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Olive Greens Institute

TILL 1 APRIL 2026

PREFACE

This is our special edition of Current Affairs Magazine for various Central & State level Competitive Examinations, covering content from the month of March 2026.

The Magazine is divided into three sections:

Section 1: Topic Wise Current Affairs in Short

The first section is dedicated to Topic Wise Current Affairs with a short description to provide information about all major happenings this month.

Section 2: Practice Questions with Answers

The Second Section contains 150 Multiple Choice Questions based on daily current affairs.

Section 3: Detailed Analysis of important Event

The Third Section covers some major happenings in this month along with analysis. The content has been covered from various online & offline sources including reputed newspapers like The Hindu, Indian Express etc. All the news topics have been explained keeping in mind their underlying issues. Every issue has been covered comprehensively. Some of the information provided may not be directly relevant for the examination. As the content is very wide, we have only covered a limited set of issues. You can utilize it smartly along with Daily Study of News Papers as well as other sources.



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Section 1

Topic Wise Current Affairs

Section 2

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SECTION 1

Topic Wise Current Affairs in Short



1: Important Days



Zero Discrimination Day : 01 March :-

Zero Discrimination Day is observed every year on March 1 under the leadership of Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). The day was first launched in 2014 to promote equality before the law and in practice, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, disability, religion, or any other status. The observance highlights the importance of inclusion and compassion in building fair societies, especially for marginalized communities and people living with HIV.

natural and man-made disasters. World Civil Defence Day emphasizes the role of civil defence services in protecting people, property, and the environment during emergencies such as earthquakes, floods, fires, and industrial accidents.



World Wildlife Day : 03 March :-

World Wildlife Day is observed every year on March 3 to celebrate the rich diversity of wild animals and plants across the globe and to raise awareness about the urgent need to conserve them. The day was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2013 to mark the adoption of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in 1973. The World Wildlife Day 2026 theme is “Medicinal and Aromatic Plants: Conserving Health, Heritage and Livelihoods”.



World Civil Defence Day : 01 March :-

World Civil Defence Day is observed annually on March 1 to raise awareness about the importance of civil protection and emergency preparedness. The day was established by the International Civil Defence Organization (ICDO) in 1990 to commemorate the entry into force of its constitution in 1972. The organization works to strengthen disaster response systems and promote cooperation among countries in handling



World Hearing Day : 03 March :-

World Hearing Day is observed annually on March 3 to raise awareness about hearing loss and promote ear and hearing care worldwide. The day is led by the World

Health Organization (WHO) to highlight the importance of preventing deafness and ensuring access to treatment and rehabilitation services. The date, 3/3, symbolically represents the shape of two ears. The observance emphasizes early detection of hearing problems, safe listening practices, and the availability of hearing aids and medical interventions. The official theme for World Hearing Day 2026 is “From communities to classrooms: hearing care for all children.”



National Safety Day (India) : 04 March :-

National Safety Day is observed every year in India on March 4 to raise awareness about safety protocols and promote a culture of accident prevention across the country. The day marks the foundation of the National Safety Council of India—a body set up to champion safety in workplaces, on roads, in public spaces, and in homes. The date also kicks off National Safety Week, which runs until March 10 each year. The National Safety Day theme 2026 is “Engage, Educate & Empower People to Enhance Safety.”



International Women’s Day : 08 March :-

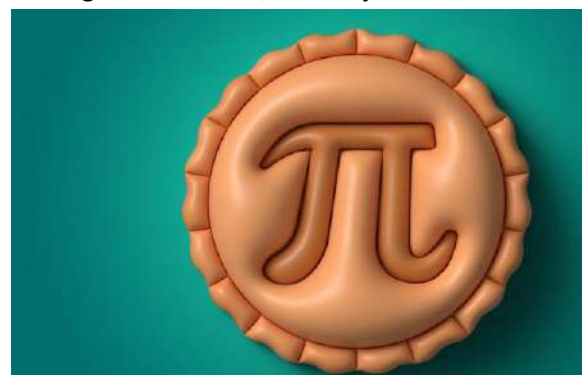
International Women’s Day is celebrated every year on March 8 to recognize the achievements of women and promote gender equality across the world. The day

traces its origins to early 20th-century labor and women’s rights movements in Europe and North America. It was later adopted by the United Nations in 1975, which helped popularize it globally. Governments, organizations, and civil society groups mark the day with campaigns, discussions, and events focused on women’s empowerment, leadership, and rights. This year, the theme for International Women's Day is “Give To Gain.”



CISF Raising Day : 10 March :-

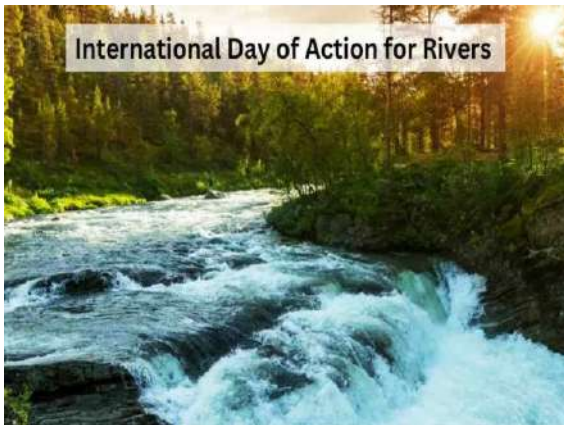
Central Industrial Security Force Raising Day is observed every year on 10 March to commemorate the establishment of the force in 1969 under the CISF Act of the Parliament of India. The day marks the formation of one of India’s major Central Armed Police Forces responsible for providing security to critical infrastructure across the country. Initially created to protect public sector undertakings, the CISF has expanded its role to include security at airports, seaports, nuclear installations, government buildings, heritage monuments, and major industrial units.



Pi Day : 14 March :-

Pi Day is celebrated every year on 14 March to honour the mathematical constant π (pi), which represents the

ratio of a circle’s circumference to its diameter. The date 3/14 corresponds to the first three digits of the constant—3.14—which is why March 14 was chosen for the celebration. The observance was first initiated in 1988 by physicist Larry Shaw at the Exploratorium science museum in San Francisco, and it has since become a global celebration of mathematics and science. The official theme for Pi Day 2026 is “Mathematics and Hope”.



International Day of Action for Rivers : 14 March :-

The International Day of Action for Rivers is observed globally on 14 March each year to raise awareness about the importance of protecting rivers and ensuring sustainable water management. The day was established after the First International Meeting of People Affected by Dams in Curitiba, Brazil, in 1997, where representatives from several countries decided to dedicate a day to advocating for rivers, water rights, and the livelihoods of communities dependent on river ecosystems. The observance began in 1998 and is sometimes referred to as the International Day Against Dams and for Rivers, Water and Life.



World Consumer Rights Day : 15 March :-

World Consumer Rights Day is observed every year on 15 March to raise global awareness about the rights and needs of consumers and to promote fair, safe, and transparent marketplace practices. The day traces its origin to 15 March 1962, when U.S. President John F. Kennedy addressed the U.S. Congress and formally recognized four basic consumer rights—the right to safety, information, choice, and to be heard. Inspired by this milestone, consumer organizations began observing the day globally from 1983 to advocate for stronger consumer protection laws and ethical business practices. The 2026 theme is “Safe Products, Confident Consumers.”



National Vaccination Day (India) : 16 March :-

National Vaccination Day is observed every year on 16 March in India to highlight the importance of immunization in protecting public health and preventing life-threatening diseases. The day commemorates the launch of the Pulse Polio Immunisation Programme in 1995, when the first dose of oral polio vaccine was administered across the country. This massive nationwide campaign aimed to vaccinate millions of children under the age of five and played a decisive role in eliminating polio from India. The theme for National Vaccination Day (India) 2026 is "Immunization for All is Humanly Possible".



Ordnance Factories Day (India) : 18 March :-

Ordnance Factories Day is observed annually on March 18 in India to commemorate the establishment of the first ordnance factory in Cossipore, Kolkata in 1801. The day highlights the crucial role played by the Ordnance Factory Board and its network of factories in strengthening India's defence preparedness. These factories manufacture a wide range of military equipment, including arms, ammunition, and vehicles for the armed forces. Various events, exhibitions, and parades are organized across ordnance factories to showcase their technological capabilities and contributions to national security.



World Oral Health Day : 20 March :-

World Oral Health Day is celebrated annually on March 20 to raise awareness about the importance of maintaining good oral hygiene and preventing dental diseases. The initiative is led by the FDI World Dental Federation, which promotes global oral health awareness campaigns. The day encourages people to adopt healthy habits such as regular brushing, flossing, reducing sugar intake, and visiting dentists regularly. Oral diseases like tooth decay, gum infections, and oral cancer

affect billions globally, often linked to lifestyle choices. The World Oral Health Day (WOHD) theme for 2026 is "A Happy Mouth is a Happy Life".



International Day of Happiness : 20 March :-

The International Day of Happiness is observed every year on March 20, as declared by the United Nations in 2012 to emphasize the importance of happiness and well-being as universal goals for people worldwide. The day highlights that economic growth alone cannot ensure human happiness; instead, inclusive development, mental well-being, social support, and environmental sustainability are equally important. Countries often release reports like the World Happiness Report around this time, ranking nations based on life satisfaction.



International Day of Forests : 21 March :-

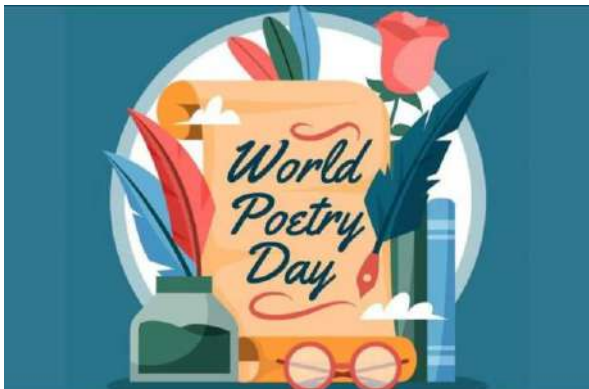
International Day of Forests is observed every year on March 21 to highlight the importance of forests and their crucial role in sustaining life on Earth. The day was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 2012 to raise awareness about deforestation, biodiversity loss, and climate change. Forests cover about one-third of the Earth's land area and provide

essential resources such as oxygen, food, shelter, and livelihoods for millions of people. The International Day of Forests 2026 theme is "Forests and economies".



World Down Syndrome Day : 21 March :-

World Down Syndrome Day is observed annually on March 21 to raise awareness about Down syndrome, a genetic condition caused by the presence of an extra copy of chromosome 21. The date (21/3) symbolizes this unique genetic trait. The day was officially recognized by the United Nations in 2011, aiming to promote the rights, inclusion, and well-being of individuals with Down syndrome. The theme for World Down Syndrome Day (WDSD) 2026 is "Together Against Loneliness".



World Poetry Day : 21 March :-

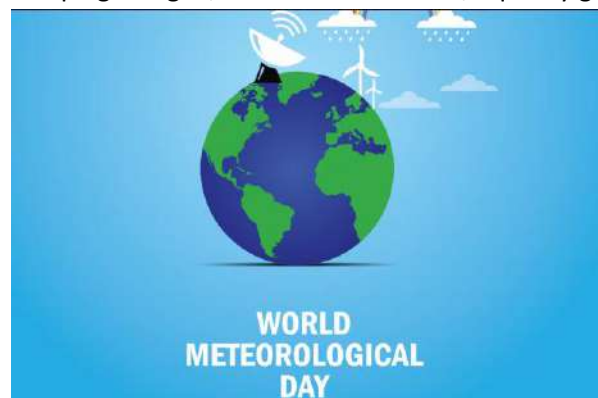
World Poetry Day is celebrated every year on March 21 to promote the reading, writing, and teaching of poetry across the globe. It was declared by the UNESCO in 1999 to recognize poetry as a powerful form of cultural expression and linguistic diversity. The day aims to support poets, revive oral traditions, and encourage appreciation of poetry in different languages and cultures. Literary events, poetry readings, workshops,

and competitions are organized worldwide to celebrate this art form.



World Water Day : 22 March :-

World Water Day is observed every year on March 22 to highlight the importance of freshwater and promote sustainable management of water resources. It was established by the United Nations in 1993 following recommendations from the Rio Earth Summit. Governments, organizations, and communities conduct awareness campaigns, conservation drives, and policy discussions. The observance is significant because billions of people worldwide still lack access to clean water, making it a critical issue for health, development, and environmental sustainability. The theme for World Water Day 2026 is "Water and Gender," with the campaign slogan, "Where water flows, equality grows".



World Meteorological Day : 23 March :-

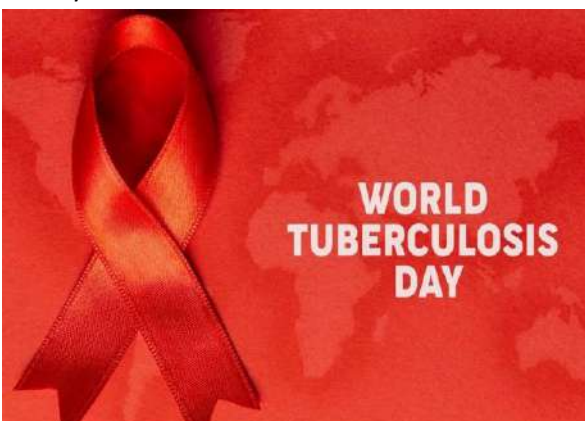
World Meteorological Day is observed every year on March 23 to mark the establishment of the World Meteorological Organization in 1950. The day highlights the importance of weather, climate, and water-related services in ensuring global safety and sustainable

development. The day emphasizes how meteorological advancements help governments and communities make informed decisions regarding agriculture, disaster management, and environmental protection. The theme for World Meteorological Day 2026 is "Observing today, protecting tomorrow".



Martyr's Day (India) : 23 March :-

March 23 is observed as Martyr's Day in India to commemorate the sacrifice of three legendary freedom fighters—Bhagat Singh, Shivaram Rajguru, and Sukhdev Thapar—who were executed by the British government in 1931. Their martyrdom became a turning point in India's freedom struggle, inspiring countless Indians to join the movement against colonial rule. The day is marked by tributes, remembrance ceremonies, and educational programs across the country. It serves as a reminder of the courage, patriotism, and sacrifices made by these young revolutionaries, who continue to be symbols of resistance and national pride in India's history.



World Tuberculosis (TB) Day : 24 March :-

World Tuberculosis (TB) Day is observed every year on 24 March to raise awareness about the global impact of tuberculosis and efforts to eliminate it. The date marks the discovery of the TB-causing bacterium by Robert Koch in 1882. The day highlights the need for early diagnosis, treatment, and global cooperation to end TB, which remains one of the deadliest infectious diseases worldwide. Governments and health organizations use this occasion to promote campaigns, improve healthcare access, and reduce stigma associated with the disease. The theme of World TB Day 2026 - 'Yes! We can end TB!'.



International Day of the Unborn Child : 25 March :-

International Day of the Unborn Child is observed annually on March 25 to recognize the value of human life from conception and to raise awareness about the rights of unborn children. The day is closely linked to the Christian observance of the Feast of the Annunciation, which marks the belief in the conception of Jesus Christ. First established in countries like El Salvador in the late 1990s, it has since been adopted in several nations across Latin America and beyond.



Purple Day of Epilepsy : 26 March :-

Purple Day is observed every year on March 26 to raise global awareness about epilepsy, a neurological disorder that causes recurring seizures. The day was founded in 2008 by a young Canadian girl, Cassidy Megan, who wanted to reduce stigma and misconceptions surrounding epilepsy. People around the world wear purple—the internationally recognized color for epilepsy awareness—and participate in campaigns, educational events, and social media initiatives. It also highlights the need for improved healthcare access and research in neurological disorders.



World Theatre Day : 27 March :-

World Theatre Day is observed every year on 27 March to promote the importance of theatre arts and highlight their role in cultural exchange, creativity, and social awareness. It was initiated in 1961 by the International Theatre Institute, and since then it has been celebrated globally by artists, institutions, and audiences. The day

emphasizes how theatre serves as a powerful medium to reflect society, address contemporary issues, and preserve cultural heritage. The theme for World Theatre Day 2026 is “Theatre and a Culture of Peace”.



World Piano Day 2026 : 29 March :-

World Piano Day is observed every year on the 88th day of the year, symbolizing the 88 keys of a standard piano—making it fall on March 29, 2026. The day was established in 2015 by German pianist and composer Nils Frahm to celebrate the piano’s cultural importance and promote music education. It encourages musicians, composers, and enthusiasts worldwide to engage with piano music through performances, learning, and sharing compositions. The piano, invented in the early 18th century by Bartolomeo Cristofori, remains one of the most versatile and widely used instruments in both classical and modern music traditions.

2: Agreements



India, Israel Sign 17 MoUs to Strengthen Bilateral Cooperation :-

During PM Modi's visit to Israel, 17 MoUs were signed covering sectors such as artificial intelligence, agriculture, cybersecurity, and fintech. Notably, an MoU between NPCI International and Israel’s MASAV will enable cross-border remittances using India's UPI. The establishment of the India-Israel Innovation Centre for Agriculture will focus on next-gen technologies like precision farming. These agreements highlight the

robust strategic partnership and shared focus on innovation and technological advancement.



Over 12 Lakh Youth Participate in MY Bharat Budget Quest :-

The MY Bharat Budget Quest 2026 has seen participation from over 12 lakh young citizens, reflecting strong engagement with the Union Budget and India's development vision. Organized by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, the initiative aims to involve youth in policy discussions and development ideas for Viksit Bharat by 2047. Participants advanced through quiz and essay stages, discussing themes like agriculture, education, and sustainable development. Winners will interact with PM Modi, highlighting the growing interest among youth in public policy and governance.



Maharashtra's Economy Set to Grow at 7.9% in 2025-26

Maharashtra's economy is projected to grow at 7.9% in 2025-26, surpassing the national growth rate of 7.6%. The state's economic performance is driven by GST collection and favorable market conditions. The agriculture sector is expected to grow by 3.4%, industry by 5.7%, and services by 9%. The state's public debt is anticipated to rise to Rs 9.32 lakh crore. The economic

survey highlights Maharashtra's continued role as a growth engine for India, maintaining fiscal discipline while supporting development across sectors.



Chhattisgarh's Community-Led Water Conservation Effort in Korea District :-

Korea district in Chhattisgarh has set an example in community-led water conservation with its 'Jal Sanchay Jan Bhagidari' initiative. The program encourages farmers to dedicate 5% of their land to create recharge ponds, supporting groundwater replenishment. Women and youth are actively involved as 'Neer Nayikas' and 'Jal Doots', promoting water conservation. Over 1,260 farmers adopted the recharge system, improving soil moisture and reducing migration. The initiative demonstrates effective public participation in addressing water security and sustainability challenges.



Affordable Medicines at Janaushadhi Kendras Easing Healthcare Costs :-

Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendras are providing affordable generic medicines, significantly reducing healthcare costs for families managing long-term illnesses. Beneficiaries in Delhi report substantial savings, with medicines for diabetes and hypertension

available at much lower prices. The initiative, under the Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana, aims to expand access to quality medicines. The scheme is set to open 25,000 Kendras by 2027, improving healthcare affordability and accessibility across India, particularly benefiting low-income households.



India and Canada's CEPA Talks Aim for \$50 Billion Trade by 2030 :-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Canadian PM Mark Carney launched Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) negotiations, aiming to boost bilateral trade to \$50 billion by 2030. Signed by Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and Canadian Minister Maninder Sidhu, the agreement covers trade in goods and services. Current trade stands at \$8.66 billion, with key Indian exports including pharmaceuticals and textiles. The CEPA aims to unlock economic cooperation potential.



Indian Army and Ladakh Forest Department Sign MoU to Protect Snow Leopard :-

The Indian Army and the Ladakh Forest Department have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to support the conservation of the endangered Snow Leopard in the high-altitude region of Ladakh. Snow

leopards are among the most elusive big cats in the world and inhabit mountainous terrains of Central and South Asia. Under this collaboration, the Army will assist in habitat protection, wildlife monitoring, and awareness programs among troops and local communities. The initiative is important because large parts of the snow leopard's habitat fall near border areas where the Army operates.



India Secures 86 Lakh Tonnes of Fertilizer Through Global Deals :-

India has secured over 86 lakh tonnes of fertilizers via international agreements, enhancing domestic production of phosphatic and potassic fertilizers. The move aims to ensure stable fertilizer supply amid reduced imports from China. Long-term deals with Saudi Arabia, Russia, and Morocco bolster the supply chain, while domestic production rises to 211 LMT. This strategy supports agricultural productivity and stability, reflecting India's focus on self-reliance in key agricultural inputs.



Punjab partners with World Bank for 'Sikhya Kranti 2.0' school reform programme :-

The government of Punjab has partnered with the World Bank to launch 'Sikhya Kranti 2.0,' an ambitious school education reform programme aimed at transforming the state's public education system. This initiative focuses on improving learning outcomes, upgrading infrastructure, strengthening teacher training, and integrating modern technology into classrooms. Building on earlier reforms, the programme aims to make government schools more competitive with private institutions and ensure quality education for all students.

substantially, with plans to expand to 25,000 centers by 2027, focusing on underserved regions. This expansion reflects the government's commitment to affordable healthcare, reducing out-of-pocket expenses, and increasing access to essential medicines across the country.



Government Expands Jan Aushadhi Kendras to Enhance Medicine Access :-

Meghalaya Joins Jal Jeevan Mission 2.0 with Reform-Linked MoU :-

The Indian government has expanded the network of Jan Aushadhi Kendras to 18,646, enhancing access to affordable generic medicines under the Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana. These centers offer medicines at significantly lower prices, covering major therapeutic categories. The initiative has grown

Meghalaya has signed a reform-linked MoU under Jal Jeevan Mission 2.0, becoming the 12th state to join the initiative aimed at sustainable rural water supply. The agreement emphasizes decentralization, community participation, and water conservation. With 83% rural tap water coverage already achieved, Meghalaya is poised to reach 100% under this mission. This initiative reflects India's commitment to ensuring universal access to clean water and sanitation, contributing to long-term water security and public health.

3: Appointments



Saba Shawl became the First Kashmiri Woman to Head Central Jail Srinagar :-

Saba Shawl has created history by becoming the first woman from Kashmir to head Central Jail Srinagar. Her appointment marks a significant milestone for women's representation in the prison administration system of Jammu and Kashmir. Traditionally, senior prison leadership positions in the region have been dominated by men, making Shawl's appointment a symbol of progress toward gender inclusion in law enforcement and correctional services. As head of the central jail, she will oversee prison administration, inmate welfare, security management, and rehabilitation programs.



Jio Platforms Appoints Dan Bailey as President for International Expansion :-

Jio Platforms has appointed Dan Bailey as President for International Expansion, strengthening its strategy to grow beyond India. Jio Platforms, a subsidiary of Reliance Industries, is known for its digital ecosystem that includes telecommunications, digital services, and technology platforms. Bailey brings extensive global experience in telecom and digital infrastructure, which will help the company explore new markets and partnerships abroad. His role will involve identifying international business opportunities, building collaborations with global technology firms, and expanding Jio’s digital platforms globally.



