



# Quarterly Newsletter



## Envisioning a National Grid Flexibility Programme for India



March 2026



## Catalysing Energy Storage in India

From Procurement to Reliable Power



Report / March 2026

AIDA is India's first unified platform for DISCOMs, fostering collaboration, innovation, and best practices to advance energy distribution and service delivery.

#### General Body (GB)

It is the apex body of the Society which meets at least once every year and approve work plans, budgets and other matters related to the Society's functioning. As of today, 55 discom bodies are part of GB.

#### Executive Committee (EC)

- The members of EC are appointed by the GB either through election or nomination. The EC meets at least once in a quarter to review the Society's activities and is responsible for overall governance and strategic direction of the society.

#### 1<sup>st</sup> AIDA EDICON 2026

AIDA is pleased to inform that it held its Annual Conference on January 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> at scope complex, featuring seven thematic sessions, the screening of its activity film, launch of 'India Discoms 2025', the presentation of the AIDA Annual Awards, and key sectoral deliberations with policymakers, regulators, distribution companies, and industry stakeholders.

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> AIDA General Body Meeting

AIDA held its 2nd General Body Meeting on 11 March 2026 at The Lalit Hotel, New Delhi, to review the FY 2025–26 progress and finalize the FY 2026–27 Action Plan and budget. Key discussions included the approval on the reconstitution of the Executive Council and the Draft National Electricity Policy (NEP), 2026, with opening and closing remarks by the General Secretary.

#### Highlights

**MoUs Signed by AIDA and Memberships:** AIDA is pleased to announce it has more than doubled its strategic network, signing a total of ten MoUs in its first year. With partners including PFI, AEEE, NASEO, NPTI, RMI, RAP, IIM Lucknow, CSEP, GEAPP and ISGF alongside with membership of UNEZA and EPRI.

**Legal Briefs:** AIDA continues to support member DISCOMs by providing legal briefs on key issues. This quarter, five briefs were issued, bringing the total to 22 to date.

**Best Practices sharing Webinars:** AIDA drives collaboration and knowledge sharing among its DISCOM members by conducting national-level webinars that focus on crucial areas being pursued by Various Discom members.

**Capacity Building:** AIDA is undertaking multiple capacity-building initiatives, including leadership, strategic management, and academic collaborations, to strengthen DISCOM capabilities and drive sectoral improvement.

**Policy Advocacy and Regulatory Initiatives:** The Association regularly undertakes policy and regulatory initiatives related to the power distribution sector and engages with concerned authorities such as CEA, MoP, CERC, and others on key DISCOM-related issues.

**AIDA Committee Meetings:** AIDA has formed seven expert committees to advance its core objectives, focusing on policy advocacy, collaboration, standardization, and capacity building in DISCOM operations. These committees provide informed recommendations on proposals from the MoP, CERC, CEA, and other key stakeholders.

#### National Workshops

1) The All India DISCOMs Association (AIDA), in collaboration with CSIS and NASEO, organized a workshop on "AI-Ready DISCOMs" on 11 February 2026 in New Delhi. In which it held four insightful technical sessions.

2) AIDA participated in India Smart Utility Week (ISUW) on March 10-14, 2026, conducted by ISGF in New Delhi as a supporting partner. It partnered in technical sessions, and also conducted the 2nd General Body (GB) Meeting on 11 March 2026.

3) AIDA participated in the 'Bharat Electricity Summit' held on 19-22 march, 2026 as an associate partner, in which it was part of two technical sessions and a special program where it launched two reports prepared in collaboration with RMI.

## Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs)

AIDA is pleased to announce it has more than doubled its strategic network, signing a total of ten MoUs in its first year. With partners including PFI, AEEE, NASEO, NPTI, RMI, RAP, IIM Lucknow, CSEP, GEAPP and ISGF alongside with membership of UNEZA and EPRI.

