headed by the **Chief Secretary** of the State, **reviews and monitors** the District Plans.

Current Affairs - 11 October 2026

- **National Level:** Two committees oversee the scheme. The **National Executive Committee** is headed by the **Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare**. The **National Monitoring Committee** is headed by the **Secretary, DA&FW**.

BATHUKAMMA FESTIVAL



Telangana's special festival of flowers Bathukamma, began with Engilipula Bathukamma.

- It is a floral festival celebrated by the women folk of Telangana.

History Behind Bathukamma:

- The term "Bathukamma" translates to "Mother Goddess Come Alive", reflecting the divine feminine energy and protection.
- Folklore connects the festival to legends of Goddess Gauri and her miraculous survival as well as King Dhramangada and Queen Satyavati of the Chola dynasty.
- Historically, the Kakatiya dynasty emphasized Bathukamma as a celebration of feminine strength and agricultural prosperity.
- Every year this festival is celebrated usually in September–October of the Gregorian calendar.
- **Cultural Traditions:** It is celebrated for nine days during Durga Navratri and the 9-day festivities will culminate on "Saddula Bathukamma" or "Pedda Bathukamma" festival.
- Bathukamma is followed by Boddemma, which is a 7-day festival.
- **State Festival:** It has been declared as the Telangana State Festival.

Current Affairs - 11 October 2026

KHADI AND VILLAGE INDUSTRIES COMMISSION

KHADI AND VILLAGE INDUSTRIES
COMMISSION



- It is a **statutory body** established under the **Khadi and Village Industries Commission Act of 1956**.
- **Nodal Ministry:** It is an apex organization under the **Ministry of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises**.
- It is charged with the **planning, promotion, organisation and implementation** of programmes for the development of Khadi and other village industries in rural areas.
- **Organisation Structure:** At the state level, Khadi & Village Industries Boards were set up to effectively implement the schemes of KVIC in their respective states.

Objectives of the KVIC are:

- **Social Objective:** To provide employment in rural areas
- **Economic Objective:** To produce a saleable product
- **Wider Objective:** To create self-reliance among the economically weaker section

Functions of the KVIC

- **Strategic Reserve:** To build a **strategic reserve** of raw materials and implements for supply to producers.
- **Processing:** To create **common service facilities** for processing raw materials as semi-finished goods and provisions for facilities for marketing KVI products.
- **Marketing:** To enhance the **sale and marketing of Khadi and** other products of village industries or handicrafts.
- **Research:** To be responsible for **encouraging and promoting research** in the production techniques.
- **Standards:** To assure the **genuineness of the products** and to set standards for the quality of products from Khadi and Village Industries.

Current Affairs - 11 October 2026

PROJECT SEABIRD



Recently, the Chief of the Defence Staff inaugurated critical trunk utility and amenity infrastructure for Indian Navy as part of Project Seabird Phase IIA at the naval base in Karnataka's Karwar.

- It is the **largest naval infrastructure project** for India.

Location: It involves creation of a **naval base at Karwar, Karnataka, on the west coast of India.**

Phases of Project Seabird:

- **Phase 1:** Its first phase, which included the construction of a **deep-sea harbour, breakwaters** dredging, a township, a naval hospital, a dockyard uplift centre and a ship lift, was commissioned in 2005.
 - **Phase 2:** The development of phase 2 of **INS Kadamba commenced in 2011.**
 - This phase is further **divided into 2A and 2B.** It was planned to expand the facilities to dock additional warships and a new Naval Air Station, among other projects.
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