Iran Appoints Mojtaba Khamenei as New Supreme Leader Amidst Conflict :-

In a strategic move amidst ongoing conflict with the U.S. and Israel, Iran has appointed Mojtaba Khamenei, son of the late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, as the new Supreme Leader. This appointment by the Assembly of Experts signals Iran's intent to maintain its hardline stance. Mojtaba's leadership is anticipated to deepen the confrontation with Western powers, with expectations of increased authority for the Islamic Revolutionary

Guard Corps. This development comes in the wake of Ayatollah Khamenei's death in a U.S.-Israeli strike, marking a significant shift in Iran's leadership dynamics.



Taranjit Singh Sandhu Appointed Delhi's 23rd Lieutenant Governor :-

Taranjit Singh Sandhu, a former Indian diplomat and BJP member, has been appointed as the 23rd Lieutenant Governor of Delhi. The swearing-in ceremony is scheduled at Lok Niwas, emphasizing his diplomatic background and prior roles, including as Indian Ambassador to the US. His appointment follows the transfer of outgoing L-G V K Saxena to Ladakh. Sandhu's extensive career in the Indian Foreign Service and recent political involvement highlight a strategic choice for Delhi's governance.



Lt Gen Syed Ata Hasnain Sworn in as Bihar Governor :-

Lieutenant General (Retd) Syed Ata Hasnain was sworn in as the Governor of Bihar, becoming the first former Indian Army officer to hold the position. His appointment is expected to bring strategic insight and leadership to the state's governance, reflecting the integration of military experience in civil administration.



Delhi Capitals Appoint Former Ireland Star John Mooney As Fielding Coach :-

The Delhi Capitals have appointed John Mooney as their new fielding coach ahead of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 season. Mooney, a former Ireland international all-rounder, becomes the first Irish cricketer to join an IPL franchise's coaching staff. He replaces the previous fielding setup and joins a support team led by head coach Hemang Badani, alongside Munaf Patel and Ian Bell. With prior coaching experience with Afghanistan, West Indies, and Ireland's women's team, Mooney is expected to strengthen Delhi Capitals' fielding performance as the team aims to improve after missing the playoffs last season.



EU leaders appoint Boris Vujcic as ECB vice president :-

European Union leaders have appointed Boris Vujcic as the Vice President of the European Central Bank for an eight-year term starting June 2026. Vujcic, who currently serves as the Governor of Croatia's central bank, will succeed Luis de Guindos. He is known for his role in guiding Croatia into the eurozone and has been a prominent voice on monetary policy, often emphasizing caution regarding inflation. His appointment is notable as it brings representation from a smaller EU economy into one of the top leadership roles in the ECB, which has traditionally been dominated by larger member states.



Uttarakhand Cabinet Expanded with Five New Ministers :-

The Uttarakhand government, led by Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, has expanded its cabinet by inducting five new ministers. This move is part of efforts to fill vacant positions and strengthen governance in the state. The new ministers, including Khajan Das and Madan Kaushik, were sworn in by Governor Gurmit Singh at Lok Bhavan. The expansion aims to enhance administrative efficiency and ensure continued focus on public welfare and development in Uttarakhand. This development reflects the state's commitment to effective governance and strategic leadership.



Chemplast Sanmar appoints A R Balaji as CFO :-

Chemplast Sanmar has appointed A R Balaji as its new Chief Financial Officer (CFO), marking a key leadership change in the company's financial management team. The appointment comes at a time when the specialty chemicals sector in India is witnessing increased growth opportunities and global demand. As CFO, Balaji will be responsible for overseeing financial strategy, capital allocation, compliance, and investor relations. This move is expected to support Chemplast Sanmar in strengthening its financial position and navigating market challenges while pursuing growth in the competitive chemicals industry.



Uttarakhand Government Allocates Portfolios Post Cabinet Expansion :-

Following the recent expansion of the Uttarakhand cabinet, Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami allocated portfolios to both newly inducted and existing ministers to streamline governance and maintain regional and political balance. The cabinet was expanded by inducting five new ministers—Madan Kaushik, Khajan Das, Pradeep Batra, Ram Singh Kaira, and Bharat Chaudhary—bringing the council of ministers closer to its full sanctioned strength.

4: Awards



Olivia Dean Sweeps 2026 BRIT Awards With Four Prizes

At the 2026 BRIT Awards held in Manchester, British singer-songwriter Olivia Dean had a standout night, winning four major awards—more than any other artist at the ceremony. She took home Artist of the Year, Album of the Year for *The Art of Loving*, Best Pop Act, and Song of the Year for her duet “Rein Me In” with Sam Fender. The success underscores her rising status in British and international music, especially following her Best New Artist Grammy Award earlier in the year. The BRIT Awards, a premier UK music awards show, celebrated a range of artists, and Dean’s achievements highlighted her broad artistic appeal and commercial impact.



Indian Women’s Cricket Team Nominated for 2026 Laureus World Team of the Year :-

The India women's national cricket team has been nominated for the Team of the Year category at the prestigious Laureus World Sports Awards 2026. The Laureus Awards are considered one of the highest honors in international sports, often referred to as the “Oscars of sports.” The nomination recognizes the outstanding performances and achievements of the Indian women’s team in international cricket tournaments. It also highlights the growing global recognition of women’s cricket and the team’s role in inspiring young athletes across India.



Chiranjeevi gets honoured with NTR National Film Award :-

Veteran Telugu film actor Chiranjeevi has been honoured with the prestigious NTR National Film Award, named after legendary actor and former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. T. Rama Rao. The award recognizes individuals who have made outstanding contributions to Indian cinema. Chiranjeevi, one of the most influential figures in the Telugu film industry, has acted in more than 150 films and is known for his versatile performances, powerful screen presence, and philanthropic activities. Over the years, he has received numerous accolades for his contribution to cinema and society, including humanitarian initiatives through his charitable trust.



Rashmika Mandanna wins Best Actress award for 'The Girlfriend' :-

Indian actress Rashmika Mandanna has won the Best Actress award for her performance in the film The Girlfriend. Mandanna, who is widely recognized for her work in Telugu, Kannada, Tamil, and Hindi cinema, received the honour for portraying a complex and emotionally intense character in the movie. The award acknowledges her strong screen presence and ability to

bring depth to the role, which resonated well with audiences and critics alike. Over the years, Mandanna has emerged as one of the most popular young actresses in Indian cinema, known for films such as Pushpa and Geetha Govindam.



Saturn Awards 2026: Tom Cruise bags Best Actor, 'Avatar: Fire and Ash' wins major honours :-

At the Saturn Awards 2026, American actor Tom Cruise won the Best Actor in a Film award for his performance in Mission: Impossible – The Final Reckoning. The Saturn Awards, presented annually by the Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror Films, recognise excellence in science fiction, fantasy, horror, and action cinema. During the ceremony, the science-fiction blockbuster Avatar: Fire and Ash, directed by James Cameron, emerged as one of the biggest winners. The film secured several major awards including Best Science Fiction Film and Best Film Direction, along with wins for visual effects and other technical categories.



BCCI to Honor Cricket Icons at Naman Awards 2026 :-

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) will honor cricket legends Roger Binny, Rahul Dravid, and Mithali

Raj with Lifetime Achievement Awards at the Naman Awards 2026 in New Delhi. Binny and David will receive the Col. C. K. Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Award, while Raj will be honored for her contributions to women's cricket. The ceremony will also recognize outstanding performances across various cricket categories and celebrate the achievements of five ICC trophy-winning Indian teams, reflecting on India's cricketing legacy and contributions to the sport.



Michael B Jordan wins best actor Oscar for Sinners :-

American actor Michael B. Jordan won the Best Actor award at the Academy Awards for his performance in the film Sinners. Jordan received widespread acclaim for portraying a complex character in the film, delivering a powerful performance that impressed both critics and audiences. Known for his roles in movies such as Creed and Black Panther, Jordan has established himself as one of Hollywood's leading actors. Winning the Oscar marks a major milestone in his career and highlights his versatility and dedication to the craft of acting.



Jessie Buckley bags Best Actress for Hamnet :-

Irish actress Jessie Buckley won the Best Actress award at the Academy Awards for her role in the film Hamnet. Buckley's performance in the movie was widely praised for its emotional depth and powerful portrayal of a character dealing with grief and personal transformation. The film is based on the acclaimed novel of the same name and explores the life of William Shakespeare's family, particularly focusing on the story of his son Hamnet. Buckley's win further strengthens her reputation as a talented performer capable of delivering intense and memorable roles.



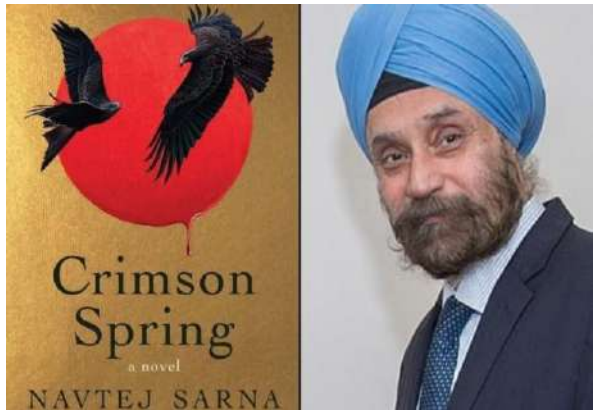
'One Battle After Another' Wins Best Picture at Oscars

The Academy Awards honored 'One Battle After Another' with the Best Picture prize, alongside five other accolades. The film, directed by Paul Thomas Anderson and starring Leonardo DiCaprio, tells a story of political resistance. The Oscars also recognized 'Sinners' and highlighted achievements in diversity, with Michael B. Jordan winning Best Actor. The ceremony paid tribute to late directors Robert Redford and Rob Reiner, amidst heightened security due to global tensions.



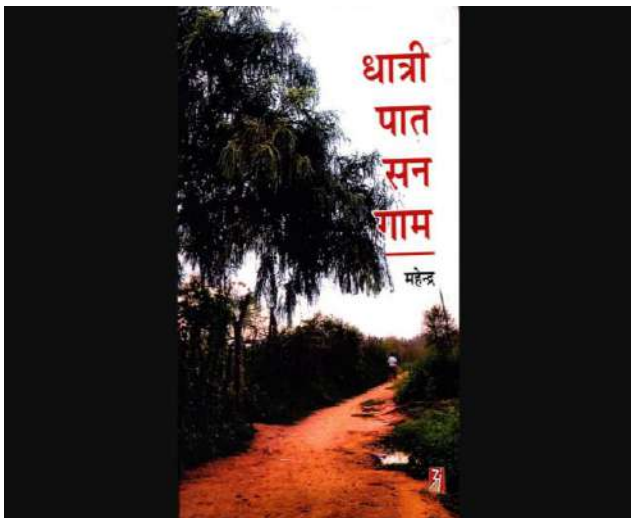
S. Tamilselvan wins Sahitya Akademi award for literary criticism :-

S. Tamilselvan has been awarded the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award 2025 in the Tamil category for his work on literary criticism titled “Thamiz Sirukathaiyin Thadangal.” The award recognizes his significant contribution to analyzing Tamil short story traditions and their evolution over time. His work critically examines narrative techniques, themes, and the socio-cultural contexts reflected in Tamil literature. The Sahitya Akademi Awards are among India’s most respected literary honours, presented annually in 24 languages, and each award carries a cash prize and a commemorative plaque.



2025 Sahitya Akademi Awards: Novelist Navtej Sarna’s ‘Crimson Night’ wins in English :-

In the English category of the Sahitya Akademi Awards 2025, novelist Navtej Sarna has been honoured for his novel “Crimson Night.” The awards, announced on March 16, cover 24 Indian languages and include various literary forms such as novels, poetry, short stories, memoirs, and criticism. Each awardee receives a cash prize of ₹1 lakh along with an engraved copper plaque, presented at a ceremony in New Delhi. Sarna’s work has been appreciated for its literary depth, narrative strength, and thematic richness, contributing to contemporary Indian English literature.



Maithili writer gets Sahitya Akademi for his memoir ‘Dhatri Paat San Gaam’ :-

In the Maithili language category, writer Mahendra has been honoured with the Sahitya Akademi Award 2025 for his memoir “Dhatri Paat San Gaam.” The book reflects personal experiences intertwined with cultural and social realities of the Mithila region, offering readers a deep insight into rural life, traditions, and emotional landscapes. Memoirs like this play an important role in documenting lived histories and preserving linguistic heritage. The selection of this work underscores the Akademi’s commitment to promoting diverse literary voices across Indian languages and encouraging autobiographical narratives that connect individual lives with broader societal contexts.



Hockey India Awards: Navneet, Hardik Named Players of the Year :-

Navneet Kaur and Hardik Singh were honored as Players of the Year at the Hockey India 8th Annual Awards, while Zafar Iqbal received the Lifetime Achievement Award. The ceremony celebrated Indian hockey’s achievements, with dignitaries and former Olympians in attendance. The awards recognize outstanding contributions to the sport, highlighting the athletes’ dedication and India’s

rich hockey legacy. This acknowledgment serves as an inspiration for future generations, reinforcing the importance of excellence in sports.



Government Launches Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar 2026 Nominations :-

The Government of India has opened nominations for the Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar 2026, celebrating excellence in science and innovation. Administered by the CSIR and the Ministry of Science Technology, the awards recognize outstanding contributions across various scientific domains. The awards will be presented in four categories, including Vigyan Ratna and Vigyan Yuva. Nominations are open online until May 11, 2026. This initiative reflects the government's commitment to fostering scientific excellence and innovation.

5: Banking



India Launches Bank Dashboard to Improve Government Fund Management :-

India's Controller General of Accounts launched the Government Bank Dashboard and Manual to enhance the governance of banks handling government transactions. The initiatives aim to reduce operational risk and improve accountability through real-time monitoring of banking functions. These reforms are part of a broader effort to modernize government banking operations, emphasizing digital integration and cybersecurity. This development reflects India's commitment to improving financial management and transparency in handling public funds.



Fino Payments Bank MD Rishi Gupta Arrested For GST Act Violation :-

Rishi Gupta, Managing Director and CEO of Fino Payments Bank, was arrested under the Central Goods and Services Tax (CGST) and State GST (SGST) Acts, 2017 for alleged violation of GST provisions in a case tied to certain business partner activities. The bank clarified that the case involves transactions linked to business partners and not the bank's own GST compliance, and that no other bank officials are implicated. Following the arrest, the bank's board appointed Ketan Merchant, Chief Financial Officer, as interim head to oversee day-to-day operations while Gupta is away.



CBI files FIR against Anil Ambani, his company for bank fraud involving over Rs 1085 crore :-

India’s premier investigative agency, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), has registered a First Information Report (FIR) against industrialist Anil Ambani and his company Reliance Communications in connection with an alleged bank fraud case amounting to more than ₹1,085 crore. The case relates to accusations that loans taken from a consortium of banks were allegedly diverted and not used for the purposes for which they were sanctioned. According to officials, the investigation will examine financial records, loan agreements, and fund flows to determine whether criminal misconduct or cheating occurred.



IDFC First Bank paid ₹645 crore towards Chandigarh fraud claims :-

IDFC First Bank paid around ₹645 crore to settle claims related to a large fraud case linked to the Chandigarh branch of the bank. The issue arose after irregularities were discovered in loans that had been sanctioned to certain borrowers through the bank’s branch in Chandigarh. Investigations revealed that the loans were allegedly obtained through fraudulent means involving misrepresentation and misuse of documentation. When the borrowers defaulted on repayment, the matter led

to legal disputes and claims against the bank for the losses incurred.



RBI Caps Bank Dividend Payouts at 75% of Profit :-

The Reserve Bank of India has set new prudential norms capping bank dividend payouts at 75% of Profit After Tax, linking them to capital strength and regulatory compliance. Effective from FY 2026-27, these norms aim to ensure banks maintain robust capital reserves while distributing profits. The policy applies to various bank categories, including Small Finance Banks and Local Area Banks, with specific conditions for compliance. This regulatory framework seeks to enhance financial stability, promote prudent management, and safeguard against financial vulnerabilities.



Japan's MUFG, State Bank of India partner to finance projects, including M&A :-

Japan’s largest financial group, Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group (MUFG), has entered into a strategic partnership with State Bank of India (SBI) to jointly finance large projects, including mergers and acquisitions (M&A), real estate funding, and cross-border corporate deals. The collaboration aims to combine SBI’s strong domestic presence and vast client network in India with MUFG’s global financial expertise and international reach.

Through this alliance, both banks will support Indian companies expanding abroad as well as Japanese firms investing in India.



India Is Set to Halt IDBI Bank Sale as Both Bids Unviable

The Government of India is reportedly considering halting the long-planned strategic disinvestment of IDBI Bank after finding the financial bids received for the bank to be unviable. The government and the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), which together hold a majority stake in the bank, had planned to sell a controlling stake to a private buyer as part of the broader privatization strategy in the banking sector. However, the bids submitted by interested parties were reportedly much lower than the expected valuation and did not meet the government’s financial expectations. As a result, authorities are reassessing the divestment plan and may suspend or rethink the sale process.



HDFC Bank Gets AAA Rating Affirmed by India Ratings :-

HDFC Bank, one of India’s largest private sector banks, has had its AAA credit rating reaffirmed by India Ratings and Research, a leading domestic credit rating agency. AAA rating signifies the highest level of safety regarding timely repayment of financial obligations, indicating a very strong capacity to meet debt commitments. The

reaffirmation reflects HDFC Bank’s robust financial performance, strong asset quality, consistent profitability, and stable management practices. Such a rating enhances investor confidence and allows the bank to raise funds at lower costs in the financial markets.



Atanu Chakraborty quits as HDFC’s part-time chairman and independent director :-

Atanu Chakraborty has stepped down from his role as part-time chairman and independent director of HDFC Bank. A former Finance Secretary of India, Chakraborty brought extensive administrative and financial expertise to the bank during his tenure. His resignation marks a significant development in the bank’s leadership structure, especially at a time when HDFC Bank is navigating post-merger integration and expanding its financial services portfolio. Although the reasons for his departure have not been detailed publicly, such changes at the board level often reflect evolving governance strategies or personal decisions.



RBI Board Approves 2026-27 Budget and Utkarsh 3.0 Framework :-

The Reserve Bank of India's Central Board has approved the budget for 2026-27 and the Utkarsh 3.0 strategy framework. The framework focuses on strengthening regulatory mechanisms, financial stability, and

institutional efficiency from 2026 to 2029. The decision came after reviewing the global and domestic economic situation and associated challenges. The RBI's strategic initiatives aim to enhance regulatory oversight and financial resilience, essential for navigating economic uncertainties and supporting sustainable growth in India's financial sector.



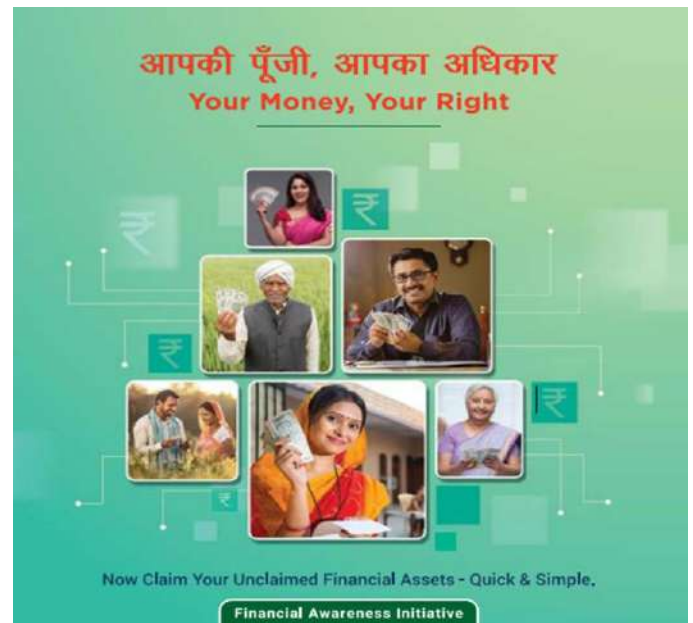
Kotak Bank set to acquire Deutsche's retail business in Rs 4,500-crore deal :-

Kotak Mahindra Bank is set to acquire the Indian retail business of Deutsche Bank in a deal valued at approximately ₹4,500 crore. The bank has reportedly emerged as the preferred bidder, with the agreement expected to be finalized soon. This acquisition would significantly strengthen Kotak's retail banking footprint, adding a large portfolio that includes personal loans, home loans, deposits, and wealth management services. The move reflects a broader trend of consolidation in India's banking sector, where global banks are gradually exiting retail operations while domestic institutions expand their market share.



RBI Proposes New Framework for Online Fraud Compensation :-

The Reserve Bank of India has proposed a revised framework to address unauthorised electronic transactions, introducing a compensation mechanism for small-value fraud cases. The framework aims to enhance fraud detection, prevention, and customer protection amid the growth of digital payments. The Indian Digital Payment Intelligence Corporation will monitor fraud using AI and analytics. These measures are part of RBI's efforts to strengthen cybersecurity and build trust in the digital payments ecosystem, crucial for India's financial stability.



RBI, IRDAI, and SEBI Help Citizens Reclaim Unclaimed Assets :-

India's financial regulators have intensified efforts to help citizens reclaim unclaimed deposits and investments, with a campaign recovering ₹5,777 crore as of February 2026. Initiatives include streamlined claim processes, digital platforms like RBI's UDGAM portal, and public awareness campaigns. These efforts aim to improve transparency and ensure rightful asset ownership, reflecting the government's commitment to financial inclusion and consumer protection. The move is significant for individuals seeking to recover unclaimed financial assets.

6: Books and Author



NCERT Withdraws Newly Released Class 8 Book After Judiciary Chapter Controversy :-

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) withdrew its newly released Class 8 Social Science textbook titled Exploring Society: India and Beyond – Part 2 shortly after its publication because of a major controversy over the content of one of its chapters. Senior lawyers raised objections in court, arguing that the material was inappropriate for a textbook for 13-14-year-old students. The Supreme Court of India took suo motu cognisance of the matter, expressing strong disapproval of the depiction — saying it could harm public confidence in the judiciary and was unsuitable for impressionable young learners.



Book on life, journey of journalist late N. R. Swami released in Odisha :-

A new book titled "The Doyen of Odisha Journalism: N R Swami" chronicling the life and journalistic journey of the late N. R. Swami, a noted correspondent who worked with PTI, The Statesman and The Hindu from the 1940s through the late 1970s — was released in Bhubaneswar,

Odisha. The book celebrates Swami’s remarkable career reporting on Odisha’s political and social developments and his contributions to Indian journalism. It was officially launched at a ceremony in the state capital.