### Indian Institute of Management Lucknow (IIM Lucknow/ IIML)

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), signed on 15 January 2026, between AIDA and Indian Institute of Management Lucknow (IIM Lucknow/ IIML) envisages a collaborative partnership to advance joint research and project-based engagement in areas of mutual interest. The collaboration will focus primarily on the broader operational dimensions of DISCOMs, particularly across technical and financial domains.

Envisaged activities of cooperation between AIDA and IIML will include:

1. Participation of selected employees of member entities of AIDA in a customized two years blended MBA program at IIM Lucknow;
2. Doctoral program for selected employees of member entities of AIDA;
3. Research and consultancy assignments;
4. Short-term, medium-term, and long-term customized Management Development program (MDPs) for senior management officials of member entities of AIDA;
5. Any other collaborative initiatives of mutual interest aimed at fostering innovation and excellence in academic and industry practices.



### **Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP)**

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), signed on 29 January 2026, between AIDA and Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP) envisages a collaborative partnership to advance joint research and project-based engagement in areas of mutual interest. The collaboration will focus primarily on the broader operational dimensions of DISCOMs, particularly across technical and financial domains.

The initial areas of cooperation will center on DISCOM transformation both technical and financial—including issues related to financial sustainability, energy transition, and preparedness for the Future Grid.

Possible activities of cooperation between AIDA and CSEP will include:

1. Exchange of Information.
2. Conduct of research projects.
3. Organizing workshops, seminars, closed-door meetings, conferences, and other meetings on mutually agreed topics.
4. Other forms of cooperation in related fields as may mutually be agreed upon.

### **Global Energy Alliance for People and Planet (GEAPP India)**

All India Discoms Association (AIDA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Global Energy Alliance for People and Planet (GEAPP India), USA, on 17 February 2026 to collaborate on research, knowledge exchange, and joint initiatives focused on strengthening power grids to enable high penetration of renewable energy (solar and wind), advancing distributed energy solutions, and supporting leadership in the global energy transition.

The key areas of collaboration include:

1. Participation as a Steering Committee Member in the India Grids of the Future Accelerator (IGFA).
2. Development of a roadmap for approximately 15 utilities to align with the “Grids of the Future” initiative during the term of the MoU.
3. Designing and outlining capacity-building and change management programs for identified utilities.

Under this MoU, both organizations will jointly explore opportunities, undertake analytical studies, and contribute to advancing the objectives of the “Grids of the Future” initiative through coordinated action under IGFA.



### **India Smart Grid Forum (ISGF)**

An MoU signed on 11th March 2026 between All India DISCOMs Association (AIDA) and India Smart Grid Forum (ISGF) establishes collaboration on power system modernization, clean energy transition, and demand-side innovations. The partnership includes joint projects, capacity building, knowledge sharing, and events, while also exploring funding opportunities and public-private collaborations. Specific activities will be undertaken based on mutually agreed terms and resource availability and agreed to cooperate in areas of mutual interest related to power systems modernization, clean energy transition, and sustainability by focusing on demand side interventions such as energy efficiency, renewables energy integration, demand flexibility, vehicle-grid integration, energy storage applications of artificial intelligence and other digital technologies.

The areas of cooperation will be:

- a. To conduct collaborative projects involving pilot demonstrations, regulatory sand boxes, and provide strategic support to facilitate engagement with DISCOMs and Electricity Regulatory Commissions, as applicable.
- b. To provide technical inputs, expert review, constructive feedback, and facilitate access to technology-related information, policy support, and capacity building.
- c. Jointly organize seminars, conferences, training programs, webinars and workshops on mutually relevant topics and encourage participation in joint and separate events/activities

wherever possible, and consider nominating speakers with domain expertise to each other's events to facilitate the cross-flow of knowledge.

- d. To identify funding and grant opportunities, establish collaborative networks, and enable and foster public-private collaborations to develop innovative concepts and project proposals.
- e. Jointly write articles, policy briefs, and publish briefs for limited or wider circulation.



