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# Ahmedabad-Dholera Semi High-Speed Rail: India's First 200 kmph Corridor Approved

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**ECONOMY****SCIENCE & TECH**

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# Ahmedabad-Dholera Semi High-Speed Rail: India's First 200 kmph Corridor Approved

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## WHY IN NEWS

The **Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA)**, chaired by **Prime Minister Narendra Modi**, on **May 13, 2026** approved India's **first semi high-speed railway project** – a **134-km double-line electrified corridor** from **Ahmedabad (Sarkhej)** to **Dholera Special Investment Region (DSIR)** – at a total project cost of **Rs 20,667 crore**. The line will operate at **200 kmph**, reducing travel time between Sarkhej and Dholera to approximately **34 minutes**. The implementing agency is the **National High-Speed Rail Corporation (NHSRCL)**.

## PROJECT PROFILE

| PARAMETER           | DETAIL   |
|---------------------|--|
| Route               | Ahmedabad (Sarkhej) – Dholera SIR                        |
| Length              | <b>134 km</b> (double line)                              |
| Design speed        | <b>220 kmph</b>  |
| Operational speed   | <b>200 kmph</b>  |
| Travel time         | ~ <b>34 minutes</b> (Sarkhej to Dholera)                 |
| Total cost          | <b>Rs 20,667 crore</b>                                   |
| Target completion   | <b>2030-31</b>   |
| Implementing agency | <b>NHSRCL</b> (National High-Speed Rail Corporation Ltd) |
| Technology          | Indigenously designed; Make in India                     |

## WHAT IS "SEMI HIGH-SPEED"?

India classifies railway speed categories as:

| CATEGORY                  | SPEED RANGE    | EXAMPLE                                     |
|---------------------------|----------------|---|
| Conventional              | Up to 130 kmph | Most express trains                         |
| Semi high-speed           | 160-220 kmph   | <b>This project; Vande Bharat Express</b>   |
| High-speed (bullet train) | 300+ kmph      | Mumbai-Ahmedabad MAHSR (under construction) |

The **Vande Bharat Express** currently operates at up to 160 kmph. The Ahmedabad-Dholera line will be India's first purpose-built infrastructure for **200 kmph operations** – requiring upgraded track, ballastless track design, signalling, and OHE (overhead electrification).

## DHOLERA SIR – STRATEGIC CONTEXT

**Dholera Special Investment Region (DSIR)** is:

- India's **first and largest Greenfield Smart City** under the **Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC)**
- Located approximately **100 km south of Ahmedabad** in Ahmedabad district, Gujarat
- Notified under the **Gujarat Special Investment Region (SIR) Act, 2009**
- Total planned area: **920 sq km** (twice the area of Mumbai's island city)
- **Dholera International Airport** under construction (Greenfield; to be operational by 2028)
- **Tata Electronics** has announced a semiconductor fab at Dholera under the India Semiconductor Mission
- Lothal – the ancient Harappan port city – lies within the Dholera SIR boundary

## Connectivity at Dholera

The rail link connects:

- 1 **Sarkhej (Ahmedabad)** – connection to national rail and metro network
- 2 **Dholera SIR** – greenfield city and industrial zone
- 3 **Dholera International Airport** (greenfield)
- 4 **Lothal National Maritime Heritage Complex** (under development by MoPSW)

## NHSRCL – NATIONAL HIGH-SPEED RAIL CORPORATION

| FEATURE                      | DETAIL   |
|------------------------------|--|
| Established                  | 2016   |
| Ownership                    | <b>GoI (50%) + Gujarat (25%) + Maharashtra (25%)</b>                         |
| Primary mandate              | Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail (MAHSR / Bullet Train)                      |
| Extended mandate             | All high-speed and semi high-speed corridor projects                         |
| Technology partner for MAHSR | <b>JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency)</b> + Shinkansen technology |

## DMIC – DELHI-MUMBAI INDUSTRIAL CORRIDOR

The **Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC)** is a **1,500-km industrial corridor** from **Delhi to Mumbai** across **8 states** (Haryana, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, UP, Delhi NCR, Uttarakhand – partially). It has **24 proposed industrial nodes** including:

- **Dholera SIR (Gujarat)** – flagship greenfield node
- **AURIC (Aurangabad Industrial City, Maharashtra)** – automotive hub
- **Shendra-Bidkin (Aurangabad)**
- **Krishnapatnam (AP)**
- **Greater Noida (UP)**

Funding: **India-Japan joint project**; Government of Japan (via JICA) committed USD 4.5 billion in ODA loans for DMIC infrastructure.

## LOTHAL – NATIONAL MARITIME HERITAGE COMPLEX

The **Lothal National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC)** being developed at Lothal (Gujarat) by the **Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW)**:

- Lothal was a key **Harappan (Indus Valley Civilisation) port city** – world’s earliest known dock (~2400 BCE)
- On the **UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List**
- NMHC will house a museum, cultural zone, and maritime heritage exhibits
- The rail link from Dholera SIR will also serve the Lothal NMHC – boosting tourism

## UPSC RELEVANCE

### GS Paper 3 – Infrastructure, Economy

- High-speed and semi high-speed rail; NHRCL; MAHSR project
- DMIC; Dholera SIR; smart cities
- India Semiconductor Mission and Dholera connection

### GS Paper 1 – History, Culture

- Lothal; Harappan civilisation; National Maritime Heritage Complex

### Mains Angles

- 1 India's first semi high-speed rail project connects Ahmedabad to Dholera SIR. Discuss how transport infrastructure acts as a catalyst for industrial development using this corridor as a case study.
- 2 The Dholera Special Investment Region has been described as India's most ambitious greenfield industrial project. Evaluate its progress and the challenges in realising its potential.
- 3 Examine the role of the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor in rebalancing India's industrial geography.

*India's first Greenfield Smart City under DMIC; notified under **Gujarat SIR Act, 2009**; 920 sq km; ~100 km south of Ahmedabad.*

*National High-Speed Rail Corporation Limited; established **2016**; 50% GoI + 25% Gujarat + 25% Maharashtra; implementing both MAHSR (Mumbai-Ahmedabad Bullet Train) and Ahmedabad-Dholera semi high-speed project.*

*Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail; 508.17 km; designed speed 350 kmph; Japan Shinkansen E5 technology; partly funded by JICA ODA loan of ~JPY 1.5 trillion (~USD 15 billion).*

*Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor; 1,500 km; 8 states; 24 nodes; India-Japan joint initiative; JICA ODA funding; DMIC Development Corporation Ltd (DMICDC) is the project management entity.*

*Gujarat Special Investment Region Act; enables designation and governance of large greenfield industrial zones with special regulations.*

*Harappan port city (~2400 BCE) in Saragwala village, Dholera taluka, Ahmedabad district; world's oldest known artificial dock; excavated 1955-60 by **S.R. Rao (ASI)**.*

*Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs; chaired by PM; approves projects above a threshold cost; also includes Finance Minister, Commerce Minister, and relevant line ministers.*

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