Ravinder Singh
Author

Brookfield Properties Hosts Acclaimed Author Ravinder Singh’s 12th Novel Launch at Worldmark Gurugram :-

In a cultural celebration in Gurugram, India, Brookfield Properties recently hosted the launch of acclaimed author Ravinder Singh’s twelfth novel "HALF OF FOREVER" at Worldmark Gurugram’s Café StayWoke. The event, organized in association with Penguin Random House India, turned the venue into a vibrant literary space where fans and readers gathered for an engaging evening. Singh, known widely for his contemporary romance novels that explore modern love and relationships, introduced his new book and spoke about his writing journey, creative inspirations, and evolving themes that resonate with urban readers.



Vice President Radhakrishnan Releases 16 Books Celebrating Tamil Heritage :-

Vice President C. P. Radhakrishnan launched 16 books on Tamil heritage, covering subjects like temple architecture and Bhakti literature. The publications highlight Tamil civilisation's depth and diversity. Emphasizing cultural unity, the VP urged the youth to cultivate reading habits. The initiative aligns with PM Modi's vision of promoting Tamil heritage globally, underlining the cultural richness as a foundation for India's growth.



Union Minister Dr Mansukh Mandaviya releases book titled "Mahatma: A Great Communicator" :-

Union Minister Mansukh Mandaviya released a book titled "Mahatma: A Great Communicator", which explores the communication style and leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The Book was written by Additional Director General Akashvani, Dr Dhiraj Kakadia. The book highlights how Gandhi effectively used simple language, symbols, and mass communication strategies to connect with millions of people during India's freedom struggle. It emphasizes his ability to mobilize public opinion through speeches, letters, newspapers, and peaceful campaigns, making him one of the most influential communicators in modern history.



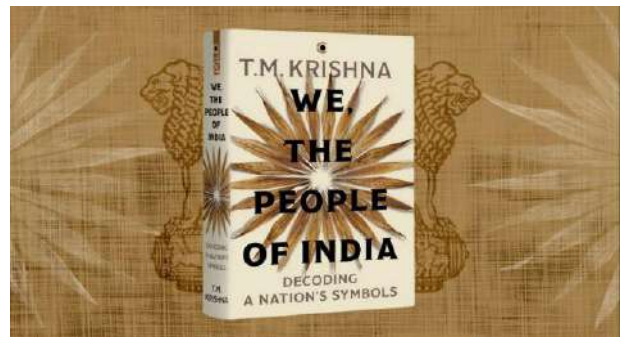
"Dasoha and Humanity" book released at Dasoha Mahamane :-

The book "Dasoha and Humanity," published by The Hindu Group, was formally released by Doddappa Appa at the Dasoha Mahamane located within the Sharanabasaveshwara Temple Complex in Kalaburagi. The book examines the philosophical ideas and social significance of the Dasoha tradition introduced by the 18th-century saint and reformer Sharanabasaveshwara. It emphasizes the timeless principles of compassion, selfless service, and social unity promoted by the tradition, and discusses how these values continue to remain meaningful and relevant in modern society.



'Sing, Dance and Lead: Leadership Lessons from the Teachings of Srila Prabhupada' by Dr. Hindol Sengupta was launched at IIT Delhi :-

A new book titled "Sing, Dance and Lead: Leadership Lessons from the Teachings of Srila Prabhupada", written by author and historian Hindol Sengupta, was launched at Indian Institute of Technology Delhi. The book explores leadership principles derived from the life and teachings of A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the founder of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON). It highlights how Prabhupada transformed a small spiritual movement into a global organization through vision, communication, and dedication.



Book "We, the People of India: Decoding a Nation's Symbols" by T.M. Krishna launched :-

At the launch of his latest book, "We, the People of India: Decoding a Nation's Symbols", at The Music Academy in Chennai. noted Carnatic vocalist and writer T. M. Krishna spoke about how the meanings of national symbols and cultural icons evolve over time depending on social and political contexts. During the discussion, Krishna emphasized that symbols associated with a nation—such as songs, cultural practices, or artistic expressions—are not static; their interpretation often changes as societies rethink ideas of identity, democracy, and inclusivity. He argued that engaging critically with such symbols can help citizens better understand their history and relevance in contemporary society.



Coffee Table Book on Prahlad Singh Patel's padyatras launched on Dandi March Day :-

A coffee table book highlighting the padyatras undertaken by Prahlad Singh Patel was launched in New Delhi at Madhya Pradesh Bhavan on the occasion of Dandi March Day, which commemorates the beginning of Dandi March led by Mahatma Gandhi in 1930. The book showcases photographs, documented moments, and narratives from Patel's padyatras that focus on social awareness, cultural values, and public engagement. The launch event linked contemporary social outreach activities with the historic legacy of Gandhi's Salt Satyagraha, which began on 12 March 1930 when Gandhi and his followers marched from Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi to protest the British salt tax through non-violent civil disobedience.



UK Society of Authors launches logo to identify books written by humans not AI :-

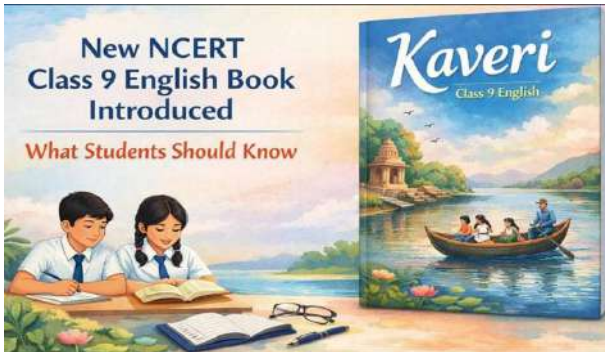
The UK-based writers' organization Society of Authors has introduced a special "Human Authored" logo that authors can place on their books to indicate that the work was written entirely by a human rather than generated by artificial intelligence. The initiative was launched during the London Book Fair amid growing concerns in the publishing industry about the rapid rise of AI-generated content. Under the scheme, authors can register their books and display the logo on their covers, helping readers easily identify literature created through human creativity.



Coffee table book on wildlife of Tamil Nadu launched :-

Tourism Minister R. Rajendran unveiled "Wildlife of Tamil Nadu," a coffee-table book brought out jointly by The Hindu Group and the Tamil Nadu Department of Tourism, during a programme organised by the Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation (TTDC) in Chennai. As stated in an official release, the publication offers both visual and descriptive insights into Tamil Nadu's varied natural scenery, wildlife habitats, ecological diversity, and cultural heritage. It takes readers through the forested landscapes of the Western

Ghats—such as Mudumalai, Anamalai, and Kalakkad-Mundanthurai—which provide shelter to wildlife including elephants, tigers, and hornbills, as well as rare species like the lion-tailed macaque and the Nilgiri tahr.



NCERT Releases New Class 9 English Book 'Kaveri' With More Texts From Indian Authors :-

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has introduced a new English textbook titled “Kaveri” for students of Class 9 as part of the updated school curriculum under the National Education Policy framework. The book replaces some earlier content and includes a larger number of literary works written by Indian authors, poets, and thinkers to highlight India’s cultural diversity and contemporary experiences. The textbook features stories, essays, and poems reflecting themes such as social values, environment, heritage, and modern life.

7: Defence



Amit Shah Inaugurates SSB Border Projects in Bihar :-

Union Home Minister Amit Shah inaugurated infrastructure projects of the Sashstra Seema Bal in Bihar, emphasizing the need for vigilance along the India-Nepal border. Shah announced a focused campaign against infiltration in the Seemanchal region, including action against illegal encroachments. The initiative highlights the government's commitment to enhancing border security and addressing infiltration challenges.



President Murmu Flies in Indigenous LCH Prachand at Jaisalmer :-

President Droupadi Murmu undertook a sortie in the indigenously developed Light Combat Helicopter (LCH) Prachand at Air Force Station Jaisalmer. The sortie was part of an operational demonstration showcasing India's defense capabilities. Accompanied by Group Captain Nayan Shantilal Bahua, the President flew alongside Chief of Air Staff AP Singh in a two-aircraft formation, carrying out maneuvers over Jaisalmer. The mission underscores India's advancement in indigenous defense technology and boosts national pride in self-reliance.



Pakistan Bombs Kabul, Taliban Open to Talks :-

In a significant escalation, Pakistan launched airstrikes on Kabul and Kandahar, accusing Afghanistan of harboring militants targeting Islamabad. This marks a shift in relations between the two nations, historically allies. The Taliban, while condemning the attacks, expressed willingness to negotiate, indicating a preference for dialogue to resolve tensions. The situation has drawn international concern, with the UN and the US urging restraint and dialogue. This conflict threatens stability in the region, highlighting the fragile peace between Afghanistan and Pakistan.



Iran Retaliates with Missile Strikes After US-Israel Assault :-

Iran launched missile strikes on Gulf Arab states in retaliation for joint US-Israel military actions. The escalation has resulted in casualties and raised fears of wider regional conflict. Iran's Revolutionary Guards vowed to continue their operations until their enemies are defeated. The geopolitical tension has impacted global markets, with investors turning to safe-haven assets like gold and silver amid the instability. The

situation remains fluid, with both sides on high alert for further developments.



Trump's Iran Strikes: A High-Stakes Foreign Policy Gamble :-

U.S. President Donald Trump's large-scale attack on Iran marks his biggest foreign policy gamble, aiming to demonstrate U.S. military power. The strikes, conducted with Israel, targeted Iran's leadership, raising questions about the future of the Islamic Republic. This move represents a significant shift from Trump's previous preference for limited operations. The President's decision to pursue regime change in Tehran through airstrikes reflects a high-risk strategy with potential regional implications.



Trump Orders Strikes to Thwart Iran's Nuclear and Missile Programs :-

US President Donald Trump ordered military strikes on Iran to prevent nuclear weapon development and curb its ballistic missile program. The campaign has targeted over 1,000 sites, including Iranian naval forces. The operation aims to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear threat to the Middle East and the US. The evolving

conflict underscores heightened geopolitical tensions and potential implications for regional stability.



MoD Signs Big Deals for ALH Mk-III VL-Shtil Missiles :-

The Ministry of Defence has signed major defence contracts for the procurement of Advanced Light Helicopter Mk-III and the VL-Shtil Missile System. The ALH Mk-III, manufactured by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, is a multi-role helicopter used for transport, search and rescue, and maritime operations. The VL-Shtil missile system is designed to enhance the air-defence capability of Indian Navy warships against aerial threats such as aircraft and missiles. These deals aim to strengthen India's defence preparedness, promote indigenous defence manufacturing, and modernize the capabilities of the armed forces.



Israel Expands Military Campaign to Beirut Amid Rising Casualties :-

Israel's military has expanded its operations to Beirut, targeting Iranian commanders amidst ongoing hostilities with Iran. The latest strikes in Lebanon's capital mark a significant escalation in the conflict, with nearly 400 casualties reported. Israel's campaign aims to dismantle Iran's regional influence, while Lebanon faces increasing

civilian tolls. This development underscores the complexity of Middle Eastern geopolitics, drawing attention to the humanitarian impact and potential for further regional destabilization.



DRDO, Indian Navy Successfully Test Air-Droppable Container :-

The DRDO and Indian Navy have successfully tested the indigenous Air Droppable Container 'ADC-150' from a P-8I Poseidon aircraft, off Goa's coast. Designed to deliver up to 150 kg payloads, this system enhances the Navy's logistics capabilities, allowing for rapid supply delivery to distant naval vessels. Developed by multiple DRDO labs, the ADC-150 will enable quick responses to ships in distress or in deep-sea operations. This innovation marks a significant advancement in India's defense logistics, showcasing indigenous capabilities and strategic maritime support.



India Calls for UN Peacekeeper Protection Amid Lebanon Tensions :-

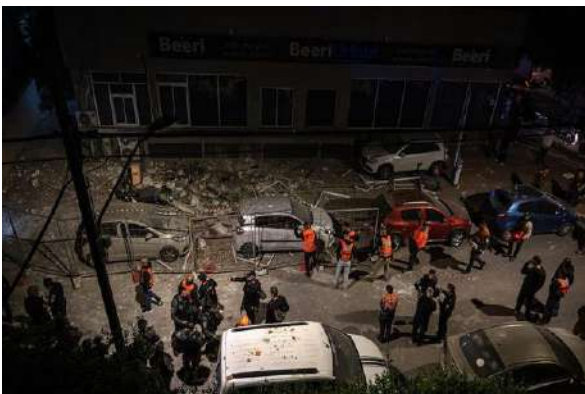
Amid escalating tensions between Israel and Hezbollah, India has joined 29 countries in urging the protection of UN peacekeepers in Lebanon. The joint statement calls for the safety of UNIFIL personnel amidst heightened

hostilities linked to the Iran conflict. Indian peacekeepers form a significant contingent in the UN mission, tasked with monitoring peace in the region. This appeal underscores the importance of international cooperation in ensuring peacekeepers' safety and highlights India's commitment to global peacekeeping efforts.



INS Trikand Concludes Port Call in Mauritius :-

Indian naval ship INS Trikand concluded its port call in Mauritius, participating in National Day celebrations and joint exercises. This visit underscores India's strong maritime ties with Mauritius and its commitment to regional security and cooperation in the Indian Ocean region.



Iran Strikes Tel Aviv in Retaliation for Killing of Security Chief :-

Iran launched missile attacks on Tel Aviv, targeting military facilities, in response to the killing of its security chief, Ali Larjani, by Israeli forces. The use of cluster warheads by Iran has intensified the conflict, resulting in casualties and further escalating tensions. This development underscores the geopolitical complexities in the Middle East and the potential for broader regional

instability. The ongoing conflict has significant implications for international relations and global security dynamics.



Indian Navy's Indigenous Stealth Frigate Taragiri to Be Commissioned on April 3 :-

The Indian Navy is set to commission its latest indigenous stealth frigate, Taragiri, on April 3. Built by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited, Taragiri is part of the Project 17A class and features advanced stealth capabilities. With over 75% indigenous content, the frigate strengthens India's maritime security and underscores the push towards self-reliance in defense manufacturing, enhancing the Navy's operational readiness.



Iran Strikes Israel, Trump Issues Ultimatum Over Hormuz :-

Iran launched missiles at Israel's Dimona, escalating tensions in the Middle East. The attack followed Israel's strike on Iran's Natanz facility. Trump issued a 48-hour ultimatum to Iran over the Strait of Hormuz. The conflict threatens global stability, with potential attacks on energy infrastructure. The situation remains critical, impacting civilian safety and international relations. Both

sides prepare for further military action, with global repercussions expected.



Assam Rifles Celebrates 191st Raising Day with Tributes from Leaders :-

Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh extended greetings to Assam Rifles on its 191st Raising Day, commending the force's dedication to safeguarding India's borders. Shah praised their dual role in security and community trust-building in the Northeast, while Singh highlighted their critical role in national security. Assam Rifles is one of India's oldest paramilitary forces, known for its discipline and courage. The celebrations underscore the force's strategic importance in maintaining peace and stability in challenging terrains.



Over 1,000 Projects to Boost Border Connectivity: Rajnath Singh :-

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh chaired a meeting focusing on the Border Roads Organisation's role in enhancing border infrastructure and national security. Over 1,000 projects are underway to ensure all-weather connectivity in remote areas, strengthening operational readiness. The BRO's efforts in the North-East and Left-Wing Extremism-affected areas have improved defence mobility and socio-economic transformation. Modern

construction techniques and advanced equipment are being adopted to enhance infrastructure development speed and quality.



Israel Strikes Iranian Nuclear Facilities Amid Rising Tensions :-

In a significant escalation in the Middle East, Israeli air strikes have targeted two Iranian nuclear sites, including the Khondab Heavy Water Complex near Arak and a yellowcake production plant in Ardakan. The strikes follow Israel's warnings to expand their offensive against Iran's nuclear program. No casualties or radiation risks have been reported. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is monitoring the situation closely, urging restraint to avoid nuclear mishaps.



Adani Defence Delivers Prahar Light Machine Guns to Army :-

Adani Defence and Aerospace delivered 2,000 Prahar Light Machine Guns to the Indian Armed Forces. Manufactured at their Gwalior complex, the delivery marks a milestone in the 'Make in India' initiative. The company aims to deliver 41,000 LMGs in under three years, ahead of the seven-year deadline. This development underscores India's efforts to enhance domestic defence manufacturing capabilities and reduce reliance on imports.

8: Economy



India-Israel Elevate Ties to Special Strategic Partnership

In a significant diplomatic move, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced the elevation of bilateral relations to a 'Special Strategic Partnership'. This partnership will encompass wide-ranging cooperation in technology, defence, trade, and people-to-people ties. The leaders emphasized the complementarity between India's talent and entrepreneurship and Israel's innovation hub status. Key discussions centered on innovation, cybersecurity, and regional security issues, marking a new phase in India-Israel relations.



Centre Approves ₹797 Crore Green Hydrogen Jetty Project at Paradip Port :-

The Indian government has cleared a ₹797.17 crore project to develop a green hydrogen jetty at Paradip Port, aimed at bolstering clean energy logistics. The project, approved by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, will include a dedicated jetty, storage systems, and pipelines for handling green hydrogen and other liquid cargo. This initiative aligns with India's National Green Hydrogen Mission, promoting sustainable infrastructure development. The project is expected to enhance Odisha's green hydrogen production clusters, integrating them with global markets and positioning India as a leader in green energy logistics.



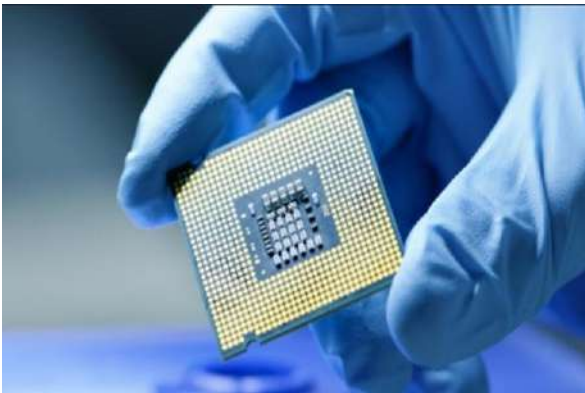
Venezuelan Oil Sale Proceeds Now Managed by US Treasury :-

The US Treasury Department is now directly managing the proceeds from Venezuelan oil sales, following a landmark deal with Caracas. This move aims to protect the funds from creditors and ensure they benefit Venezuelan citizens. The change comes after the ousting of Venezuelan President Maduro, with the US overseeing the country's oil exports. Revenue from Venezuelan crude is expected to reach \$2 billion soon, with plans to invest in infrastructure and healthcare improvements.



Assam Leads India's Muga Silk Production: Economic and Cultural Impact :-

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced that Assam accounts for 90% of India's Muga silk and 65% of Eri silk production, emphasizing the state's pivotal role in the silk sector. These indigenous silks are crucial to sustaining rural livelihoods and strengthening Assam's agrarian economy. The state government is implementing initiatives to enhance productivity and market access, supporting the vision of #AtmanirbharAssam. Muga silk, known for its golden sheen, holds a Geographical Indication tag.



India's Semiconductor Talent Push Gains Momentum :-

Delhi's leading educational institutions are pivotal in India's semiconductor mission, training students in chip design under the Chips to Startups (C2S) scheme. Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw highlighted the progress towards training 85,000 engineers. With world-class tools provided to 315 institutions, students gain hands-on experience in semiconductor technologies. The initiative aims to expand to 500 universities, positioning India as a global semiconductor hub, creating significant job opportunities for the youth.



NMDC Achieves Historic Iron Ore Production Milestone

NMDC Limited, a leading Indian miner, has become the first in the country to produce 50 million tonnes of iron ore in a single financial year. This achievement marks a significant milestone in strengthening India's raw material base for its expanding steel sector. The company's growth under the NMDC 2.0 strategy reflects its commitment to operational excellence and national priorities. NMDC's operations in mineral-rich regions continue to ensure the country's iron ore security as India aims to expand its steelmaking capacity to 300 million tonnes by 2030.



Jan Dhan Yojana Accounts Surpass ₹2.94 Lakh Crore in Deposits :-

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced that Jan Dhan accounts under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana have accumulated deposits exceeding ₹2.94 lakh crore. The scheme, with a significant rural and female account holder base, reflects India's financial inclusion efforts. Alongside Jan Dhan, other social security initiatives like PMJJBY and PMSBY show substantial enrolment. The government's JAM trinity platform further supports financial inclusion. The data highlights

the success of policies aimed at expanding financial access across India.



US Federal Reserve Maintains Benchmark Rate Amid Economic Uncertainty :-

The US Federal Reserve has kept its benchmark federal funds rate unchanged at 3.5%-3.75%, citing solid economic activity and low job gains. The decision comes amid uncertainties related to Middle East developments and inflation risks. The Fed reiterated its commitment to supporting maximum employment and returning inflation to its 2% target. The central bank will continue to monitor economic indicators and is prepared to adjust monetary policy as necessary to address potential risks to its dual mandate.



India Boosts Fertilizer Production Ahead of Kharif Season :-

The Indian government has increased domestic urea production by 23% to ensure sufficient fertilizer availability for the upcoming Kharif 2026 season. This strategic move, involving enhanced natural gas procurement and diversified imports, aims to mitigate supply chain disruptions due to regional geopolitical tensions. The initiative ensures that farmers have timely

access to essential fertilizers, safeguarding agricultural productivity. The Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers oversees this concerted effort to maintain stable supply chains and support the agricultural sector during critical sowing periods.



India Invites Global Bids for Rare Earth Magnet Manufacturing :-

The Ministry of Heavy Industries has invited global bids to establish rare earth permanent magnet manufacturing units in India. This initiative, supported by substantial financial incentives, aims to reduce dependency on imports and strengthen domestic production capabilities. The magnets are crucial for sectors like electric vehicles and defense. The bid process reflects India's commitment to building a comprehensive domestic value chain and enhancing its position in the global market. The move aligns with the National Critical Mineral Mission to diversify supplies amid geopolitical tensions.



Finance Minister Launches 'PRARAMBH 2026' for New Tax Regime :-

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has launched 'PRARAMBH 2026', a campaign to educate citizens about the new Income Tax Act, 2025, effective

from April 1, 2026. The campaign aims to simplify tax provisions through various media platforms, promoting awareness and voluntary compliance. The upgraded Income Tax Website 2.0 was also unveiled, enhancing digital service delivery. The initiative includes multilingual guidance material and over 300 workshops nationwide, reflecting a comprehensive approach to reform India's tax system and encourage compliance.



Core Sector Growth at 2.3% in February; Cement, Steel Lead :-

India's core sector recorded a growth of 2.3% in February 2026, driven by expansions in cement, steel, fertilizers, coal, and electricity production. Cement production saw the highest growth at 9.3%, followed by steel at 7.2%. This growth reflects the performance of key infrastructure sectors, critical for economic stability. However, crude oil and natural gas outputs saw declines, highlighting areas needing attention. The overall growth indicates resilience in certain sectors amid global challenges, with implications for policy focus on infrastructure and industrial productivity to sustain economic momentum.