## Legal Briefs

- 1. Implementation of Supreme Court Judgment on Liquidation of Regulatory Assets:** The Supreme Court of India, in *BSES v. Union of India* and connected matters (judgment dated 06.08.2025), laid down key principles for tariff determination and management of regulatory assets under the Electricity Act, 2003. The Court held that tariffs must be cost-reflective, regulatory assets should remain within reasonable limits (guided by the 3% ARR principle under the Electricity (Amendment) Rules, 2024), and existing regulatory assets must be liquidated within seven years. It also directed the Appellate Tribunal for Electricity (APTEL) to monitor implementation. Accordingly, APTEL initiated suo motu proceedings and directed state electricity regulatory commissions to submit affidavits detailing regulatory assets, revenue gaps, and roadmaps for liquidation. The process is now underway, with liquidation expected to occur through annual instalments from 01.04.2024 to 31.03.2031, along with payment of carrying cost to Discoms.
- 2. Interim Directions under Section 11(2) of the Electricity Act, key legal position from APTEL judgment:** The judgment of the Appellate Tribunal for Electricity (APTEL) in *GUVNL v. CERC* clarified that under Section 94(2) of the Electricity Act, 2003, the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC) can grant interim relief in proceedings under Section 11(2), but only in exceptional circumstances and after satisfying the legal tests of prima facie case, balance of convenience, and irreparable injury. The case arose when Tata Power Company Limited sought interim compensation for costs incurred while complying with government directions to operate imported coal-based plants. APTEL held that these parameters were not adequately examined by CERC and remanded the matter for limited reconsideration, emphasizing that generating companies must clearly justify interim relief and that Discoms can strongly oppose such claims on these legal grounds.
- 3. Generators cannot seek relaxation of prescribed plant availability factor on account of change in law and force majeure without justifiable reasons: APTEL judgment in appeal no. 399 of 2019.** The Appellate Tribunal for Electricity in its judgment dated 13.01.2026 in *NTPC Ltd. v. CERC & Ors.* (Appeal No. 399 of 2019) addressed the issue of whether coal shortages arising from Government directions to minimize imports could justify relaxation of the prescribed Plant Availability Factor (PAF). While NTPC Limited argued that such directions constituted “change in law” or “force majeure,” the Tribunal upheld the findings of Central Electricity Regulatory Commission that these were merely administrative advisories without statutory force and that the responsibility of fuel procurement lies with the generator. However, relying on its earlier Vallur judgment, APTEL held that CERC erred in not continuing the previously granted relaxation and accordingly directed reduction of NAPAF from 85% to 83% for the relevant period, thereby granting limited relief while reaffirming that generators cannot claim deemed availability or shift fuel-related risks to beneficiaries without sufficient justification.

- 4. Discoms cannot seek interim reliefs in a substantive petition filed by the generator and cannot compel the generator to supply power on account of reduction in project capacity as per the PPA CERC order in I.A. No. 3 of 2023 in petition No. 192/Mp/2021, SBSR Power Vs. SECI:** The CERC Order dated 05.06.2023 in SBSR Power v. SECI addresses whether a DISCOM can compel a generator to supply power from capacity commissioned after contractual reduction under a PPA. The Commission held that once the project capacity is reduced due to delay in commissioning (as per the PPA terms), the generator has no obligation to supply power from the reduced portion. It emphasized that regulatory bodies cannot override explicit contractual provisions, relying on the Supreme Court's Sasan Power judgment. CERC also ruled that DISCOMs cannot seek interim reliefs in a petition filed by the generator, nor enforce supply through such proceedings. Any rights must be pursued through an independent petition. Additionally, once capacity is reduced and third-party sale is permitted, the generator is free to sell power in the open market. DISCOMs were advised to act as proactive beneficiaries by closely monitoring the commissioning progress and by independently initiating proceedings to assert their rights.
- 5. Section 65 of the Electricity Act, 2003: why advance payment of subsidy is a statutory mandate, not a fiscal discretion:** Section 65 of the Electricity Act, 2003 mandates that State Governments must pay subsidies in advance to DISCOMs before implementing concessional tariffs. If not paid, the subsidy becomes inoperative and the regular tariff applies. It establishes that subsidy is a statutory obligation, not discretionary, and protects DISCOMs from financial strain. The 2023 SOP further prescribes procedures for timely payment, accounting, and penalties for delays, though practical challenges like delayed payments still persist.