Over 10,000 Complaints on Ayush Suraksha Portal: Government :-

The Ayush Suraksha Portal has logged over 10,000 complaints since its launch, underscoring efforts to monitor misleading advertisements and ensure safety in traditional medicine. Launched on May 30, 2025, the portal facilitates regulatory action against misleading claims and adverse drug reactions. Maharashtra reported the highest complaints, all acted upon. The portal is part of broader regulatory initiatives for Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, and Homoeopathy systems. This reflects the government's commitment to accountability and safety in promoting traditional medicine, crucial for public health confidence.



Coal Production Reaches 1 Billion Tonne Mark, Boosting India's Energy Security :-

India's coal production has exceeded 1 billion tonnes for the second consecutive year, reflecting the country's growing self-reliance in energy. This milestone supports stable electricity generation and aligns with the government's vision of building a resilient energy framework. Improved planning and policy measures have contributed to this achievement, ensuring uninterrupted fuel supply to key sectors.



PM Modi Reviews West Asia Conflict Impact on India's Economy :-

Prime Minister Modi chaired a Cabinet Committee meeting to assess the West Asia conflict's impact on India's economy. The discussion focused on essential supplies, energy, agriculture, and trade. Strategies were developed to ensure commodity availability and explore alternative import sources. The government aims to maintain stability while addressing emerging challenges. Cooperation with state governments is crucial to prevent black-marketing and ensure public convenience during this global crisis.



Global Shares Volatile as Oil Prices Rise Amid Middle East Tensions :-

Global markets experienced volatility as oil prices rebounded following US President Donald Trump's postponement of military action against Iran. The geopolitical tensions have resulted in an energy shock, with the Strait of Hormuz remaining a flashpoint for global trade. Despite temporary relief rallies, uncertainty persists as investors remain cautious about the situation's impact on global markets. The developments underline the interconnectedness of geopolitical events and financial markets, with energy prices playing a pivotal role.



India's Health Insurance Premiums Surpass ₹1.2 Lakh Crore :-

India's health insurance sector recorded a growth rate of 9%, with total premium collections exceeding ₹1.2 lakh crore in FY 2024–25. This surge reflects increased awareness of health coverage and demand for medical expense protection. The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India has introduced timelines for cashless claims, enhancing efficiency. Factors like an ageing population and expanded policy features drive the growth. With a claims paid ratio of 87.50% and improved grievance redressal mechanisms, the sector aims for greater transparency and reliability.



India Targets 5,000 Tonnes Rare Earth Magnet Output by 2030 :-

India plans to produce 5,000 tonnes of rare earth permanent magnets by 2030, responding to rising demand in sectors like electric vehicles and renewable energy. A pilot project on NdFeB magnets is underway, with a samarium-cobalt plant operational in Visakhapatnam. The initiative is part of a coordinated policy push for critical minerals, with lithium exploration gaining momentum. The government aims to liberalize the sector, allowing private participation while maintaining strategic resource safeguards. Rare earth corridors will enhance domestic processing and value addition capabilities.



GIFT City Surpasses \$100 Billion Turnover, Boosting India's Financial Hub :-

Gujarat's GIFT City has crossed the \$100 billion turnover mark, establishing itself as a competitive global financial hub. Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel highlighted the project's growth, reflecting India's rising stature in the financial ecosystem. Hosting over 1,150 entities, GIFT City offers a conducive environment for international financial services. The development signifies India's commitment to advancing its financial infrastructure and attracting global investment, positioning the country as a leader in the global financial sector.



IEPFA Hosts 'Niveshak Shivir' in Bhubaneswar :-

The Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority organized a 'Niveshak Shivir' in Bhubaneswar, offering a platform for resolving investor grievances. Over 285 participants received assistance on unclaimed dividends and shares. This initiative is part of IEPFA's nationwide outreach to enhance investor awareness and streamline claim processes, reinforcing efforts to build a transparent financial ecosystem.

9: International



PM Modi Announces 'Villages of Excellence' for Indo-Israel Agricultural Cooperation :-

During his state visit to Israel, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the creation of 'Villages of Excellence' to deepen agricultural cooperation between India and Israel. Building on the success of the Indo-Israel Centres of Excellence, the initiative aims to extend Israeli

agricultural technology to the grassroots level in India. The project will enhance income and productivity for millions of Indian farmers by integrating advanced techniques in nursery management, cultivation, irrigation, and fertigation.



PM Modi Pays Tribute at Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust Memorial :-

During his state visit to Israel, PM Modi paid his respects at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial. Accompanied by PM Netanyahu, Modi laid a wreath and visited the Book of Names. The visit underscores India's commitment to remembering Holocaust victims and promoting peace. The solemn ceremony reflects shared values of humanity and respect between India and Israel.



Pakistan Declares 'Open War' on Afghanistan Amid Rising Tensions :-

Pakistan declared 'open war' against Afghanistan following airstrikes in Kabul, Kandahar, and Paktia. Pakistan's Defense Minister accused the Taliban of harboring militant groups and exporting terrorism. The escalation follows longstanding tensions over cross-border militancy and the disputed Durand Line. The Taliban condemned the strikes as violations of Afghan sovereignty. This development highlights the fragile security situation in the region, impacting diplomatic relations and regional stability.



Melania Trump to Chair UN Security Council Meeting on Education :-

Melania Trump will chair a United Nations Security Council meeting on education, marking the first time a spouse of a world leader has held such a position. The meeting, focused on 'Children, Technology, and Education in Conflict,' underscores the role of education in promoting global peace. This event highlights U.S. engagement with the UN and Melania Trump's advocacy for children's causes. It reflects the broader diplomatic efforts to address global educational challenges and the significance of international cooperation in advancing educational initiatives.



CEO of World Economic Forum Steps Down Amid Epstein Scandal :-

Borge Brende, CEO of the World Economic Forum, resigned following an investigation into his ties with Jeffrey Epstein. His resignation comes amid scrutiny of Epstein's connections with global leaders. Brende's decision highlights the ongoing impact of the Epstein scandal on international organizations and the importance of transparency and accountability in leadership roles. The WEF's response indicates a commitment to maintaining its integrity and focus on global economic issues amidst challenging circumstances.



UK Cinemas React to Paramount's Acquisition of Warner Bros :-

British cinemas have cautiously welcomed Paramount's acquisition of Warner Bros, expressing concerns about potential job losses and reduced movie releases. Netflix's withdrawal from the bidding war simplifies the situation but does not alleviate fears of industry consolidation. Paramount's commitment to a robust film slate offers some reassurance. The acquisition highlights the evolving dynamics of the entertainment industry, where streaming giants and traditional studios vie for dominance.



Air India Flight Returns Amid Israel-Iran Conflict Escalation :-

Air India's Delhi–Tel Aviv flight returned to Delhi after Israel's preventive strikes on Iran, which prompted airspace closures across the Middle East. The escalating conflict has disrupted international flight operations, with many airlines rerouting or canceling flights. The Israel Defense Forces ordered nationwide school closures and advised citizens to work from home as a precaution against potential missile attacks. The

situation remains tense, with global airlines closely monitoring developments in the region.



Bill Clinton Testifies on Epstein Ties to US Congress :-

Former President Bill Clinton testified before a congressional panel about his ties to the late Jeffrey Epstein. The closed-door session, part of an inquiry into Epstein's activities, follows testimony from Hillary Clinton. The panel seeks to understand the nature of Clinton's association with Epstein, including his flights on Epstein's plane. The inquiry has stirred political tensions, with Democrats calling for similar scrutiny of former President Trump, who also had connections to Epstein.



India and Finland Sign Key Agreements for Strategic Partnership :-

India and Finland have signed a series of agreements to strengthen bilateral cooperation across sectors such as mobility, sustainability, technology, and innovation during Finnish President Alexander Stubb's visit to India. The agreements aim to elevate ties to a Strategic Partnership in Digitalization and Sustainability, reflecting growing collaboration in emerging technologies and green transition. Key agreements include a Migration and Mobility Partnership to facilitate skilled professional

movement, and a renewed MoU on Environmental Cooperation, expanding collaboration in bioenergy and renewable technologies. The visit underscores the deepening relationship between the two nations.



Trump Overhauls Washington with Ambitious Redesign Projects :-

President Donald Trump is undertaking a sweeping redesign of Washington, including a \$400 million White House ballroom and a 250-foot Independence Arch. The projects aim to transform iconic landmarks, drawing criticism from preservationists. The redesign includes plans for a renovated Kennedy Center and changes to the Oval Office and Rose Garden. The initiatives reflect Trump's vision for enhancing Washington's architectural landscape, but have sparked public debate over the preservation of historic sites and the prioritization of public funds.



MEA Issues Advisory for Foreign Nationals Amid West Asia Crisis :-

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) issued an advisory for foreign nationals affected by the West Asia crisis to approach the nearest FRRO for visa assistance. This comes amid escalating tensions following military strikes

involving the U.S., Israel, and Iran, leading to travel disruptions and airspace closures. Indian nationals in the region are advised to exercise caution, avoid non-essential travel, and stay close to designated shelters. With travel disruptions affecting visa timelines, the advisory ensures foreign visitors can maintain legal status in India, highlighting the government's proactive measures in response to the evolving situation.



Afghanistan Fires at Pakistani Jets Amid Regional Tensions :-

Amid escalating regional tensions, Afghanistan reportedly fired at Pakistani jets over Kabul following blasts and gunfire. This development is part of ongoing instability exacerbated by U.S.-Israeli strikes on Iran and retaliatory actions. The conflict between Afghanistan and Pakistan has raised fears of prolonged hostilities, with several countries calling for restraint and offering to mediate a ceasefire. The situation highlights the fragile security dynamics in the region and the challenges of maintaining stability amid complex geopolitical conflicts.



NHRC Rescues Six Indian Workers Held in Thailand :-

The NHRC successfully rescued six Indian workers held captive and tortured in Thailand. Following their

intervention, four workers were repatriated to India, with efforts ongoing for the remaining two. The workers, from Odisha, were confined and forced to work without wages. The NHRC's prompt action led to collaboration with Thai authorities and the employer, ensuring the workers' release. This case highlights the critical role of human rights bodies in protecting citizens abroad.



PM Modi Congratulates Nepal on Successful Elections :-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated Nepal on the peaceful conduct of its recent elections. He described the event as a proud moment in Nepal's democratic journey and reaffirmed India's commitment to fostering close ties with Nepal's new government. The successful elections are seen as a milestone for Nepal, highlighting the nation's dedication to democratic processes. As a neighbouring country, India is poised to strengthen its partnership with Nepal, focusing on shared peace, progress, and prosperity in the region.



Iran Threatens Oil Blockade Amid Escalating Tensions with U.S. and Israel :-

Iran's Revolutionary Guards announced a potential blockade of oil exports if U.S. and Israeli attacks persist, escalating tensions in the Middle East. President Trump

warned of severe retaliation if Iran disrupts oil flow through the Strait of Hormuz. The conflict has already impacted global oil markets, causing price fluctuations. Diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis continue, with potential implications for global energy supplies and geopolitical stability.



Indonesia Plans Social Media Restrictions for Children Under 16 :-

Indonesia is set to implement a new regulation requiring social media platforms to deactivate accounts for users under 16. The move aims to protect children from online risks, with platforms like YouTube and TikTok engaging with the government to understand the provisions. The regulation reflects global concerns over child safety and mental health, as governments worldwide consider similar measures to safeguard young users.



US Conducts Rescue Operations After Aircraft Crash in Iraq :-

The US military is conducting rescue operations following the crash of a KC-135 refueling aircraft in Iraq. The incident occurred during Operation Epic Fury, a mission against Iranian targets. Although not a result of hostile

fire, the crash underscores the risks associated with military operations in the region. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for downing the aircraft, highlighting the ongoing tensions and complex security dynamics in the Middle East. Investigations are underway to determine the cause and implications of the crash.



India Resumes Riyadh Flights Amid West Asia Tensions

The Indian Ministry of Civil Aviation has resumed flights to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, amid the evolving West Asia situation. The resumption marks a crucial step in restoring air connectivity, with airlines adjusting operations to ensure passenger safety. The ministry is coordinating with airlines to monitor airfares and maintain smooth travel. This development underscores the importance of strategic planning and collaboration in managing international air travel during geopolitical uncertainties.



UN Urges India to Mediate in Iran-Israel Conflict :-

The United Nations Human Rights Office has called on India to play a diplomatic role in resolving the escalating conflict between Iran and Israel. The conflict has led to humanitarian crises and economic disruptions, affecting

countries in the region and beyond. The UN emphasized the importance of influential countries like India in facilitating dialogue and securing a ceasefire. The appeal comes amidst growing concerns over civilian casualties and potential violations of international humanitarian law, highlighting the need for global diplomatic engagement to prevent further escalation.



CBSE Cancels Class 12 Exams in West Asia Amid Crisis :-

CBSE has cancelled Class 12 board exams in several West Asian countries due to regional unrest. This decision affects students in Bahrain, Iran, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. The board will announce alternative result procedures soon. This move reflects the impact of geopolitical tensions on education and the challenges in ensuring academic continuity for Indian students abroad.



Argentina Officially Withdraws from World Health Organization :-

Argentina has formally withdrawn from the World Health Organization, emphasizing its sovereignty in health policy. The decision, effective one year after notification, allows Argentina to design health policies that align with national priorities. The government asserts that withdrawal will not affect healthcare quality, as

Argentina does not rely on WHO funding. This move marks a significant shift in Argentina's engagement with global health institutions, reflecting its commitment to independent health governance.



Iran Expands Military Response with Strikes on Gulf Energy Hubs :-

In a significant escalation of ongoing conflicts in West Asia, Iran launched missile strikes targeting key energy infrastructure across the Gulf. The attacks followed a reported strike on Iran's South Pars gas field, which Tehran attributed to the US and Israel. Qatar's Ras Laffan industrial city, a critical hub for global LNG exports, was severely impacted, with extensive damage reported. The UAE intercepted missiles targeting its Habshan gas facility, while Saudi Arabia neutralized threats aimed at its Eastern Province.



Jaishankar and Israeli Counterpart Discuss West Asia Conflict :-

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar engaged in a telephonic conversation with Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar to discuss the ongoing conflict in West Asia. The dialogue underscores India's proactive diplomatic efforts to maintain regional stability amid escalating tensions. Jaishankar's interactions with global

counterparts reflect India's emphasis on dialogue and cooperation to address the multifaceted challenges posed by the conflict. These efforts are crucial for safeguarding India's strategic interests and ensuring the safety of Indian nationals in the region.



EU Leaders Call for Moratorium on Strikes in Middle East :-

European Union leaders have called for a moratorium on military strikes targeting energy and water facilities in the Middle East, amid concerns about the conflict's impact on the global economy. The EU's stance emphasizes the protection of civilian infrastructure and adherence to international law. This diplomatic appeal reflects the broader international effort to de-escalate tensions in the region and ensure stability in global energy markets, which are vital for economic growth and security across the world.



Iran Offers Passage to Japanese Vessels Amid Hormuz Blockade :-

Iran has expressed readiness to allow Japanese vessels to transit the Strait of Hormuz, a key oil supply route largely closed during the U.S.-Iran conflict. Iranian Foreign Minister Araqchi's statement highlights Tehran's

diplomatic outreach to Japan, a major oil importer. The move comes amid global calls for de-escalation and reflects Iran's attempts to maintain critical economic partnerships.



Iran Allows Strait of Hormuz Passage for Non-Enemy Ships :-

Amidst tensions, Iran stated that the Strait of Hormuz remains open to non-enemy ships, coordinating safety with Tehran. The statement comes during the US-Israel conflict with Iran, which threatens global energy supply through the strait. Iran prioritizes diplomacy while emphasizing the aggression from the US and Israel as the root cause of the situation. The announcement aims to ensure maritime safety while addressing international concerns over regional stability.



Japan Considers Minesweeping in Hormuz Post-Ceasefire :-

Japan's Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi indicated potential minesweeping operations in the Strait of Hormuz, contingent on a ceasefire in the ongoing Iran-US-Israel conflict. Japan's top-level minesweeping technology could play a significant role in securing the critical energy route. The conflict has raised concerns over regional stability, affecting Japan's crude oil

imports. The situation underscores Japan's strategic interest in maintaining maritime safety and energy security.



Bahrain Proposes UN Resolution to Secure Strait of Hormuz :-

Bahrain has submitted a draft UN Security Council resolution aiming to authorize countries to use 'all necessary means' to safeguard commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz. The resolution, backed by Gulf Arab states and the US, targets Iran's actions as a threat to international peace. However, it faces potential vetoes from Russia and China. Meanwhile, France has proposed a more conciliatory draft, emphasizing diplomatic solutions. The Strait of Hormuz is a critical global oil supply route, and its security remains a top priority for international stakeholders.



India Showcases Rural Water, Sanitation Model to Sri Lankan MPs :-

India's Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation presented its rural drinking water and sanitation framework to a Sri Lankan parliamentary delegation led by MP S.M. Marikkar. The session highlighted India's Jal Jeevan Mission and Swachh Bharat Mission-Grameen, which have significantly increased rural tap water access

and achieved nationwide open defecation-free status. The programs, designed with a decentralized approach, focus on infrastructure creation, sustainability, and community participation.



Trump Extends Pause on Striking Iran's Energy Plants :-

U.S. President Donald Trump announced an extension of the pause on strikes against Iran's energy infrastructure until April 6, amid ongoing conflict in the Middle East. While Trump stated that talks with Iran are progressing well, Iranian officials dismissed the U.S. proposal as one-sided. The conflict has significantly impacted global markets, with oil prices soaring due to disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz. The situation remains tense as both sides engage in retaliatory actions. The international community continues to watch developments closely, given the conflict's broader geopolitical implications.



Marco Rubio Holds Call with Kurdish Leader Amid Iran Conflict :-

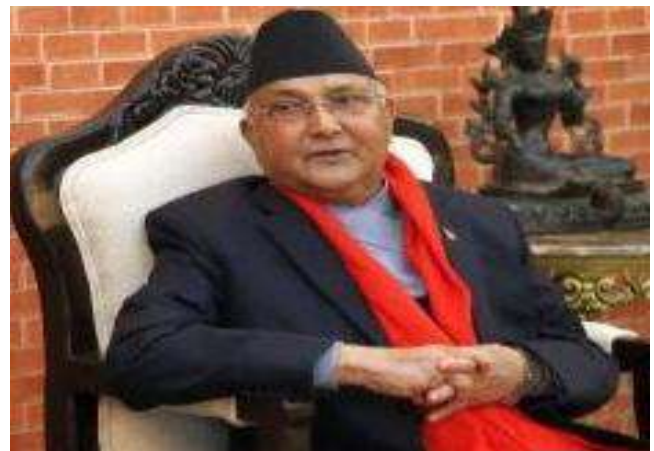
U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio held a discussion with Kurdistan Regional Government Prime Minister Masrour Barzani, expressing gratitude for Kurdish support in oil exports despite the ongoing Iran conflict. Rubio conveyed condolences for casualties in recent Iranian missile attacks on Kurdish bases. The call highlights the strategic importance of Kurdish cooperation in stabilizing regional oil supplies. The Iran

conflict continues to impact global markets, with Rubio's engagement reflecting U.S. diplomatic efforts to manage regional tensions and ensure energy security amidst escalating hostilities.



Trump Urges Saudi Arabia to Join Abraham Accords :-

US President Donald Trump has urged Saudi Arabia to join the Abraham Accords, highlighting its potential impact on regional peace. The accords, originally signed in 2020, marked a significant diplomatic shift in Arab-Israeli relations. Saudi Arabia's participation could further enhance regional stability and cooperation, although it remains contingent on progress in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.



Nepal's Ex-PM Oli Arrested Over Gen Z Protest Deaths

Former Nepalese Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli has been arrested in connection with the deaths during last year's Gen Z anti-corruption protests. The arrest follows a panel's recommendation to prosecute him for negligence. This development occurs amidst political changes in Nepal, with rapper-turned-politician Balendra Shah recently sworn in as the new Prime Minister. The situation highlights ongoing political challenges in Nepal.

10: Miscellaneous



Expelled AIADMK Leader O Panneerselvam Joins DMK :-

O Panneerselvam, former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and expelled AIADMK leader, has joined the DMK in the presence of Chief Minister M.K. Stalin. This political shift occurs ahead of the upcoming Tamil Nadu Assembly elections, potentially altering the political landscape. Panneerselvam's move follows his expulsion from AIADMK due to a leadership conflict. His joining DMK adds a new dimension to the electoral contest, highlighting the dynamic nature of Tamil Nadu's political arena and the significance of strategic alliances in shaping electoral outcomes.



Vice President Confers Degrees at Delhi University's 102nd Convocation :-

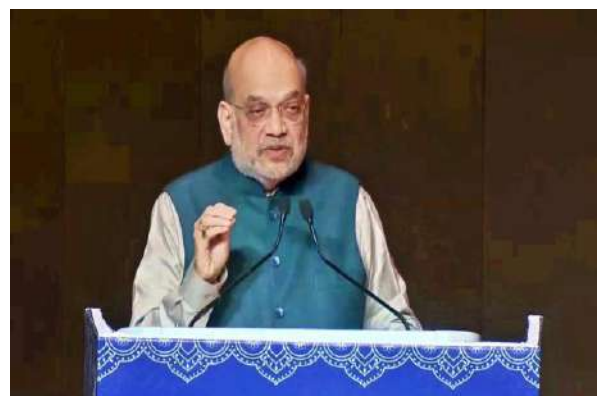
Vice President C. P. Radhakrishnan conferred degrees on over 1.2 lakh students at Delhi University's 102nd Convocation. The event celebrated the university's transformation into a leading academic institution, emphasizing the role of education in national

development. Radhakrishnan highlighted the increasing participation of women in higher education and the importance of lifelong learning. The ceremony underscored the university's commitment to nurturing leaders and innovators, aligning with the national vision of Viksit Bharat and Aatmanirbhar Bharat.



PM Modi Highlights Jan Aushadhi Initiative on Its Anniversary :-

On Jan Aushadhi Diwas 2026, PM Modi emphasized the success of the Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana. The scheme has significantly reduced healthcare costs, with Jan Aushadhi Kendras offering medicines at affordable prices. The initiative has helped citizens save over ₹40,000 crore on medicines. Women entrepreneurs have played a vital role in the program's expansion, making healthcare accessible to millions across India. Modi reiterated the government's commitment to affordable healthcare.



Amit Shah Highlights Jan Aushadhi Initiative's Impact on Affordable Healthcare :-

Union Home Minister Amit Shah extended greetings on Jan Aushadhi Diwas, emphasizing the Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana's success in providing affordable medicines. With around 18,000 Jan Aushadhi Kendras, the scheme has saved citizens over ₹40,000 crore on healthcare expenses. Shah highlighted the program's role in spreading awareness about generic medicines and alleviating the financial burden on the poor. The initiative underscores the government's commitment to accessible healthcare for all.



Bangladesh Closes Universities to Conserve Energy Amid Middle East Conflict :-

Facing an energy crisis linked to the Middle East conflict, Bangladesh has decided to close all universities, advancing Eid al-Fitr holidays to conserve electricity and fuel. This measure aims to reduce the strain on the country's power system and alleviate traffic congestion. Bangladesh, heavily reliant on energy imports, is grappling with fuel supply disruptions. The government has imposed fuel sales limits and urged educational institutions to reduce operations. The crisis highlights the interconnectedness of global energy markets and the impact of geopolitical tensions on national policies.



Cabinet Approves Connectivity Corridor for Jewar International Airport :-

The Cabinet has approved a revised ₹3,630 crore budget for a Greenfield corridor linking Noida International Airport to the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway. The 31.42 km project, implemented under the Hybrid Annuity Mode, will improve access from South Delhi, Faridabad, and Gurugram to the airport. This initiative is expected to enhance regional connectivity, support economic development, and boost logistics efficiency across the National Capital Region. The project reflects the government's commitment to developing strategic infrastructure to accommodate urban expansion and improve regional mobility.



UAE Allows Return of Residents with Expired Visas Amid Conflicts :-

In response to escalating tensions in West Asia, the UAE has introduced a temporary measure allowing residents with expired visas to return without new entry permits. This decision, valid until March 31, addresses exceptional

circumstances preventing timely returns. The UAE continues to monitor regional developments, prioritizing national security while facilitating the safe return of expatriates. This measure reflects the UAE's commitment to supporting its residents during crises, ensuring stability and humanitarian relief.



IOA Launches Tree Planting Campaign for Olympic Day :-

The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) has called on state Olympic associations to plant 2,036 trees each to celebrate Olympic Day. This initiative aims to promote environmental sustainability and align with the International Olympic Committee's Olympic Forest initiative. By involving athletes and communities, the IOA seeks to inspire ecological responsibility through sport. The campaign underscores the Olympic Movement's commitment to building a greener future, integrating sports and sustainability for positive global impact.



Foundation Laid for Major Pharma Facility in J :-

Union Minister Jitendra Singh laid the foundation for a multinational pharmaceutical facility in Kathua, Jammu and Kashmir. The project, worth ₹600-700 crore, aims to boost local

industry and reduce dependency on imports. This initiative is part of India's broader strategy to enhance pharmaceutical self-reliance and strengthen the healthcare sector.



Piyush Goyal to Withdraw Jan Vishwas Bill Amid Budget Session :-

Union Minister Piyush Goyal will request the withdrawal of the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2025, during the Lok Sabha session. The Bill aimed to decriminalize minor offences to promote trust-based governance. Its withdrawal follows recommendations from a Select Committee. The session will also feature discussions on Demands for Grants for the 2026-27 financial year and the presentation of committee reports. The proceedings reflect ongoing legislative activities vital to the Union Budget session, impacting governance and economic policies.



Top US Security Official Resigns Over Iran Conflict :-

Joe Kent, head of the National Counterterrorism Center, resigned, citing disagreement with the US's decision to engage in war with Iran. Kent stated that Iran posed no

immediate threat to the US, challenging the justification for the conflict. His resignation highlights internal dissent within the administration and raises questions about the legal and strategic grounds for the ongoing military engagement. This development underscores the complexities of foreign policy decision-making in conflict scenarios.



President Murmu Installs 'Ram Yantra' at Ayodhya's Ram Temple :-

President Droupadi Murmu marked a pivotal moment in the construction of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Temple in Ayodhya by installing the 'Shri Ram Yantra'. The installation on the temple's second floor symbolizes the completion of its construction. The event, attended by Uttar Pradesh's top leaders and Vedic scholars, underscores the temple's cultural and religious significance. The President also honored workers involved in the temple's construction and participated in various ceremonial activities, enhancing the temple's spiritual and cultural legacy.



Delhi CM Rekha Gupta Distributes Bicycles to Schoolgirls :-

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta distributed bicycles to 1,000 girl students in Pitampura, reiterating her commitment to ensuring that every girl in Delhi can complete her education without obstacles. The initiative aims to address commuting challenges faced by schoolgirls, providing them with means to continue their education seamlessly. Gupta emphasized the potential of girls as future leaders and contributors to society. The bicycle distribution is part of the government's broader efforts to promote education and empowerment for girls, reflecting a commitment to gender equality and social welfare.



Government Issues Accessibility Guidelines for OTT Platforms :-

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has mandated accessibility features on OTT platforms to support users with hearing and visual impairments. New content must include closed captioning, audio descriptions, or sign language interpretation. This move aims to promote inclusivity in digital content, ensuring equal access to entertainment and information for all. The guidelines reflect the government's commitment to creating an inclusive digital ecosystem and enhancing the viewing experience for diverse audiences.

11: National



RailOne SuperApp Surpasses Two Crore Downloads :-

RailOne, the Indian Railways SuperApp, has reached over two crore downloads within eight months of its launch. The app integrates key railway services, including ticket booking and train inquiries, enhancing passenger convenience. This rapid adoption signifies the growing digital transformation within Indian Railways, aligning with the '52 Reforms in 52 Weeks' initiative. The RailTech Policy, announced alongside, aims to foster innovation and digitization in railways, highlighting India's commitment to modernizing its transportation infrastructure.



India to Build First Riverine Lighthouses on Brahmaputra :-

In a significant development for inland navigation, India will construct its first riverine lighthouses on the Brahmaputra River. Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal laid the foundation stones for four lighthouses at key locations along National Waterway 2. The project, with an investment of ₹84 crore, aims to boost navigation and tourism in the region. The lighthouses, powered by solar

energy, will enhance navigational safety and support the development of inland water transport, underscoring the government's commitment to sustainable and efficient transportation infrastructure.



IBM Launches First Infrastructure Innovation Centre in India :-

IBM has inaugurated its first Infrastructure Innovation Centre in India at the India Systems Development Lab in Bengaluru. The Sangam Infrastructure Innovation Centre aims to position India as a hub for advanced infrastructure engineering and AI innovation. The centre will collaborate with clients, software vendors, and ecosystem partners to develop AI-based solutions, integrating hybrid cloud and advanced infrastructure technologies. This initiative reflects IBM's commitment to fostering local innovation while supporting global markets, contributing to India's AI journey and technological advancement.



Gujarat Launches herSTART Programme for Women Entrepreneurs :-

Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel has launched the fifth edition of the herSTART programme, aimed at supporting women entrepreneurs in the state. The initiative offers incubation, mentorship, and market access to women-led startups. The launch was accompanied by the inauguration of a research park at Gujarat University, reinforcing the state's commitment to women-led development. The herSTART programme aligns with national efforts to promote entrepreneurship and innovation, providing opportunities for women in emerging sectors such as technology and deep-tech innovation.



Home Minister Amit Shah Launches Digital Tools for Census 2027 :-

Union Home Minister Amit Shah has launched digital tools and mascots for India's first fully digital Census 2027. Developed by C-DAC, the tools include a Self-Enumeration Portal allowing online submissions before field surveys. The census will involve over three million officials in a two-phase exercise, capturing housing and population data. Mascots 'Pragati' and 'Vikas' will promote awareness and participation. The digital platforms aim to enhance efficiency and transparency, marking a significant step in modernizing India's census operations.



Tribes Art Fest 2026 Showcases Over 30 Tribal Art Forms in Delhi :-

Union Tribal Affairs Minister Jual Oram inaugurated the Tribes Art Fest 2026 in Delhi, highlighting the government's commitment to tribal heritage preservation and economic empowerment. Featuring over 75 tribal artists and 1,000 artworks, the festival promotes cultural preservation alongside socio-economic development. The event includes panel discussions and participatory workshops, aiming to create market linkages and sustainable livelihoods for tribal communities.



PM Modi Congratulates Civil Services Exam 2025 Topper Anuj Agnihotri :-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated the successful candidates of the Civil Services Examination 2025, highlighting their dedication and hard work. Anuj Agnihotri secured AIR 1, followed by Rajeshwari Suve M and Akansh Dhull. Modi emphasized that clearing the exam marks the beginning of a crucial journey in public service. He encouraged those who didn't succeed to explore other opportunities to contribute to the nation, reaffirming the importance of perseverance and resilience.



Shakti Walk to Celebrate Women's Leadership on International Women's Day :-

The Ministry of Women and Child Development held the 'Shakti Walk' along Kartavya Path in New Delhi to celebrate International Women's Day. The event was aimed to highlight women's central role in shaping India and featured representatives from diverse fields. The walk was culminated in cultural performances celebrating women's achievements. The initiative underscored the commitment to gender equality and empowerment, recognizing women's contributions to advancing India's development goals.

**President Murmu's Protocol Lapse in Bengal Draws Central Govt's Attention :-**

The Central government has sought a detailed report from the West Bengal administration regarding protocol lapses during President Droupadi Murmu's visit to the state. The request follows President Murmu's public expression of disappointment over the arrangements at a tribal conference she attended. Key issues include the last-minute change in venue and the absence of state ministers to receive her. The Union Home Ministry has taken note of the deviation from protocol, emphasizing the importance of adhering to established procedures during high-profile events.

**Amroha's Surbhi Yadav Secures AIR 14 in UPSC, Inspires Aspirants :-**

Surbhi Yadav from Amroha, Uttar Pradesh, has achieved All India Rank 14 in the UPSC Civil Services Examination, bringing pride to her family and community. Her success is celebrated as an inspiration for young aspirants, particularly from middle-class backgrounds. Surbhi's accomplishment highlights the role of education in empowering individuals and transforming lives, serving as a motivating example for future candidates in the civil services domain.

**Over 52,000 Indians Successfully Evacuated from Gulf Region Amid Iran Conflict :-**

The Ministry of External Affairs announced the safe return of over 52,000 Indians from the Gulf region amidst ongoing geopolitical tensions involving Iran. With disrupted travel and safety concerns, Indian carriers have been crucial in facilitating this large-scale evacuation. The government has set up a Special Control Room to assist affected individuals. Indian airlines continue to monitor the evolving situation to ensure passenger safety, while the Ministry of Civil Aviation is vigilant about maintaining reasonable airfares.

**J&K's Indira Gandhi Tulip Garden Opens March 16 with New Online Booking :-**

The Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden in Srinagar will open to the public on March 16, marking the start of Kashmir's spring season. This year, the garden boasts a record 18 lakh tulips across 70 varieties, enhanced by an online ticketing system for easier visitor access. The garden not only showcases tulips but also features daffodils, hyacinths, and more, offering a vibrant floral experience. This initiative is part of broader efforts to boost tourism and local engagement in J, with ecological restoration efforts also enhancing the region's natural beauty.



NHAI to Build Four-Lane Corridor in MP for Delhi-Mumbai Expressway :-

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved a ₹3,839 crore project to construct a four-lane highway corridor in Madhya Pradesh, linking Badnawar to the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway. Spanning 80.45 km, this development under the Hybrid Annuity Mode aims to enhance travel efficiency and connectivity. Strategically important for linking Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Ujjain, the corridor will support economic activities and reduce travel time, benefiting the region's logistics and industrial sectors.



Elephant-Train Collisions: Environment Ministry Prioritizes 77 Railway Stretches :-

In an effort to mitigate elephant deaths on railway tracks, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

has identified 77 priority railway stretches across 14 states. The decision follows a national workshop in Dehradun, focusing on policy implementation to minimize wildlife fatalities due to train collisions. Collaborative assessments by the Wildlife Institute of India, Indian Railways, and state departments have led to a mitigation plan involving wildlife-friendly infrastructure, such as ramps and bridges.



Centre Sanctions ₹1,912 Crore for Disaster Relief in Six Regions :-

The Indian government, led by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, has approved an additional ₹1,912.99 crore for disaster relief across Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Nagaland, and Jammu Kashmir. This funding from the National Disaster Response Fund aims to support recovery from recent natural calamities, including floods and cyclones. The assistance complements existing state resources and highlights the Centre's commitment to bolstering disaster preparedness and response capabilities nationwide, ensuring timely aid and recovery in affected regions.



Govt Approves Reforms in Food Safety Rules :-

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has approved major food safety reforms, including perpetual FSSAI licence validity. These changes aim to reduce compliance

costs and enhance food safety standards, reflecting the government's commitment to ease of doing business and public health.



India Post Launches '24 Speed Post' for Next-Day Delivery :-

India Post has introduced '24 Speed Post,' a new premium express delivery service guaranteeing next-day delivery of urgent consignments across six major cities, starting March 17. Launched by Union Minister Jyotiraditya M. Scindia, the service initially covers Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad. Additional features include OTP-based secure delivery, end-to-end tracking, and a Buy Now Pay Later (BNPL) facility for business customers. This initiative strengthens India Post's express delivery capabilities.



Assembly Polls 2026 Announced for Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal :-

The Election Commission of India announced the schedule for Assembly elections in Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal, with polling to take place in April 2026. Assam and Kerala will vote on April 9, Tamil Nadu on April 23, and West Bengal in two phases. The results will be declared on May 4. The elections are expected to shape the political landscape as parties prepare for the upcoming contests.



Air India Ramps Up West Asia Flights Amid Regional Tensions :-

Amid escalating tensions in West Asia, Air India and Air India Express have increased their flight operations to the region. A total of 48 flights, both scheduled and non-scheduled, are being operated to ensure connectivity and passenger safety. The increased frequency covers destinations like Jeddah, Muscat, and Riyadh, with additional flights subject to local conditions. The airlines emphasized the importance of maintaining connectivity and have coordinated with relevant authorities to manage the operations effectively.



5G Hackathon Launched with ₹50 Lakh Funding for Innovation :-

The Department of Telecommunications has launched the second edition of the 5G Innovation Hackathon 2026, aiming to foster next-generation telecom solutions and digital transformation. Open to students, start-ups, and innovators, the hackathon encourages the development of 5G, AI, and IoT technologies. Proposals are invited until April 17, 2026, with selected teams receiving financial and infrastructural support. This initiative seeks to accelerate technological advancements and showcase innovations at the India Mobile Congress 2026, contributing to India's digital economy.



Centre Strengthens Open Schooling Framework to Achieve 100% Enrolment :-

The Ministry of Education is bolstering the open schooling system through the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) to achieve a 100% Gross Enrolment Ratio by 2030. This initiative aims to reintegrate out-of-school children by offering flexible education pathways. The move is part of the National Education Policy 2020 and aligns with the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, ensuring inclusive and equitable education for all.



Indian Railways Implements Kavach System on Prayagraj-Kanpur Route :-

Indian Railways has operationalized the Kavach system on the 190-km Prayagraj-Kanpur section, enhancing safety and enabling high-speed operations on the Delhi-Howrah corridor. The indigenous system, developed under the Make in India initiative, prevents accidents by controlling train speed and applying brakes in case of signal violations. This deployment is part of Indian Railways' broader mission to modernize operations and improve passenger safety on key routes across the country.



Transgender Persons Amendment Bill 2026 Passed in Lok Sabha :-

The Lok Sabha has passed the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026, revising the definition and regulatory framework for transgender persons. The bill aims to protect individuals facing social exclusion due to biological conditions, with a focus on specific socio-cultural identities. However, it excludes self-identification based on perception, drawing protests from the community. The bill requires scrutiny for the issuance of identity certificates. The move highlights the ongoing debate over the rights and recognition of transgender persons.



PM Modi to Inaugurate Noida International Airport Phase I :-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to inaugurate Phase I of the Noida International Airport at Jewar, Uttar Pradesh, on March 28. Developed under a Public-Private Partnership model with an investment of ₹11,200 crore, the airport will serve as a major international gateway for the National Capital Region. Initially handling 12 million passengers annually, the facility aims to ease congestion and enhance passenger and cargo capacity. Equipped with advanced systems for all-weather operations, the project also integrates a multi-modal cargo hub and

emphasizes sustainability with plans to operate as a net-zero emissions facility.



CCPA Bars 'LPG Charges' in Hotel, Restaurant Bills :-

The Central Consumer Protection Authority has prohibited hotels and restaurants from adding 'LPG charges' or similar costs to consumer bills, deeming it an unfair trade practice. The advisory states that input costs should be included in menu prices, and separate charges violate consumer rights. The CCPA warns that violations may result in strict action under the Consumer Protection Act. Consumers can request charge removal or file complaints via the National Consumer Helpline. This move aims to ensure transparency and protect consumer interests in the hospitality sector.



Election Commission Completes Scrutiny of Nominations for Assembly Polls :-

The Election Commission of India has concluded the scrutiny of nominations for upcoming Assembly elections in Assam, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu, as well as bye-elections in multiple states. A total of 2,140 candidates remain in the fray across these regions. The scrutiny process was conducted transparently and involved videographed sessions to ensure fairness. The elections are scheduled for April 9, and the final list of candidates has been published. This development marks a crucial step in India's democratic process, with the polls expected to shape the political landscape in these states.



PM Modi Condoles Loss of Lives in Andhra Pradesh Mishap :-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed deep sorrow over a tragic accident in Andhra Pradesh's Markapuram district, where a bus collided with a truck, resulting in multiple casualties. Modi announced an ex-gratia payment of Rs 2 lakh for the families of the deceased and Rs 50,000 for the injured. The accident, which occurred near Rayavaram, highlights the ongoing challenges of road safety in India. The Prime Minister's response reflects the government's commitment to providing support and assistance to affected families in times of crisis.



AI Cameras and War Rooms to Manage Railway Crowds: Vaishnaw :-

Indian Railways has introduced measures to manage passenger rush, including AI-enabled CCTV cameras and dedicated war rooms. Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw announced plans for holding areas at 76 stations to reduce congestion. The initiative includes complete access control and wider foot-over-bridges to streamline passenger movement. These efforts aim to enhance safety and efficiency across major railway hubs, reflecting the government's focus on improving infrastructure and passenger experience.

12: Obituaries



K.P. Unnikrishnan, ex-Union Minister and senior Congress leader, passes away :-

K.P. Unnikrishnan, a veteran Indian politician and former Union Minister, passed away in Kozhikode, Kerala, at the age of 89 after treatment for age-related health issues. Unnikrishnan had a long and distinguished political career spanning more than three decades. He was elected six times to the Lok Sabha (India's Lower House of Parliament) from the Vadakara constituency in Kerala and served as a Union Minister in the V.P. Singh Cabinet from 1989 to 1990, handling key portfolios including Telecommunications, Shipping, and Surface Transport.



Eminent journalist and former ambassador H.K. Dua passes away at 88 :-

H.K. Dua, a respected Indian journalist and former diplomat, passed away at the age of 88. He had a distinguished career in journalism, serving as editor for prominent newspapers such as The Tribune and The Hindustan Times. Known for his insightful political analysis and commitment to ethical journalism, Dua played an important role in shaping public discourse in India. Later in his career, he also served as India's ambassador to Denmark and was nominated to the Rajya Sabha, the upper house of India's Parliament.



Veteran Journalist Narayan Bareth Passes Away at 68 in Jaipur :-

Veteran journalist Narayan Bareth passed away at the age of 68 in Jaipur, marking the loss of a respected voice in Indian journalism. Bareth was widely known for his insightful political reporting and deep understanding of regional and national issues. Over several decades, he worked with various media organizations and earned recognition for his analytical writing, balanced reporting, and commitment to journalistic ethics. He also contributed significantly as a commentator and public affairs analyst, frequently appearing in television discussions to explain complex political developments.



Eminent historian K.N. Panikkar passes away :-

Renowned historian K. N. Panikkar, a leading scholar of modern Indian history, passed away at a hospital in Thiruvananthapuram at the age of 89. Throughout his academic career, Panikkar made significant contributions to the study of colonial India, nationalism, and the social and cultural transformations during British rule. He was closely associated with progressive and secular academic thought and often spoke against communal interpretations of history. Panikkar also served on several national academic bodies and participated in historical research projects documenting India's freedom movement.



Veteran Tamil filmmaker Thakkali Srinivasan passes away at 72 in Bengaluru :-

Veteran Tamil filmmaker Thakkali Srinivasan passed away in Bengaluru at the age of 72 after battling prolonged health issues. Srinivasan was a versatile figure in the South Indian film industry, known for working as a director, producer, composer, actor, and screenwriter

over several decades. He gained recognition for his involvement in films such as *Nalaya Manithan* (1989), *Adhisaya Manithan* (1990), and the horror film *Jenna Natchathiram* (1991), which helped shape the horror and mystery genre in Tamil cinema during the late 1980s and early 1990s.



Actress Madhu Malhotra Passed Away :-

Veteran Bollywood actress Madhu Malhotra passed away in March 2026 at the age of around 71–72, marking the end of a long association with the Hindi film industry. She was known for her supporting roles in several popular films of the late 1970s and 1980s and gained recognition for appearing in well-known movies such as *Hero* and *Satte Pe Satta*. Over the years, she built a reputation as a dependable character actor who contributed to many successful productions. Malhotra's performances, though often in supporting roles, were appreciated for their natural style and expressive screen presence.



Actor Chuck Norris passes away at 86 :-

The death of Chuck Norris at the age of 86 marks the end of an era in martial arts and action cinema. A legendary figure, Norris gained fame through films and television shows like Walker, Texas Ranger and was also a close associate of Bruce Lee. He played a major role in popularizing martial arts in mainstream entertainment and inspired generations of fighters and actors. His passing followed a medical emergency, and tributes have poured in from fans and the global MMA community, reflecting his lasting legacy.



Four time Lok Sabha MP and veteran BJP leader Datta Meghe passed away :-

Veteran BJP leader and four-time Lok Sabha MP Datta Meghe passed away at the age of 89, marking the end of a long and influential political career spanning over five decades. He represented constituencies such as Nagpur, Ramtek, and Wardha in Maharashtra and also served as a Rajya Sabha member between 2002 and 2008. Initially associated with the Congress and later the Nationalist Congress Party, he joined the Bharatiya Janata Party in 2014. Beyond politics, he was widely known for his contributions to education and healthcare, establishing several institutions that benefited rural communities.



Harish Rana, first to be allowed passive euthanasia in India, dies at AIIMS :-

The news of Harish Rana's death marks the end of a historic and emotionally significant legal case in India. Rana, who had been in a permanent vegetative state for over 13 years following a severe brain injury in 2013, became the first person in India to be granted passive euthanasia by the Supreme Court. After a landmark judgment in March 2026, the Court allowed withdrawal of life-sustaining treatment, recognizing the right to die with dignity under Article 21. He passed away at AIIMS in New Delhi after the medical process was carried out under strict guidelines and supervision.



Malayalam actor-director E.A. Rajendran passes away at 71 :-

Veteran Malayalam actor and director E. A. Rajendran passed away at the age of 71 in Kollam, Kerala, after battling age-related health issues for some time. He had a long and distinguished career spanning theatre, cinema, and television, with appearances in around 60 films. Known for his versatility, Rajendran played both character roles and antagonists in notable Malayalam movies such as Kaliyattam, Pranayavarnangal, and Daya. He began his artistic journey in theatre and trained at the National School of Drama before transitioning into films and television. His passing is considered a significant loss to the Malayalam film industry.