## Policy Advocacy and Regulatory Engagements

### Ministry of Power

AIDA, representing distribution utilities, has undertaken policy advocacy to address regulatory uncertainty arising from the benchmark Energy Charge Rate (ECR) framework under Section 11 directions dated 05.05.2022. It highlighted that DISCOMs relied on the committee-determined benchmark rates for power procurement, billing, and financial planning, and any retrospective changes could impose unforeseen financial liabilities and disrupt merit order positions.

AIDA has therefore urged the Ministry of Power to issue a clarification on the applicability and finality of the benchmark ECR during the period of operation of the Section 11 directions. This intervention aims to ensure regulatory certainty, reduce litigation, and safeguard both DISCOM financial stability and consumer interests.

### Forum of Regulators and Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC)

AIDA has highlighted a key regulatory concern regarding the design and implementation of Fuel and Power Purchase Price Adjustment (FPPA/FPPAS) mechanisms across States, particularly the treatment of negative FPPA/FPPAS in cases where Distribution Licensees are carrying substantial regulatory assets and accumulated revenue gaps. The inconsistencies in the regulatory approach adopted by certain State Commissions are creating confusion and delay in liquidation of regulatory assets. It has pointed out that such practices, as seen in certain State regulations, create internal inconsistencies and adversely impact the financial health of DISCOMs by delaying recovery of past costs and increasing carrying burdens.

Through its policy advocacy, AIDA has urged the Forum of Regulators (FoR) to develop harmonized model guidelines on FPPA/FPPAS treatment in the context of regulatory assets and revenue gaps to ensure that negative FPPA is first adjusted against accumulated regulatory assets before being refunded to consumers. This approach aims to balance consumer interest with DISCOM financial sustainability, promote regulatory consistency, and support timely recovery of power procurement costs in line with the Ministry of Power's framework.

## Webinars

### **Webinar on learnings from International Study Tour to the IRENA Assembly and Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week**

AIDA concluded its third international study tour to Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week (ADSW), held from 10–12 January 2026 in Abu Dhabi, UAE, with support from IRENA, and hosted 12 delegates from member DISCOMs. A follow-up webinar was organized on 29<sup>th</sup> January, 2026, to share key insights from the visit and the IRENA Assembly. Shri Jitender Nalwaya, Director (Technical), PUVVNL, highlighted the need for infrastructure upgrades, technology collaboration, and digital interventions to support the energy transition, along with opportunities linked to NDCs.

The discussions emphasized collaboration in scaling investments through AI and digital technologies, and addressed challenges in solar adoption, including consumer awareness and rooftop deployment. In his concluding remarks, Shri Alok Kumar, Director General, AIDA, stressed the importance of such study tours and webinars in sharing global best practices and called for greater focus on behind-the-meter battery adoption.

### **Webinar on Change Management for Improved Consumer Service**

The AIDA Secretariat organized a knowledge-sharing webinar today on 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 2026 on “Change Management for Improved Consumer Service”, featuring CESC Limited’s award-winning transformation journey. CESC Limited received the Gold Award at EDICON 2026 organized by AIDA in this category for its pioneering digital and consumer service initiatives. A presentation was delivered by Shri Sujit Paul, Vice President (Customer Services & Digital Initiatives), CESC Limited, who shared CESC’s multi-year change management program covering digital channels, call centers, branding, and customer journey redesign.

Through AI-driven analytics and sentiment tracking (eVOC), CESC achieved 87% non-cash payment adoption and improved its Net Promoter Score (NPS) from –5 to +40, demonstrating measurable gains in consumer satisfaction and engagement. Innovative tools such as intelligent IVR, multilingual voice bots, autonomous social media agents, WhatsApp channels, and rich-content digital payment links were showcased as key enablers of this transformation. The session provided actionable insights for DISCOMs on leveraging digital platforms, analytics, and structured change management to enhance consumer experience and operational performance. AIDA will continue to document and disseminate such best practices for the benefit of the sector.