13: Ranks & Reports



India Projects 6.8–7.2% GDP Growth in 2026–27: EY Report :-

India's GDP is projected to grow between 6.8% and 7.2% in FY 2026–27, driven by trade agreements and economic reforms, according to EY's Economy Watch report. The report highlights India's improved medium-term growth outlook amid global uncertainties. Achieving the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision requires enhanced tax compliance and sustained fiscal consolidation. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman outlines plans for fiscal deficit reduction, balancing growth support with fiscal stability.



UIDAI Biometric Update Drive Covers Over 1 Lakh Schools :-

The Unique Identification Authority of India's drive for Mandatory Biometric Updates (MBU) in Aadhaar has covered over 1,03,000 schools, benefiting 1.2 crore children. Launched in September 2025, the mission integrates with the UDISE+ application, facilitating real-time biometric update status visibility. The initiative ensures seamless Aadhaar authentication for accessing

government schemes and is crucial for entrance exam registrations. Biometric updates are free for children aged 7-15 for a year starting October 2025.



PM Modi's YouTube Channel Surpasses 30 Million Subscribers :-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's YouTube channel has reached over 30 million subscribers, highlighting his significant digital presence. This achievement follows his milestone of 100 million followers on Instagram, making him the first world leader to achieve this feat. PM Modi's use of digital platforms enhances his communication with the public, reflecting his influence and engagement in the digital age.



Oil Prices Surge Over 25% Amid Prolonged Middle East Conflict :-

Oil prices have surged over 25%, reaching their highest levels since mid-2022, due to escalating tensions in the Middle East. Major producers have cut supplies, and disruptions around the Strait of Hormuz have heightened market fears. The conflict has led to significant shipping delays, impacting global oil supply chains. Analysts warn of sustained high prices if regional tensions persist. This

surge is expected to have widespread economic implications, including increased fuel costs for consumers and businesses, and could potentially strain the global recovery from recent economic challenges.



Oil Prices Drop as Trump Predicts Middle East Conflict Resolution :-

Oil prices fell after U.S. President Donald Trump predicted a quick end to the Middle East conflict, easing concerns over prolonged supply disruptions. Brent crude fell by over 4%, reflecting market optimism about a potential de-escalation. The conflict, involving the U.S. and Israel against Iran, had previously driven prices above \$100 per barrel. Despite the drop, analysts warn of ongoing risks, especially with Iran's threat to block oil exports if attacks continue.



India's Foodgrain Output Hits Record Levels in 2025-26 Estimates :-

India's foodgrain production for 2025-26 is projected at record levels, with Kharif and Rabi seasons expecting strong outputs. The Ministry of Agriculture projects Kharif foodgrain at 1,741.44 LMT and Rabi at 1,745.13 LMT, with significant increases in rice, wheat, and maize production. The estimates reflect robust agricultural performance, driven by favorable conditions and advancements in farming practices. These projections

support food security and economic stability, underscoring the sector's critical role in India's growth and development.



India's Metro Network Ranks Third Globally, Says Union Minister :-

Union Minister of State for Housing and Urban Affairs, Tokhan Sahu, announced that India now boasts the third-largest metro network in the world. With over 1,143 kilometres operational across 29 cities and 936 kilometres under construction, India's metro network has rapidly expanded under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The development is a significant step in improving urban mobility, reducing traffic congestion, and promoting sustainable transportation solutions. The metro networks have not only improved connectivity but have also contributed to social changes, like better safety for women commuters.



India's Data Centre Capacity Quadruples Since 2020 :-

India's data centre capacity has grown fourfold, reaching 1,500 MW by 2025, driven by the rise of AI and digital services. Union Minister Jitin Prasada highlighted the expansion of AI compute capacity and the support for startups and researchers at subsidized rates. With electricity demand from data centres projected to reach 13.56 GW by 2032, the government is expanding national transmission infrastructure. The adoption of

advanced cooling technologies is also reducing the environmental impact of data centre operations, supporting sustainable growth in the sector.



India Leads Global Coconut Production, Announces Promotion Scheme :-

India maintains its position as the leading producer of coconuts, contributing over 30% to global output. The government has announced a Coconut Promotion Scheme to enhance productivity and replace old trees with high-yielding varieties. This initiative, part of a broader ₹350 crore allocation for high-value agriculture, aims to strengthen India's agricultural sector and support the livelihoods of millions involved in coconut farming. This development highlights India's agricultural prowess and commitment to sustainable farming practices.



Aadhaar Emerges as World's Largest Biometric ID System :-

Aadhaar, India's biometric identity system, has become the largest in the world, with 134 crore users and over 17,000 crore authentication transactions. Union Minister Jitin Prasada highlighted Aadhaar's role in enabling identity verification for service delivery. The system, managed by UIDAI, utilizes AI and machine learning for accurate verification. Aadhaar's robust privacy safeguards and compliance audits ensure data protection. The initiative has significantly enhanced service delivery, making it a cornerstone of India's digital infrastructure.



Global Oil Prices Fall as US Considers Easing Iran Sanctions :-

Global oil prices have declined following US indications of potentially easing sanctions on Iranian crude to stabilize market supplies. This development comes amid heightened tensions in West Asia, impacting global energy dynamics. The easing of sanctions could lead to increased oil exports from Iran, influencing price volatility and market stability. Such geopolitical maneuvers have significant implications for energy-importing nations like India, affecting domestic economic conditions and energy security. The evolving situation requires careful monitoring by global stakeholders.



India's Pharma Market Projected to Reach \$130 Billion by 2030 :-

India's pharmaceutical industry, a global leader in volume and a significant player in value, is projected to grow from its current valuation of \$60 billion to \$130 billion by 2030. This growth is supported by a robust manufacturing base, rising exports, foreign investment, and government initiatives aimed at reducing import dependency and enhancing global market presence. The sector's expansion is further bolstered by trade agreements with regions like the EU and the UK, enhancing market access.



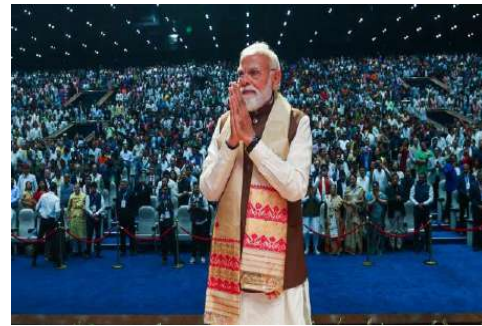
Gold Prices Plummet Amid Strong Dollar and Profit Booking :-

Gold prices fell sharply by nearly 6% this week due to profit booking and a strengthening U.S. dollar. The decline contrasts with earlier safe-haven demand driven by geopolitical tensions. Analysts attribute the drop to global cues and central banks' cautious stance on interest rates, affecting precious metals' appeal. The market outlook remains cautious amid ongoing economic uncertainties.



India's Export Growth Resilient Amid Global Challenges

India's exports have reached USD 714.73 billion in April-January FY 2025-26, reflecting a 5.26% growth despite global uncertainties. The government continues to support export competitiveness through policy initiatives like the Foreign Trade Policy 2023 and the Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products scheme. Emphasis on MSME participation and digital infrastructure is driving export growth. These efforts align with India's strategic trade goals, positioning the country as a key player in the global economy.



PM Modi Tops Global Approval Rankings with 68% Rating :-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been ranked the world's most popular leader with a 68% approval rating in a global survey by Morning Consult. The survey, conducted between March 2-8, places him ahead of leaders from Switzerland and South Korea, who each have a 62% rating. Modi's leadership continues to garner international recognition, reflecting his enduring popularity and influence on the global stage. The survey underscores Modi's significant approval as he continues to lead India on the path of development and global engagement.



India Positions Itself as Global Electro-Tech Manufacturing Hub :-

According to a World Economic Forum report, India is emerging as a global leader in electro-tech manufacturing, driven by its focus on renewable energy and technology. The country is leveraging its strengths in solar power and battery production to industrialize sustainably, bypassing traditional fossil fuel reliance. India's electronics industry has expanded significantly, contributing to its capability in manufacturing solar panels, batteries, and electric vehicles. This strategic positioning aims to enhance energy sovereignty and establish India as a key player in global supply chains, aligning with its sustainable development goals.

14: Schemes & Committees



RailTech Policy Launched to Drive Innovation in Indian Railways :-

Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw announced the RailTech Policy to integrate technology and innovation within Indian Railways. The policy encourages engagement with startups and research institutions through a dedicated digital portal. Key focus areas include AI-enabled systems for safety, efficiency, and maintenance. This initiative represents a shift from traditional procurement to an innovation-driven framework, aiming to enhance service delivery and operational efficiency across the railway network.



Union Minister Sonowal Inaugurates Inland Waterways Projects in Assam :-

Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal inaugurated three major inland waterways projects in Dibrugarh, Assam. The projects aim to enhance logistics, trade, and tourism along National Waterway-2 (Brahmaputra). This initiative reflects the government's commitment to preserving cultural identity while fostering economic development. By strengthening inland waterways infrastructure, the projects are expected to reduce logistics costs and boost regional trade, contributing to Assam's growth as a strategic economic corridor.



PM Modi Unveils Rs 4,400 Crore Infra Projects in Madurai :-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated infrastructure projects worth over Rs 4,400 crore in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, marking a significant step in the state's development journey. The projects include major highway expansions and redeveloped railway stations aimed at improving connectivity, boosting economic activity, and enhancing quality of life. These initiatives are expected to reduce travel time, enhance regional connectivity, and support trade and socio-economic advancement, aligning with the national vision of a developed India by 2047.



PM Modi Inaugurates Development Projects Worth Rs 2,700 Crore in Puducherry :-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated and laid the foundation stone for development projects worth over Rs 2,700 crore in Puducherry, covering infrastructure, education, healthcare, housing, and mobility. The projects aim to enhance ease of living and accelerate economic growth in the Union Territory. Modi emphasized the Centre's vision of 'BEST Puducherry' representing Business, Education, Spirituality, and Tourism. Major connectivity projects are expected to decongest Puducherry town and reduce travel time, boosting tourism and trade.



Project HANUMAN Launched to Address Growing Human Wildlife Conflict :-

The government has launched Project HANUMAN to address the increasing incidents of human-wildlife conflict in different parts of India. The initiative focuses on improving monitoring systems, community awareness, and conflict-mitigation strategies in areas where wildlife frequently comes into contact with human settlements. The project involves coordination between forest departments, wildlife experts, and local

communities to protect both people and animals. Measures may include better habitat management, early-warning systems, and the use of modern technology for tracking wildlife movement.



Amit Shah Inaugurates Projects Worth ₹3,770 Crore in Odisha :-

Union Home Minister Amit Shah inaugurated projects worth over ₹3,770 crore in Odisha, including initiatives by NDDDB and OMFED. The sulphuric acid plant at Paradip strengthens domestic production, aiming for self-reliance. Shah also laid the foundation for a National Forensic Sciences University campus. The cooperative sector will see significant growth, with a focus on dairy cooperatives to boost rural incomes. Shah expressed confidence in eliminating Naxalism by March 2026, promoting regional development.



PM Modi Inaugurates Key Development Projects Worth ₹33,500 Crore in Delhi :-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated multiple development projects in Delhi, worth around ₹33,500 crore, aimed at enhancing infrastructure and connectivity. The initiatives include metro network expansion and modern residential complexes for government employees. PM Modi emphasized the

importance of Delhi's development in shaping India's global image, highlighting the projects' role in improving public transportation and environmental sustainability. These efforts reflect the government's commitment to transforming the national capital into a modern, efficient metropolis, aligning with broader national development goals.



Jal Jeevan Mission Extended to 2028 with ₹8.69 Lakh Crore Outlay :-

The Union Cabinet has extended the Jal Jeevan Mission to December 2028, increasing its outlay to ₹8.69 lakh crore. The revised strategy aims to ensure sustainable piped water supply across rural India, emphasizing community participation and digital monitoring via the Sujalam Bharat framework. With over 15.8 crore households currently connected, the mission focuses on achieving universal access by 2028. This initiative reflects India's commitment to improving public health and rural infrastructure, aligning with broader development goals and the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision.



PM-RAHAT Scheme Launched for Road Accident Victims

The Prime Minister–Road Accident Victims' Hospitalisation and Assured Treatment (PM-RAHAT)

Scheme has been launched to provide cashless treatment up to ₹1.5 lakh for victims of road accidents. Announced by Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari, the scheme covers treatment for up to seven days post-accident. It integrates with the Electronic Detailed Accident Report (eDAR) platform and the national health authority's system to streamline claims and payments. This initiative aims to improve emergency response, ensuring timely medical care for road accident victims across India.



PM Modi to Transfer ₹18,640 Crore to Farmers Under PM-KISAN :-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to release the 22nd instalment of the PM-KISAN scheme, transferring over ₹18,640 crore to 9.32 crore farmers. This initiative is part of the government's ongoing efforts to provide direct income support to farmers, enhancing their economic security and boosting rural demand. The scheme, which has already disbursed over ₹4.09 lakh crore since its inception, aims to empower small and marginal farmers, supporting their agricultural and household needs.



PM Modi Inaugurates ₹18,700 Crore Projects in Kolkata

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated projects worth ₹18,700 crore in Kolkata, enhancing connectivity

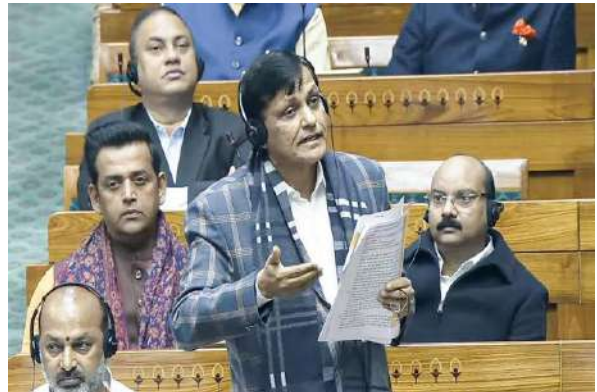
through road, rail, and port infrastructure. These initiatives aim to boost trade, industry, and economic growth in eastern India, reflecting the government's commitment to infrastructure development and regional prosperity.



J&K L-G Distributes Appointment Letters to Terror Victims' Families :-

Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha distributed appointment letters to the next of kin of 50 terror victims, providing employment opportunities as part of the 'Sharansthi' initiative. The program aims to support affected families in rebuilding their lives. The L-G highlighted the importance of justice and recognition for victims' families and reaffirmed the administration's commitment to addressing their concerns.

creek bridge, and a 10-year maintenance provision. This strategic infrastructure is expected to reduce logistics turnaround time and improve cargo movement efficiency, supporting India's maritime sector growth under the Maritime India Vision 2030 and Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047.



Centre Approves Vibrant Villages Programme-II with Rs 6839 Crore Outlay :-

The Indian government has launched the Vibrant Villages Programme-II, a Central Sector Scheme with a Rs 6839 crore budget, to develop 1954 villages along international borders. The programme focuses on livelihood generation, infrastructure development, and connectivity improvements. By addressing developmental gaps, the initiative aims to curb migration from border villages and enhance national security. The scheme's convergence-driven approach is expected to transform these villages into vibrant hubs of development, reinforcing India's security and growth strategy.



Centre Approves Rs 472 Crore Road Over Bridge for Tuna-Tekra Port :-

The Indian government has sanctioned a Rs 472 crore project to construct a Road Over Bridge (ROB) at Tuna-Tekra, aimed at enhancing port connectivity and cargo evacuation. The project, overseen by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, will include viaducts, a



Railways Introduces Five New Reforms Under 'Reform Express' :-

Union Minister for Railways Ashwini Vaishnaw has announced five new reforms under the 'Reform Express' initiative, focusing on cargo transportation, infrastructure quality, and passenger convenience. The reforms include a new container-based system for salt transportation and flexible wagon designs for automobiles. These measures aim to enhance efficiency and service delivery across the Indian Railways. The initiative reflects the government's commitment to modernizing the railway sector and improving the overall passenger experience.



PM-KISAN Scheme Reaches Over 9.35 Crore Farmers :-

The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme has disbursed over ₹4.27 lakh crore to farmers, benefiting more than 9.35 crore farmers since its inception. The scheme provides ₹6,000 annually to eligible farmers, supporting agricultural inputs and

reducing dependency on informal credit. Studies indicate improved income and risk management for beneficiaries. The scheme's success reflects the government's commitment to rural welfare and agricultural development, ensuring financial support for farmers across India.



Railways Approves ₹1,236 Crore Fibre Network, Kavach Projects :-

Indian Railways has sanctioned infrastructure projects worth ₹1,236 crore to enhance communication systems and expand the Kavach train protection system. The dual-path communication network will cover divisions in Central, Western, and Southern Railway zones. The Kavach system will be deployed over high-density routes, improving operational safety by preventing collisions. The projects aim to create a redundant communication system, ensuring uninterrupted connectivity.

15: Science & Technology



UIDAI and Google Collaborate to Display Aadhaar Centres on Maps :-

The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has partnered with Google to display authorized Aadhaar centres on Google Maps. This initiative will enhance accessibility and convenience for citizens seeking Aadhaar services. The platform will provide information on services, operating hours, and accessibility features. This collaboration aims to counter misinformation and facilitate seamless access to Aadhaar-related services nationwide.



India's Space Sector Enhanced by New Cybersecurity Guidelines :-

CERT-In and SIA-India have released new cybersecurity guidelines to secure India's space infrastructure. Announced at the DefSat Conference Expo 2026, the guidelines aim to boost cyber resilience across the space ecosystem, including satellite operators and ground stations. The framework establishes core cybersecurity principles to protect against sophisticated threats, emphasizing a 'secure-by-design' approach. This initiative highlights the growing importance of cybersecurity in national security and space exploration, ensuring the integrity and safety of India's burgeoning space sector.



Jitendra Singh Inaugurates Rs 60 Crore Recombinant Cells Facility :-

Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh inaugurated a state-of-the-art 'Central Facility for Recombinant Cells and Sensors' at BRIC-RGCB in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. Developed at a cost of Rs 60 crore, this facility aims to boost drug discovery, medical research, and agricultural genomics. It marks a significant step in India's transition towards a bio-driven economy, with biotechnology

playing a central role in manufacturing, healthcare, and sustainable development. The Minister also announced a new GMP facility to support advanced cell-based therapies.



Semicon 2.0 to Expand Semiconductor Design Training to 500 Universities :-

India has met its 10-year semiconductor talent target in four years, training 85,000 engineers. Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw announced the expansion of the programme to 500 universities under Semicon 2.0. The initiative includes Electronic Design Automation tools and aims to tap into the growing global semiconductor market projected to reach \$2 trillion. This presents significant employment opportunities for Indian youth, enhancing technological self-reliance.



BharatNet Expands Digital Connectivity to 2.15 Lakh Gram Panchayats :-

The BharatNet programme has successfully connected over 2.15 lakh Gram Panchayats, marking a significant milestone in India's digital infrastructure expansion. The initiative aims to provide affordable and high-speed internet access, particularly in rural areas, through optical fibre networks and 5G services. The government's

focus on integrating digital literacy programmes and last-mile connectivity is strengthening rural livelihoods and ensuring the timely delivery of benefits.



High-Fat Keto Diet May Enhance Exercise Benefits, New Study Finds :-

A recent study led by Sarah Lessard at Virginia Tech suggests a ketogenic diet can improve exercise benefits in individuals with high blood sugar. Published in Nature Communications, the research demonstrated that a high-fat, low-carb diet normalized blood sugar levels in mice and enhanced muscle response to exercise. The findings indicate that diet and exercise work synergistically, potentially offering new strategies for managing hyperglycemia and improving metabolic health. Researchers plan to extend the study to human participants.



Kavach 4.0 Enhances Railway Safety on Key Indian Rail Routes :-

Indian Railways has implemented Kavach 4.0, an advanced Automatic Train Protection system, across 1,452 kilometers on critical routes like Delhi-Mumbai and Delhi-Howrah. Kavach 4.0 enhances safety by automatically applying brakes and facilitating train operations in low visibility. With significant infrastructure deployment, including optical fibre and

RFID tags, the system represents a leap in modernizing India's rail safety. This initiative aligns with the broader goal of reducing train accidents and ensuring passenger safety across the railway network.



Digital India Expands Connectivity and Affordability Nationwide :-

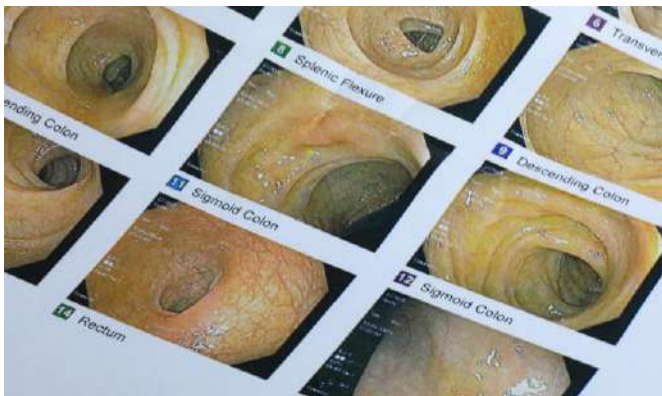
Under the Digital India initiative, internet access has seen remarkable growth from 25 crore users in 2014 to over 103 crore in 2025. The program, led by Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, focuses on reducing data costs and enhancing digital public infrastructure. With the lowest data tariffs globally, platforms like Aadhaar and UPI have facilitated seamless access to services. This digital transformation is pivotal in bridging the digital divide, fostering inclusive growth, and driving India's digital economy forward.



Google Maps Introduces Gemini AI for Enhanced Navigation :-

Google Maps has launched a groundbreaking update featuring the Gemini AI model, transforming navigation with its 'Ask Maps' conversational feature. This AI-driven tool enables users to ask complex, natural-language questions for personalized travel recommendations. Launched by Google CEO Sundar Pichai, the feature is available in the US and India. It integrates a vast dataset,

enhancing user experience with 3D route visualizations and live community insights. This evolution marks a significant step forward in digital navigation, offering a more immersive and intuitive planning process for users.



Study Links Two Colon Polyp Types to Increased Cancer Risk :-

A study conducted by Flinders University has found that two types of colon polyps may increase the risk of bowel cancer fivefold. The research emphasizes the importance of early detection and regular colonoscopy for individuals with these polyps. The findings suggest that adenomas and serrated polyps may represent separate cancer pathways, highlighting the need for tailored screening strategies to prevent colorectal cancer.



IIT Guwahati Pioneers Hydrogen Production and Desalination Technology :-

Researchers at IIT Guwahati have developed a breakthrough material capable of generating hydrogen fuel and desalinating seawater. The material exhibits exceptional electrocatalytic performance, surpassing commercial electrodes. Additionally, it supports cost-effective desalination using solar energy. This dual-functional system addresses environmental and water

scarcity challenges, offering a sustainable hydrogen production method and a solution for clean drinking water. Published in Advanced Functional Materials, the study highlights the material's potential for commercial applications, showcasing innovative use of MXene-based catalysts for energy and environmental solutions.



Cannabis Shows Limited Efficacy for Mental Health Disorders: Study :-

A comprehensive review published in The Lancet reveals limited evidence supporting the effectiveness of cannabis-based medicines for mental health and substance-use disorders. Analyzing 54 clinical trials, researchers found no significant benefits for conditions like anxiety, PTSD, and opioid-use disorder. The study underscores the need for more high-quality research to establish therapeutic roles for cannabinoids, as medical use expands globally. The findings highlight gaps in the evidence base, particularly for depression.



DeepSeek Speculated to Test New AI Model 'Hunter Alpha' :-

A mysterious AI model, 'Hunter Alpha,' appeared on the OpenRouter platform, sparking speculation about its

developer, possibly DeepSeek. This AI model, trained with up to 1 trillion parameters, resembles expectations for DeepSeek's upcoming V4 model. Despite no official confirmation, its features suggest it could be a precursor to significant advancements in AI technology. This development highlights the ongoing race in AI innovation, with implications for global technological leadership.



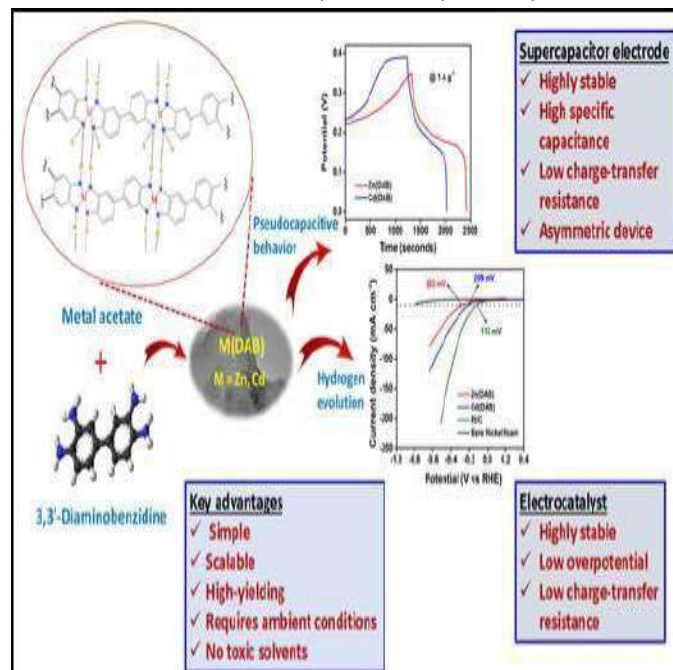
OpenAI Plans Desktop Superapp to Streamline User Experience :-

OpenAI has announced the development of a desktop 'superapp' to integrate its ChatGPT, Codex, and browser platforms into a single application. This initiative, led by President Greg Brockman and Chief of Applications Fidji Simo, aims to simplify the user experience and enhance competitiveness against rivals like Anthropic. The integration is expected to streamline resources and improve quality by reducing fragmentation across OpenAI's offerings. This strategic move reflects the growing trend of tech companies optimizing their product ecosystems to better meet user demands and maintain market leadership.



NASA Expands Moon Program with New Base and Nuclear Spacecraft :-

NASA has announced plans to build a \$20 billion base on the moon's surface, cancelling the Lunar Gateway space station project. The agency will also send a nuclear-powered spacecraft to Mars by 2028 to demonstrate advanced propulsion. These initiatives aim to enhance humanity's presence in space and prepare for future exploration. The changes reflect a shift in NASA's strategy, focusing on sustainable lunar operations and nuclear technology in space exploration, positioning the US as a leader in the next phase of space exploration.



New Polymer Materials to Boost Energy Storage and Hydrogen Production :-

Scientists from the Centre for Nano and Soft Matter Sciences, working under India's Department of Science and Technology along with CHRIST (Deemed to be University), have created novel coordination polymers called Zn(DAB) and Cd(DAB). The coordination polymers, synthesized at room temperature, demonstrated impressive capacitance and potential for cost-effective hydrogen generation. This breakthrough aligns with India's efforts to promote clean energy technologies and reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

16: Sports



Gulmarg to Emerge as Global Winter Sports Hub, Mandaviya Announces :-

Union Minister Mansukh Mandaviya announced plans to develop Gulmarg into a global winter sports destination during the 6th Khelo India Winter Games. Future editions will expand into a 15-day festival incorporating sports, tourism, and cultural events. This initiative aims to boost tourism and youth engagement in sports, transforming Jammu Kashmir into a hub for winter sports. The development aligns with India's vision to enhance its sporting infrastructure and promote sports as a means of regional growth and national unity.



Olympians Lead 63rd Fit India Sundays on Cycle :-

Olympians Jinson Johnson and Anish Bhanwala will headline the 63rd Fit India Sundays on Cycle, promoting fitness across India. The event will feature cycling activities at various locations, including Visakhapatnam and New Delhi. This initiative is part of the broader Fit India Movement, launched to foster an active lifestyle among citizens. The campaign has seen participation

from over 2.5 crore people nationwide, emphasizing the importance of fitness in combating obesity and pollution. This movement aims to make fitness a daily habit for Indians.



Jammu and Kashmir Win First Ranji Trophy by Defeating Karnataka :-

Jammu and Kashmir made history by claiming their first-ever Ranji Trophy title, defeating Karnataka based on a first-innings lead. The victory was secured with a 291-run lead, thanks to stellar performances by Shubham Pundir and Auqib Nabi. This landmark achievement highlights J's rise in Indian domestic cricket, as they overcame several former champions on their path to the final. The triumph marks a significant moment in the state's cricketing history and is a testament to their talent and determination.



Sri Lanka's Head Coach Sanath Jayasuriya to Step Down Post World Cup :-

Sri Lanka's head coach Sanath Jayasuriya announced his decision to step down following the team's

underwhelming performance at the T20 World Cup. Despite reaching the Super Eights, Sri Lanka failed to secure a semi-final spot. Jayasuriya's resignation marks a significant change in the team's coaching structure, reflecting the challenges of maintaining competitive performance on the global stage. The development highlights the dynamic nature of sports management and the need for strategic planning to achieve long-term success.



India Defeat New Zealand, Clinch T20 World Cup 2026 Title :-

The ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 concluded with a dominant victory for India national cricket team over the New Zealand national cricket team in the final played on 8 March 2026. India produced an outstanding all-round performance to secure the title by a massive margin of 96 runs, marking one of the most commanding victories in a T20 World Cup final. Batting first, India posted a huge total of 255 runs for the loss of five wickets in their 20 overs. In response, New Zealand struggled against India's disciplined bowling attack and were bowled out for 159 runs in 19 overs.



Sanju Samson Credits Sachin Tendulkar for World Cup Success :-

Sanju Samson, the Player of the Tournament in India's recent T20 World Cup victory, credited cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar for his guidance during challenging times. Samson's interactions with Tendulkar provided clarity and game awareness, culminating in his remarkable performance. Despite setbacks, Samson's perseverance led to match-winning innings in crucial games, highlighting the impact of mentorship in sports. This victory not only marks a personal achievement for Samson but also reinforces the importance of resilience and guidance in achieving success at the highest levels of cricket.



FIFA COO Confirms World Cup 2026 Will Proceed Despite Middle East Conflict :-

FIFA Chief Operating Officer Heimo Schirgi affirmed that the 2026 World Cup will proceed as planned, despite ongoing Middle East tensions. The tournament, set to be the largest in history, will take place across the U.S., Mexico, and Canada. FIFA is closely monitoring the situation, particularly concerning Iran's participation. Preparations continue, with Dallas hosting the International Broadcast Centre and fan festival, underscoring FIFA's commitment to staging the event amid geopolitical challenges.



Indian Basketball Team Returns Home After Stranding in Doha :-

The Indian men's basketball team is returning home after being stranded in Doha for ten days due to regional geopolitical tensions. The team was in Qatar for the FIBA Basketball World Cup 2027 Asian Qualifiers. The Qatar Basketball Federation and Indian embassies provided support during the team's stay. The players traveled by road to Saudi Arabia before flying back to India, marking the end of an unexpected and challenging experience.



Inaugural Edition Of Khelo India Tribal Games 2026 To Be Hosted By Chhattisgarh :-

The inaugural edition of the Khelo India Tribal Games 2026 is set to be hosted by Chhattisgarh, marking a significant step toward promoting sports among tribal communities. The event will take place across multiple cities including Raipur, Jagdalpur, and Ambikapur, and is expected to see participation from around 3,700 athletes, coaches, and officials from across the country. This initiative under the Khelo India programme aims to identify and nurture grassroots talent from tribal regions, providing them with a national platform to showcase their abilities and encouraging inclusive sports development.



India Names Squad for Women's T20I Series Against South Africa :-

The BCCI announced a 15-member squad for the upcoming women's T20I series in South Africa, led by Captain Harmanpreet Kaur and Vice-captain Smriti Mandhana. The series will feature five matches from April 17 to April 27. Young talent Anushka Sharma has earned her first call-up following a standout performance in the Women's Premier League. The series is crucial for enhancing India's international cricket profile and providing exposure to emerging players, contributing to the broader development of women's cricket in India.



Mansukh Mandaviya Opens Khelo Tribal Games in Chhattisgarh :-

Union Minister Mansukh Mandaviya inaugurated the Khelo India Tribal Games 2026 in Chhattisgarh, aiming to identify and promote sporting talent in tribal regions. The Games, held annually, focus on nurturing athletes from diverse backgrounds and enhancing India's sports ecosystem. The initiative aims to boost tourism and regional development, with a long-term goal of enhancing India's performance in international sports events and hosting the Olympic Games in 2036.



MS Dhoni to Miss Initial IPL 2026 Matches Due to Injury

Chennai Super Kings' legendary captain MS Dhoni is set to miss the first two weeks of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 following a calf strain injury. Dhoni's absence is a significant setback for CSK, as they aim for a record sixth IPL title. The veteran cricketer is currently undergoing rehabilitation, and the team will rely on Sanju Samson to take over wicketkeeping duties in the interim. The IPL season is eagerly anticipated, with teams gearing up for competitive matches, underscoring the league's importance in Indian sports.



Khelo India Tribal Games: Karnataka Dominates Medal Tally :-

Karnataka continues to lead the medal tally at the Khelo India Tribal Games, with standout performances in swimming. Manikanta L's multiple golds contributed significantly to the state's success. Odisha and Assam

follow in the rankings, while host Chhattisgarh secured three medals. The Games highlight the athletic prowess of tribal communities and promote sports development across diverse regions.



Tiger Woods Arrested on DUI Charge After Florida Crash :-

Golf legend Tiger Woods was arrested for DUI after a car crash in Florida. The incident marks Woods' second DUI charge, following a 2017 arrest. The 15-time major champion, who recently returned to competitive golf, faces legal challenges amidst his storied career. Woods' achievements include 82 PGA Tour wins, and his arrest highlights personal struggles that have impacted his public image.

17: State



India Launches CBDC-Based Digital Food Currency Pilot in Puducherry :-

India has initiated a pilot project using Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) to distribute food subsidies in Puducherry under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana. The digital currency, known as e₹, will be credited to beneficiaries' CBDC wallets for purchasing foodgrains. This move aims to enhance transparency and efficiency in subsidy distribution, reducing leakages and ensuring the intended use of funds. The project represents a significant step in leveraging digital technologies to improve public welfare systems, aligning with the government's broader digital empowerment agenda.



PM Modi Inaugurated Micron's Semiconductor Facility in Gujarat :-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Inaugurated Micron's Semiconductor Assembly, Test, and Packaging (ATMP) facility in Sanand, Gujarat. This marks a milestone in India's semiconductor manufacturing journey, with the facility set to commence production of memory modules. The project, with an investment of over ₹22,500 crore, is a significant step under the India Semiconductor Mission. It underscores India's ambition to become a global hub for semiconductor manufacturing.



MoS Shripad Naik Inaugurates Rooftop Solar Plant in Tripura :-

Minister of State for Power, Shripad Naik, inaugurated a rooftop solar plant in Tripura, marking the state's commitment to renewable energy. The project is part of Tripura's plan to solarize all district headquarters, reducing electricity costs and promoting environmental sustainability. The initiative aligns with India's broader renewable energy goals, aiming to empower government offices with clean energy solutions. The

project demonstrates a coordinated effort between the Centre and the state to achieve energy self-reliance.



Vice President Lays Foundation Stone of Chetana Ganashram in Thrissur :-

Vice President C. P. Radhakrishnan laid the foundation stone for Chetana Ganashram, an eco-friendly cultural and musical campus in Thrissur, Kerala. The Ganashram aims to promote spiritual awakening and social harmony, bringing together people of all religions under a shared cultural platform. Radhakrishnan highlighted India's rich musical heritage and emphasized the role of music in promoting unity and healing. The campus will feature five alayams dedicated to music meditation, therapy, and Indian dance, reflecting the spirit of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.



17 Killed in Nagpur Factory Blast; PM Modi Announces Ex Gratia :-

A devastating explosion at an explosives factory in Nagpur, Maharashtra, resulted in 17 fatalities and 18 injuries. The blast at SBL Energy Limited caused significant damage, prompting ongoing rescue operations. Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced ex gratia assistance for the victims' families, reflecting

the government's commitment to providing relief. Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis expressed condolences and ordered a thorough investigation into the incident.



Kolli Hills Became Tamil Nadu's First Dark Sky Park :-

Kolli Hills has been declared the first Dark Sky Park in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Dark Sky Parks are specially protected areas where artificial light pollution is minimized so that the night sky can be clearly observed. The initiative aims to promote astronomy tourism, environmental awareness, and scientific education. By limiting excessive lighting, the park will allow visitors and researchers to observe celestial objects such as stars, planets, and meteor showers more clearly. The project also supports conservation efforts because reduced artificial lighting benefits wildlife and ecosystems.



Uttarakhand's Shri Jhanda Ji Mela Celebrates Tradition and Devotion :-

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhama extended greetings on the occasion of the historic Shri Jhanda Ji Mela in Dehradun. Celebrated annually to mark the birth anniversary of Shri Guru Ram Rai Ji, the fair is a symbol of faith and cultural heritage. It emphasizes the

region's traditions rooted in humanity and devotion. The event also coincides with International Women's Day, highlighting the role of women in Uttarakhand's development. This celebration serves as a reminder of the cultural richness and community spirit prevalent in the state.



PM Modi Lays Foundation Stone of Kota Airport, Boosts Hadoti Region's Development :-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually inaugurated the foundation stone-laying ceremony for the new Kota Airport, a significant development for Rajasthan's Hadoti region. The airport, with an estimated cost of ₹1,500 crore, is expected to enhance connectivity, trade, and tourism. PM Modi highlighted the potential for economic growth and the region's unique identity, emphasizing the importance of infrastructure development in fostering regional prosperity. The initiative aligns with broader efforts to improve transportation networks and stimulate economic activity in emerging urban centres.



PM Modi to Launch Amrit Bharat Trains from Tamil Nadu :-

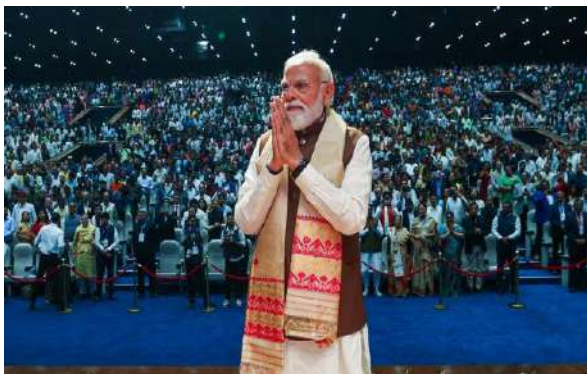
Prime Minister Narendra Modi will flag off two Amrit Bharat Express trains from Tiruchirappalli, enhancing

connectivity in southern India. These new services, including the Podanur-Dhanbad and Nagercoil-Charlapalli routes, will improve regional mobility across Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha, and Jharkhand. The initiative aligns with the government's focus on boosting rail infrastructure and connectivity, facilitating economic growth and regional integration. The launch of these trains represents a significant step in the expansion of affordable and efficient rail services under the Make in India program.



PM Modi Launches ₹23,550 Crore Development Projects in Assam :-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated and laid foundation stones for multiple development projects worth ₹23,550 crore in Silchar, Assam. These projects aim to enhance connectivity, boost employment, and strengthen the Barak Valley's role as a logistics hub in the North East. Modi highlighted the Shillong–Silchar High-Speed Corridor, the Silchar flyover, and rail electrification as key initiatives to improve regional mobility and economic integration with South-East Asia. Additionally, he praised the Assam government's efforts in granting land rights to tea garden families and supporting education and healthcare for youth.



PM Modi Inaugurates Elevated Port Corridor in Assam

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated an elevated road corridor and inland waterways projects worth ₹526 crore in Assam. The corridor enhances connectivity between Pandu Port and National Highway-27, addressing last-mile connectivity challenges. Modi also launched cruise terminals to promote river tourism along the Brahmaputra River, boosting local economies and creating job opportunities. These initiatives are part of the government's vision to transform the Brahmaputra into a major economic corridor, strengthening logistics and connectivity in Northeast India.



Maharashtra's Mumbai 3.0 Development Gets a Boost with New Policy :-

The Maharashtra government has introduced a Land Acquisition and Allotment Policy to accelerate Mumbai 3.0 development near key infrastructure projects. Aimed at attracting non-polluting industries, the policy offers sops for land acquisition, balancing infrastructure needs with local rights. Strategies include compensation models and floor space index exchanges. The Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) is designated as the New Town Development Authority, tasked with maximizing infrastructure returns.



Madhya Pradesh Launches AI Mission to Enhance Governance :-

The Madhya Pradesh government has announced the rollout of an 'AI Mission' to integrate artificial intelligence into state governance. Implemented in phases, the initiative aims to improve service delivery and identify risks in sectors like agriculture and health. The mission will also promote AI skilling programs and partnerships with startups, potentially revolutionizing governance and economic opportunities within the state. This development aligns with India's broader push towards digital transformation and innovation.



Gujarat Launches Rs 2,500 Crore Development Projects

Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel announced development projects worth Rs 2,500 crore over three days, including Rs 938 crore in Mehsana. These initiatives cover infrastructure, education, and healthcare, reflecting the state's financial management strength. The projects aim to boost economic activity and transform Vadnagar into a heritage town. Gujarat's industrial potential is showcased through MoUs worth Rs 3.24 lakh crore, aligning with the 'Viksit Bharat @2047' vision.



UP CM Yogi Adityanath Distributes Appointment Letters to Nursing Officers :-

Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath awarded appointment letters to 1,228 nursing officers, with 90% women, enhancing the state's healthcare system. This initiative, coinciding with Chaitra Navratri, underscores women's empowerment and professional opportunities. The government focuses on healthcare improvements, reviving training centers, and establishing new colleges. The move marks progress in employment, healthcare, and women's participation, reflecting the government's commitment to comprehensive development.



Maharashtra to Invoke MCOCA Against Food Adulterators :-

Maharashtra's FDA Minister Narhari Zirwal announced the expansion of inspection drives and the use of MCOCA against food adulteration. This move aims to strengthen food security across the state. Recent raids have led to cases against individuals involved in adulteration, particularly in milk supplies. The government is also addressing manpower shortages in regulatory bodies. The decision underscores the state's commitment to ensuring food safety and public health amid rising concerns over food quality.



Punjab's Mansa Railway Station Redeveloped After a Century :-

The historic Mansa railway station in Punjab has been redeveloped under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme, bringing modern facilities to passengers after nearly a century. The upgraded station now features modern amenities like waiting rooms, lifts, Wi-Fi, and parking facilities. This redevelopment is part of a nationwide initiative to modernize railway infrastructure, enhancing passenger convenience and connectivity. The transformation of the Mansa station reflects the government's focus on improving transportation infrastructure to meet contemporary demands.



Gujarat Assembly Passes Uniform Civil Code Bill :-

The Gujarat Assembly has passed the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill, making it the second state after Uttarakhand to implement such legislation. The bill mandates registration of marriages and live-in relationships and introduces uniform rules for divorce and inheritance. It

aims to ensure equality and justice, applying to all citizens regardless of caste or religion. The bill reflects the Supreme Court's judgments and draws from legal frameworks in other democratic countries.



Uttarakhand CM Flags Off New Dehradun-Pithoragarh Flight Service :-

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhama inaugurated the Dehradun-Pithoragarh flight service, enhancing regional connectivity. The new air service reduces travel time between the two cities to one hour, providing strategic and economic benefits. This initiative is part of the UDAN scheme, aimed at improving air connectivity in remote areas. The launch signifies a significant step towards integrating remote regions into mainstream development, reflecting the government's commitment to regional growth and accessibility.

18: Summits & Conferences



India-UK Conference on Green Hydrogen Standards :-

India and the UK held a conference in New Delhi to discuss green hydrogen safety standards and protocols. The event emphasized collaborative efforts to develop robust safety frameworks and regulatory practices. Key stakeholders from government, academia, and industry deliberated on hydrogen production, storage, and transportation standards. The conference aimed to align India's standards with global best practices, supporting India's National Green Hydrogen Mission for large-scale deployment of clean energy technologies.



President Murmu Attended Women's Day Celebration in New Delhi :-

President Droupadi Murmu attended the International Women's Day celebration at Manekshaw Centre in New Delhi. Organized by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, the event highlighted women's contributions across sectors. Key discussions were focused on labor codes and women's entrepreneurship. The celebration reaffirms the commitment to gender equality and empowerment, showcasing government initiatives supporting women-led development. Prominent women leaders and representatives from diverse fields are expected to participate.



Piyush Goyal Inaugurates AAHAR 2026, Italy as Partner Country :-

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal inaugurated the 40th edition of AAHAR 2026 in New Delhi, a premier trade platform for the food and hospitality industry. The five-day exhibition features domestic and international participants, with Italy as the partner country, showcasing advancements in food processing and hospitality technologies. AAHAR aims to foster global partnerships, enhance trade linkages, and showcase

innovations, reflecting India's growing influence in the food and hospitality sectors.



National Conference on Cold Water Fisheries in J&K :-

The Indian government is set to host a National Conference on Cold Water Fisheries in Srinagar, Jammu Kashmir, to explore sustainable development in the sector. Attended by Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh and other dignitaries, the event will discuss investment opportunities, infrastructure development, and livelihood potential in cold water fisheries. With a focus on regions like the Himalayas and Northeast, the conference aims to advance India's fisheries sector, supporting economic growth and biodiversity conservation.



Rashtrapati Bhavan Hosts 'Purple Fest' for Divyangjan :-

The Rashtrapati Bhavan hosted 'Purple Fest' to celebrate the talent and achievements of Divyangjan, emphasizing their equal role in India's development. President Droupadi Murmu highlighted the significance of inclusivity and social justice in the country's progress towards a developed nation by 2047. The event featured cultural performances, interactive stalls, and fun activities for over 8,000 Divyangjan, promoting

awareness and inclusion. This initiative underscores the government's commitment to empowering persons with disabilities and fostering a more inclusive society.