## Committee Meetings

AIDA has formed seven expert committees to advance its core objectives, focusing on policy advocacy, collaboration, standardization, and capacity building in DISCOM operations. These committees provide informed recommendations on proposals from the MoP, CERC, CEA, and other key stakeholders.

Committee	No. of Meetings (Quarterly)
Committee Meeting on Policy Related Matters	One
Committee Meeting on Regulatory Matters	Five
Committee Meeting on Contracts	Two
Committee Meeting on Commercial Aspects of Discoms Functioning	Three

## International Visits

### International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), Abu Dhabi Visit, 10-14 January, 2026

AIDA concluded its third international study tour to Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week (ADSW), held from 10–14 January 2026 in Abu Dhabi, UAE, with support from IRENA, hosting 12 delegates from its member DISCOMs. During the visit, the delegation participated in the 16th Assembly of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), held at St. Regis Hotel, Saadiyat Island, which focused on the theme “Powering Humanity: Renewable Energy for Shared Prosperity.” AIDA delegates actively participated in key sessions focusing on energy planning, investment frameworks, innovation in renewable technologies, geothermal energy development, green industrialization, and the role of artificial intelligence in energy transitions.

The delegation also attended the World Future Energy Summit 2026 (13–14 January 2026), a flagship event under ADSW, which brought together global industry leaders, innovators, and policymakers. The summit showcased cutting-edge technologies, emerging business models, and investment opportunities across renewable energy and sustainability sectors. In addition, a field visit to key energy infrastructure in Abu Dhabi was explored, offering practical exposure to advanced utility operations and large-scale renewable energy projects.

The visit enabled AIDA delegates to gain strategic insights, strengthen international engagement, and identify actionable learnings to support India’s ongoing energy transition and DISCOM reforms.



### Visit of high level AIDA Delegation to NASEO Annual Conference

An AIDA delegation visited Washington DC, USA from February 1–6, 2026 at the invitation of NASEO and CSIS to strengthen international collaboration and gain insights into advanced power sector practices. The delegation engaged with leading organizations such as CEBA, CSIS, NASEO, ESIG, RMI, and industry stakeholders, focusing on key themes like renewable energy integration, demand flexibility, grid modernization, data centre power requirements, and the use of AI/ML in power systems.

The visit highlighted global best practices in green tariffs, virtual power plants, energy storage, and utility operations. It also opened avenues for collaboration in capacity building, research, and knowledge exchange, particularly in areas such as demand forecasting, procurement optimization, and network planning. Overall, the tour reinforced AIDA's efforts to bring global learnings to strengthen DISCOM performance, policy advocacy, and innovation in India's power sector.

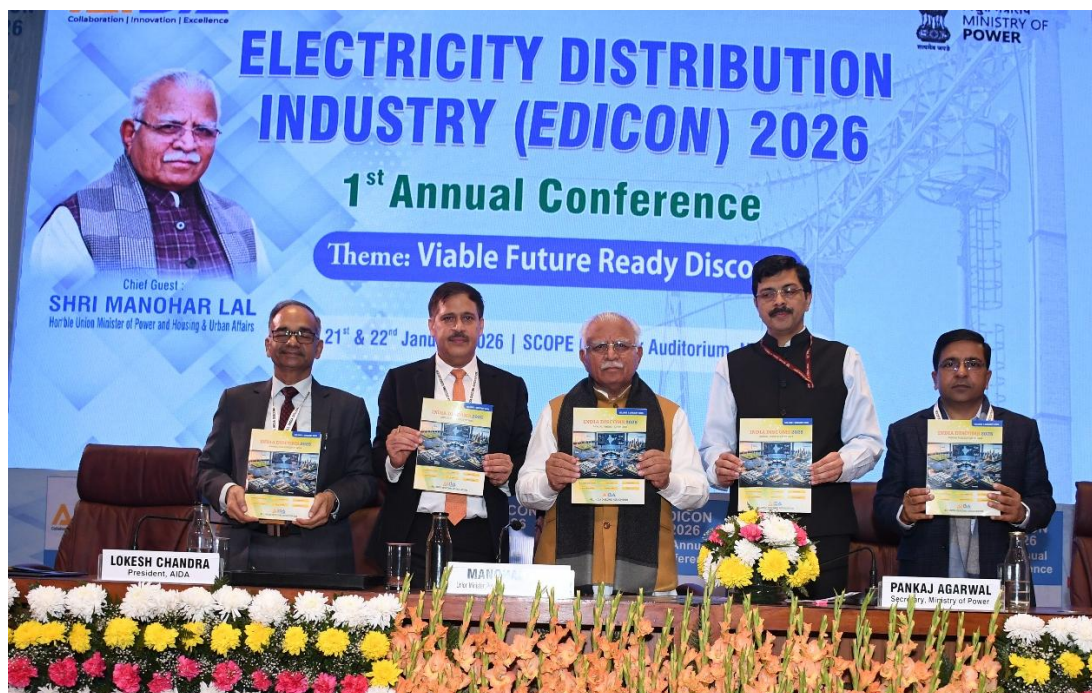


## National Events

### AIDA, EDICON 2026

AIDA successfully completed its first year and hosted a two-day Annual Conference on 21-22 January 2026, bringing together policymakers, regulators, DISCOMs, and industry stakeholders for focused deliberations across seven key technical sessions. The conference was inaugurated by Shri Manohar Lal, Union Minister of Power, Government of India as the chief guest of the conference. It also featured the screening of AIDA's activity film, presentation of the AIDA Annual Awards across six categories, release of its publication 'India Discoms 2025', and thematic sessions led by knowledge partners and DISCOMs to foster collaboration and strengthen future-ready distribution utilities.

The conference showcased AIDA's work in 2025, engaged stakeholders to identify priority areas for improving DISCOM performance, and recognized innovative initiatives that promoted peer learning and excellence. It strengthened appreciation of AIDA's role in policy and regulatory advocacy, deepened understanding of key sectoral issues, identified new action areas and collaboration opportunities, and encouraged sector-wide improvement through the AIDA Awards, 2025. The awards were presented across six categories each in gold and silver category.





**AIDA-NASEO Seminar on AI-Ready DISCOMs: Advancing Grid Efficiency, Reliability and Sustainability** the All India DISCOMs Association (AIDA), in collaboration with the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and the National Association of State Energy Officials (NASEO), successfully organized the workshop “AI-Ready DISCOMs: Policy Actions to Advance Grid Efficiency, Reliability and Sustainability” on 11 February 2026 at India Habitat Centre, New Delhi. The workshop featured four focused technical sessions:

- ◆ Session 1: AI for Power Systems – Opportunities, Risks, and Safeguards
- ◆ Session 2: AI-readiness of DISCOMs – Building the Digital Foundation and Operationalizing AI
- ◆ Session 3: Innovations and Partnerships
- ◆ Session 4: AI for Affordable Life – Demand Flexibility for Energy-Efficient India.

It brought together policymakers, regulators, and experts to discuss accelerating AI adoption in the power sector. An MoU between AIDA and NASEO was also exchanged, reinforcing international collaboration for DISCOM modernization and India’s clean energy transition.



## India Smart Utility Week, ISGF

The 12th edition of ISUW was held from 10–14 March 2026 in New Delhi, India, as a premier international conference and exhibition on Smart Energy and Smart Mobility. AIDA was a supporting partner and also partnered in a technical session on “Digitalization Roadmaps for Utilities,” contributing to discussions on advancing digital transformation in the power sector. Shri Alok Kumar, DG, AIDA, was part of the award jury on ‘Innovation Awards 2026’ and was also being felicitated the prestigious "Award" under the category "ISGF President's Award for the Best Contribution towards Energy Transition in India" at 10th ISGF Innovation Awards 2026 on 13th March 2026 at Hotel Lalit, New Delhi.



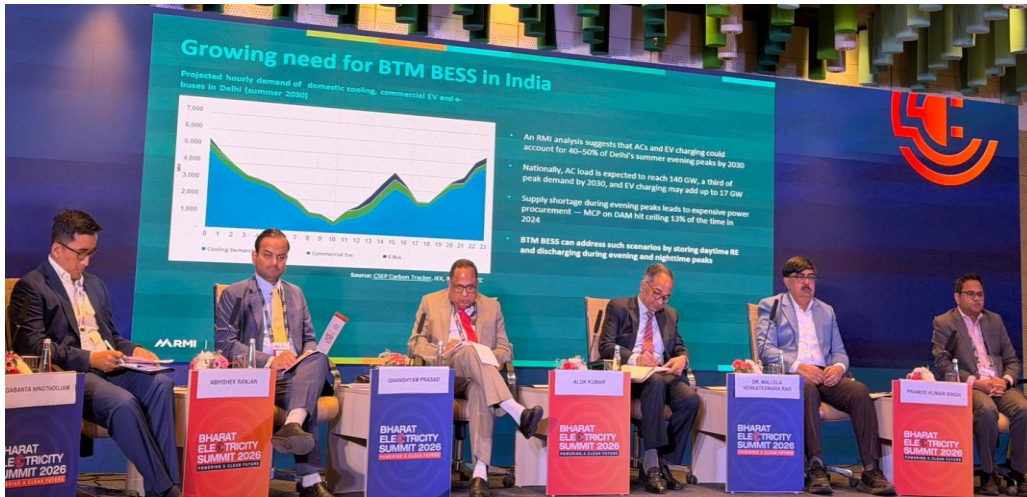
## Bharat Electricity Summit, 2026

The Bharat Electricity Summit 2026, held under the patronage of India’s Ministry of Power, took place from 19–22 March 2026 at Yash Bhoomi, Dwarka, New Delhi. As India’s premier platform for the power sector, it brought together global policymakers, CEOs, government leaders, regulators, investors, and industry experts across the entire electricity value chain.

1. As an Associate Partner, AIDA played a significant role by leading two technical sessions on: (i) A Resilient Global Energy Mix: Strengthening Reliability, Affordability and Clean Growth, and (ii) Building Intelligent Grid Systems: From Smart Metering and ADMS-DERMS Platforms to Next-Generation TSO-DSO Coordination.
2. AIDA also organized a special program on “Behind the Meter (BTM) Storage of DRE” on 22 March 2026, during which it launched two publications ‘Catalyzing Energy

Storage in India: From Procurement to Reliable Power’ and ‘Envisioning a Demand Flexibility Platform for India’ in collaboration with RMI.

3. Additionally, AIDA moderated the CEO Roundtable on Distribution, chaired by the Secretary, Ministry of Power.
4. AIDA further participated in the State Ministerial Meeting of Power Ministers.



## AIDA General Body Meeting

As part of the event, AIDA organized the 2nd Meeting of its General Body (GB) on 11th March 2026 at the Lalit Hotel, New Delhi. The meeting served as an important platform to review the progress of AIDA's Annual Plan for FY 2025–26 and to deliberate on and finalize the Action Plan for FY 2026–27, including approval of the corresponding budget. Key discussions during the meeting included the reconstitution of the Executive Council and deliberations on the Draft National Electricity Policy, 2026.

Following the deliberations, the General Body approved the AIDA Annual Action Plan (2026–27) and in addition suggested: preparing a national template for DISCOM digitalization roadmaps; standardizing equipment specifications in consultation with CEA; developing a national data management policy; and undertaking a study to benchmark global supply reliability standards and define differentiated aspirational targets for Indian DISCOMs across various geographies.



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