US and China Economic Chiefs Meet in Paris :-

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng met in Paris to discuss trade issues, including tariffs and rare earth exports, as a precursor to a potential Trump-Xi summit. The meeting highlights ongoing trade tensions and the strategic importance of Sino-US relations in global economic stability. The outcomes could influence future trade agreements and economic policies, impacting global markets and economies.



Global Conference on Women in Agri-Food Systems Concludes :-

The Global Conference on Women in Agri-Food Systems concluded in New Delhi, highlighting the importance of women's leadership and participation in agriculture. The event resulted in the adoption of the Delhi Declaration, calling for a Global Alliance on Women in Agri-Food Systems. The conference emphasized gender-responsive policies, access to resources, and women's

empowerment as key factors for sustainable agricultural development.



EAM Jaishankar to Visit Brussels for EU Foreign Affairs Council Meeting :-

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar is set to visit Brussels to participate in the EU Foreign Affairs Council meeting, engaging with EU foreign ministers. The visit aims to deepen India-EU strategic partnerships and build on the outcomes of the 16th India-EU Summit. Jaishankar's discussions will focus on strengthening bilateral relations and cooperation on global challenges.



Sports Journalists Federation of India Celebrates Golden Jubilee in Delhi :-

The Sports Journalists Federation of India (SJFI) concluded its Golden Jubilee convention in Delhi, with DDCA president Rohan Jaitley highlighting journalism's role in sports administration. The event featured discussions with key sports figures and awards for notable contributions, including a ₹51 lakh reward for cricketer Pratika Rawal. The convention marked a milestone in sports journalism, fostering dialogue among journalists and administrators, and celebrating

achievements in the field. The event underscored the importance of media in shaping sports narratives.



India and Russia Discuss UN Priorities in 7th Round of Consultations :-

India and Russia held the seventh round of consultations on UN matters in New Delhi, focusing on priorities like counterterrorism, peacekeeping, and UNSC reforms. Led by MEA Secretary (West) Sibi George and Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Alimov, the discussions also covered regional and global developments. This meeting underscores the strategic partnership between India and Russia and their collaborative approach to addressing global challenges within the UN framework.



Bharat Electricity Summit Sets Path for Future-Ready Power Sector :-

The inaugural Bharat Electricity Summit concluded with a roadmap for a resilient power sector, emphasizing India's goal of achieving 500 GW of non-fossil fuel capacity by 2030. Union Power Minister Manohar Lal highlighted the summit's focus on global cooperation, smart metering, and renewable energy expansion. Over 35,000 attendees and 200 companies participated, underscoring India's influence in the global energy ecosystem. The summit's actionable outcomes aim to

strengthen DISCOMs and accelerate India's energy transition.



BIMSTEC Youth Programme Promotes Cultural Exchange and Sustainability :-

India hosted the BIMSTEC Youth Heritage and Sustainability Immersion Programme in Madhya Pradesh, fostering cultural ties and promoting sustainable development. Over 80 participants from BIMSTEC countries engaged in cultural and environmental activities, emphasizing leadership and intercultural dialogue. The programme aligns with India's Mission LiFE initiative, promoting sustainable lifestyles. It highlights India's role in regional cooperation and youth empowerment, aiming to strengthen people-to-people connectivity and advance BIMSTEC's priority sectors.



EAM Jaishankar Engages on Global Issues at G7 Meeting

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar participated in high-level discussions at the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in France, focusing on trade, the West Asia conflict, and global governance reforms. He met with Canadian and German counterparts to enhance bilateral ties and explore diplomatic initiatives for resolving the West Asia crisis. Jaishankar emphasized the urgent need for United Nations Security Council reforms and

highlighted the importance of resilient trade corridors, citing the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor.



G7 Summit to Include India, South Korea, Brazil, Kenya
 France will host leaders from India, South Korea, Brazil, and Kenya at the G7 summit in June, reflecting efforts to broaden global economic cooperation. The summit, however, will not include China, as France aims to address global imbalances and economic challenges. The inclusion of these countries underscores the importance of diverse perspectives in addressing international issues. The summit will focus on preventing financial crises and fostering sustainable economic growth, amidst ongoing geopolitical tensions.



Innovation Must Be Shared Equitably: Piyush Goyal at WTO Meet :-

At the 14th Ministerial Conference in Cameroon, India's Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal emphasized the need for equitable sharing of innovation and development opportunities among WTO members. Highlighting asymmetries from past trade rounds, Goyal called for fair participation in global trade to build productive capacities and employment. His statements reinforce India's commitment to a multilateral trading system that addresses the needs of developing nations, aligning with

broader goals of global economic inclusivity and cooperation.



PharmaMed 2026 Concludes with Roadmap for India's Pharma Sector :-

The ninth edition of PharmaMed 2026 concluded with a focus on shaping the future of India's pharmaceutical sector. The conference emphasized a transition towards value-driven approaches, regulatory harmonization, and innovation. Participants highlighted the importance of reducing API import dependence and leveraging digital tools for supply chain efficiency. The event underscores India's commitment to building a resilient and globally competitive pharma ecosystem, reinforcing its leadership in the pharmaceutical industry.



Earth Hour 2026: Sanjay Van Mahotsav Promotes Environmental Awareness :-

The DDA, in collaboration with WWF-India, organized the Sanjay Van Earth Hour Mahotsav to celebrate Earth Hour 2026. The event included nature walks, biodiversity talks, and creative workshops to promote environmental consciousness. This initiative aligns with the global Earth Hour campaign, encouraging individuals to reconnect with nature and adopt sustainable practices for environmental protection.

SECTION 2

Practice Questions with Answers



PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1) Who is the first Indian Prime Minister to address the Israeli Parliament, Knesset?

- A) Atal Bihari Vajpayee
- B) Manmohan Singh
- C) Narendra Modi
- D) Lal Bahadur Shastri

2) Which prestigious Israeli award was conferred upon PM Narendra Modi during his 2026 visit?

- A) Grand Collar of Israel
- B) Speaker of the Knesset Medal
- C) Nobel Peace Prize
- D) Order of Jerusalem

3) India is negotiating a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with which country as of February 2026?

- A) United States
- B) Japan
- C) Israel
- D) Russia

4) Which historical figure from Gujarat offered refuge to Polish and Jewish children during the Holocaust, as highlighted by PM Modi?

- A) Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel
- B) Maharaja of Nawanager (Jam Saheb)
- C) Gopal Krishna Gokhale
- D) Bal Gangadhar Tilak

5) Who launched the 'Golden Era of Maharashtra through Unity and Trust' initiative in February 2026?

- A) Ram Nath Kovind
- B) Pratibha Patil
- C) Droupadi Murmu
- D) Venkaiah Naidu

6) Which technological platform did India and Israel agree to link for seamless cross-border payments as part of their recent bilateral agreements?

- A) SWIFT
- B) NEFT

- C) Unified Payments Interface (UPI)
- D) PayPal

7) What agricultural initiative was launched to deepen India-Israel cooperation and benefit Indian farmers at the grassroots?

- A) Green Revolution 2.0
- B) Villages of Excellence
- C) Smart Farm Clusters
- D) Agri-Digital Hubs

8) Which agreement was signed to promote sustainable fisheries and aquaculture between India and Israel?

- A) Blue Economy Pact
- B) MoU on Fisheries and Aquaculture
- C) Marine Technology Alliance
- D) Oceanic Partnership Treaty

9) Which Indian state infrastructure was recently restored by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO), including the Taram Chu Bridge, after natural disasters?

- A) Arunachal Pradesh
- B) Sikkim
- C) Jammu Kashmir
- D) Uttarakhand

10) Who inaugurated the fully digitised Railway Claims Tribunal (e-RCT) as part of Indian Railways' digital reforms?

- A) Piyush Goyal
- B) Nirmala Sitharaman
- C) Ashwini Vaishnav
- D) Hardeep Singh Puri

11) Who recently inaugurated the rooftop solar power plant in Tripura, marking the state's plan to solarise all district administrative headquarters?

- A) Ratan Lal Nath
- B) Shripad Y. Naik
- C) Narendra Modi
- D) Hardeep Singh Puri

12) What is the key feature of the new semiconductor facility inaugurated by PM Modi in Sanand, Gujarat?

- A) Largest chip design centre in Asia
- B) Micron's Assembly, Test and Packaging (ATMP) facility for memory modules
- C) Solar cell manufacturing plant
- D) India's first quantum computing centre

13) Which Indian state recently distributed over 1 lakh land pattas under 'Mission Basundhara 3.0' to indigenous landless families?

- A) West Bengal
- B) Odisha
- C) Assam
- D) Jharkhand

14) The Indian Air Force's Exercise Vayu Shakti 2026, attended by President Murmu and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, was conducted at:

- A) Gwalior
- B) Pokhran
- C) Tezpur
- D) Ambala

15) Which two countries reaffirmed their commitment to defence industry partnerships during high-level meetings in Rome?

- A) India and France
- B) India and Italy
- C) India and Japan
- D) India and Germany

16) Why did global gold and silver prices surge in late February 2026?

- A) US interest rate cuts
- B) Record mining output
- C) Israel–Iran tensions
- D) Rupee appreciation

17) Which Indian state won its first-ever Ranji Trophy title in the 2025–26 season?

- A) Delhi
- B) Karnataka
- C) Jammu and Kashmir

D) Rajasthan

18) Which two countries launched joint military strikes on Iran in February 2026, escalating regional conflict?

- A) Russia and Syria
- B) Saudi Arabia and UAE
- C) United States and Israel
- D) France and UK

19) What advisory did the Indian Embassy in Tehran issue for Indian nationals in February 2026?

- A) Evacuate immediately
- B) Resume business as usual
- C) Exercise utmost caution and remain indoors
- D) Travel to border areas

20) Which major infrastructure projects were inaugurated to boost inland waterways on the Brahmaputra (NW 2) in Dibrugarh?

- A) New railway lines
- B) Customs and Immigration Complexes and Heritage Building
- C) Highway bridges
- D) Metro stations

21) Who was killed in the joint US-Israeli airstrikes on March 1, 2026, marking a major escalation in Middle East tensions?

- A) Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian
- B) Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi
- C) Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei
- D) Iranian General Qassem Soleimani

22) What policy theme was emphasized at the National Science Day 2026 event, focusing on research-to-application in India?

- A) Clean Energy for All
- B) Women in Science Catalysing Viksit Bharat
- C) Digital India for Rural Growth
- D) Aerospace Innovation for Tomorrow

23) Which country's head coach Sanath Jayasuriya announced his decision to step down after a disappointing T20 World Cup campaign in 2026?

- A) India

- B) Sri Lanka
- C) Bangladesh
- D) Australia

24) What is the significance of Operation 'Epic Fury', named by the Pentagon in March 2026?

- A) US evacuation from Afghanistan
- B) US-India joint naval exercise
- C) US-Israeli military campaign against Iran
- D) Humanitarian aid mission to Africa

25) Which Indian university held its 102nd convocation in March 2026, conferring degrees on more than 1.2 lakh students?

- A) Jawaharlal Nehru University
- B) Banaras Hindu University
- C) University of Delhi
- D) Aligarh Muslim University

26) Which key agreement was signed between India and Finland during Finnish President Alexander Stubb's 2026 visit to India?

- A) Defense Cooperation Agreement
- B) Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement
- C) Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement
- D) Free Trade Agreement

27) What is the primary goal of the 'Jal Sanchay Jan Bhagidari' initiative in Chhattisgarh's Korea district?

- A) Increasing fertilizer use
- B) Boosting fishery output
- C) Groundwater recharge via community participation
- D) Expanding road networks

28) How many working women in India represent an untapped Rs 2.8 lakh crore opportunity for the BFSI sector, according to a 2026 report?

- A) 2 crore
- B) 3.5 crore
- C) 5 crore
- D) 7.5 crore

29) What is the allocated budget for the agriculture sector in India's Union Budget 2026-27?

- A) Rs 1,10,000 crore

- B) Rs 1,62,671 crore
- C) Rs 2,00,000 crore
- D) Rs 1,51,853 crore

30) Which Indian state's economy is projected to grow at 7.9% in 2025-26, as per its Economic Survey?

- A) Gujarat
- B) Karnataka
- C) Maharashtra
- D) Tamil Nadu

31) What milestone did Assam achieve in March 2026 as mentioned in recent news?

- A) Export of GI-tagged Karbi Anglong Ginger to London
- B) First export of Assam tea to Canada
- C) Launch of new rice variety
- D) Setting up an agricultural university

32) Which two leaders agreed to target USD 50 billion in bilateral trade by 2030?

- A) PM Modi & UK PM
- B) PM Modi & Canadian PM Mark Carney
- C) PM Modi & Australian PM
- D) PM Modi & Saudi King

33) What major event did occur on March 3, 2026?

- A) Solar Eclipse
- B) Cyclone landfall
- C) Total Lunar Eclipse
- D) Tornado outbreak

34) Which sector outperformed others in Indian stock markets amid geopolitical tensions in early March 2026?

- A) Technology
- B) Auto
- C) Metal
- D) FMCG

35) Why did global oil prices surge over 7% in early March 2026?

- A) OPEC production cut
- B) Discovery of new oil fields
- C) Escalating Israel-Iran conflict
- D) US dollar depreciation

36) What unique feature characterised the 'Phool Holi' celebration at Kashi Vishwanath Dham in Varanasi in 2026?

- A) Use of chemical colours
- B) Five-tier floral setup
- C) Water balloon fights
- D) Laser light shows

37) Which Indian cricketer is set to return for the home series against Afghanistan starting June 14, 2026?

- A) Sachin Tendulkar
- B) Rohit Sharma
- C) Virat Kohli
- D) Suryakumar Yadav

38) Which Indian women's sports team was shortlisted for the Laureus World Team of the Year Award in 2026?

- A) Women's Hockey Team
- B) Women's Football Team
- C) Women's Cricket Team
- D) Women's Badminton Team

39) Who inaugurated the Bharat Pavilion at Mobile World Congress 2026, showcasing India's telecom innovations?

- A) Narendra Modi
- B) Ashwini Vaishnaw
- C) Jyotiraditya Scindia
- D) Nirmala Sitharaman

40) Which international leader visited India in March 2026 to keynote the Raisina Dialogue?

- A) President of Canada
- B) President of Finland
- C) Prime Minister of Australia
- D) President of Cyprus

41) Who secured All India Rank 1 in the UPSC Civil Services Examination 2025?

- A) Rajeshwari Suve M
- B) Akansh Dhull
- C) Anuj Agnihotri
- D) Raghav Jhunjunwala

42) Which Indian state's 2026-27 budget announced a farm loan waiver of up to ₹2 lakh per farmer?

- A) Gujarat
- B) Maharashtra
- C) Odisha
- D) Karnataka

43) What is the target length of the Metro network in Maharashtra by 2047, as per the recent state budget?

- A) 500 km
- B) 800 km
- C) 1,200 km
- D) 2,000 km

44) Which scheme has provided over ₹4 lakh crore to more than 10 crore farmers in India?

- A) PM Fasal Bima Yojana
- B) PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi
- C) Rashtriya Gokul Mission
- D) Kisan Credit Card Scheme

45) Which pop star lead the closing ceremony of the 2026 ICC Men's T20 World Cup in Ahmedabad?

- A) Shakira
- B) Ricky Martin
- C) Ed Sheeran
- D) Enrique Iglesias

46) Which Indian city is set to get a new airport with an estimated cost of ₹1,500 crore to boost regional development?

- A) Kota
- B) Ajmer
- C) Jaipur
- D) Bundi

47) Which scheme has helped Indian citizens save over ₹40,000 crore on medicines by 2026?

- A) Ayushman Bharat
- B) Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana
- C) Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi
- D) Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana

48) How many women were among the top 25 candidates in the UPSC CSE 2025 final result?

- A) 5
- B) 7
- C) 11
- D) 14

49) Which Indian government initiative aims to train 85,000 engineers in semiconductor design within ten years?

- A) Digital India Mission
- B) Semicon 2.0 Programme
- C) Skill India Mission
- D) Atal Innovation Mission

50) Which event did President Droupadi Murmu attended on March 8, 2026, in Delhi?

- A) Science Congress
- B) International Women’s Day celebration
- C) Startup India Summit
- D) Swachh Bharat Awards

51) What was the main focus of PM Modi's post-Budget webinar?

- A) Promotion of space technology
- B) Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas – Fulfilling Aspirations of People
- C) Startup India initiative
- D) Digital India campaign

52) Which redevelopment project did PM Modi visit on March 8, 2026, to hand over keys to women allottees?

- A) Netaji Nagar Redevelopment
- B) GPRA Sarojini Nagar Redevelopment
- C) East Kidwai Nagar Project
- D) Rajiv Chowk Modernisation

53) According to recent statements, over how many Jan Dhan accounts are now held by women in India?

- A) 10 crore
- B) 18 crore
- C) 28 crore
- D) 38 crore

54) What is the main objective of the ASMITA athletics league launched in 2026?

- A) Train male Olympic athletes
- B) Promote yoga among youth
- C) Increase women's participation in sports
- D) Develop new sports infrastructure

55) Which initiative aims to provide credit cards and formal financial support to street vendors in Delhi?

- A) PM Kisan
- B) PM SVANidhi
- C) Startup India
- D) Stand Up India

56) Who recently assumed the position of Supreme Leader of Iran, shortly before the country launched missile and drone strikes on Israel and the Gulf states?

- A) Ali Khamenei
- B) Ebrahim Raisi
- C) Mojtaba Khamenei
- D) Hassan Rouhani

57) Which Indian institution celebrated its 49th Annual Day in March 2026, highlighting its role in digital health and public health systems?

- A) AIIMS Delhi
- B) National Institute of Health and Family Welfare (NIHFW)
- C) Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)
- D) National Health Mission (NHM)

58) Project Cheetah in India reached a milestone in March 2026 with the birth of five cubs by which Namibian cheetah at Kuno National Park?

- A) Gamini
- B) Jwala
- C) Siyaya
- D) Oban

59) Which country is co-hosting the 11th edition of joint military exercise 'Lamitiye 2026' with India?

- A) Japan
- B) Seychelles

- C) Maldives
- D) France

60) Which technology-driven sector in India is projected to see end-user spending reach \$3.4 billion in 2026, according to a Gartner report?

- A) E-commerce
- B) Telecommunications
- C) Information Security
- D) Edtech

61) Which city recently hosted the inauguration of the new National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA) office and the launch of AI-based dam safety tools?

- A) Mumbai
- B) Hyderabad
- C) New Delhi
- D) Bengaluru

62) What significant status was recently granted to Madurai Airport by the Union Cabinet?

- A) National cargo hub
- B) International airport
- C) Greenfield airport
- D) Private airport

63) What is the main purpose of the 'Lake and Air Watch' initiative launched in Gujarat?

- A) Boosting agricultural output
- B) Real-time monitoring of lake health and air quality
- C) Promoting tourism
- D) Improving road infrastructure

64) Which city's forest department planted 20,000 mangrove seedlings along the Buckingham Canal to enhance climate resilience?

- A) Kolkata
- B) Chennai
- C) Kochi
- D) Mumbai

65) Which two new Amrit Bharat Express train routes were flagged off by PM Modi as part of a connectivity boost in southern India?

- A) Chennai–Mumbai and Bengaluru–Hyderabad
- B) Podanur–Dhanbad and Nagercoil–Charlapalli

- C) Hyderabad–Delhi and Coimbatore–Kolkata
- D) Madurai–Coimbatore and Rameswaram–Chennai

66) Which indigenous technology has been commissioned on 1,452 km of key Indian Railways routes to enhance safety?

- A) Vande Bharat Express
- B) Kavach 4.0
- C) BharatNet
- D) Tejas Mark-II

67) How much subsidy did Indian Railways provide on passenger tickets in 2024–25?

- A) ₹10,000 crore
- B) ₹25,000 crore
- C) ₹60,239 crore
- D) ₹1,20,389 crore

68) What significant parliamentary event occurred after nearly four decades in March 2026?

- A) Passage of Women's Reservation Bill
- B) No-confidence motion against the Lok Sabha Speaker
- C) Impeachment of the Prime Minister
- D) Joint session of Parliament on GST

69) What is the financial outlay for the 22nd instalment of PM-KISAN to be released in March 2026?

- A) ₹2,000 crore
- B) ₹12,500 crore
- C) ₹18,640 crore
- D) ₹4.09 lakh crore

70) Which team will host the opening match of IPL 2026?

- A) Mumbai Indians
- B) Sunrisers Hyderabad
- C) Royal Challengers Bengaluru
- D) Chennai Super Kings

71) What emergency measure did the Indian government implement to prevent LPG shortages amid the West Asia crisis in March 2026?

- A) Ban on LPG exports
- B) LPG Control Order maximizing domestic production
- C) Free LPG for all households

D) Importing LPG from the US only

72) Who was sworn in as the new Governor of West Bengal?

- A) C.V. Ananda Bose
- B) Suvendu Adhikari
- C) R.N. Ravi
- D) M.K. Narayanan

73) Which significant infrastructure projects were inaugurated by PM Modi during his West Bengal visit on March 14, 2026?

- A) New airports
- B) National highway and port development projects
- C) Solar power plants
- D) Metro rail expansions

74) What technological tool did Indian Railways introduce in 2026 to enhance safety and predictive maintenance?

- A) Satellite tracking
- B) Machine Vision Inspection System (MVIS)
- C) Blockchain ticketing
- D) E-locomotive controls

75) Which Indian organization urged states and UTs to plant 2,036 trees each in 2026 to mark Olympic Day?

- A) Ministry of Environment
- B) Sports Authority of India
- C) Indian Olympic Association (IOA)
- D) National Biodiversity Authority

76) Which recently launched initiative aims to provide faster and more transparent online approval for access permissions along Indian National Highways?

- A) Bharat Mala Portal
- B) Rajmarg Pravesh Portal
- C) Highway Suvidha Portal
- D) SADAK Connect Portal

77) Which rice variety from Assam was exported for the first time to the UK and Italy in March 2026?

- A) Basmati Rice

B) Chakhao Rice

C) Joha Rice

D) Sona Masoori Rice

78) What significant achievement did the Great Indian Bustard captive breeding programme reach in March 2026?

- A) First international relocation
- B) Population in the wild doubled
- C) Tally of birds in captivity reached 70
- D) First successful genetic modification

79) Which scheme released over ₹18,000 crore directly to Indian farmers' bank accounts in March 2026?

- A) PM-Fasal Bima Yojana
- B) PM-KUSUM
- C) PM-Kisan
- D) Kisan Credit Card Scheme

80) Which country's new president did PM Narendra Modi congratulate in March 2026, expressing hope for deeper bilateral cooperation?

- A) Brazil
- B) Argentina
- C) Chile
- D) Spain

81) Which Indian company recently became the first to produce 50 million tonnes of iron ore in a single financial year?

- A) SAIL
- B) Tata Steel
- C) NMDC Limited
- D) Vedanta

82) Who was sworn in as the 43rd Governor of Bihar, becoming the first former Indian Army officer to hold the post?

- A) Arif Mohammad Khan
- B) Syed Ata Hasnain
- C) Prem Kumar
- D) Samrat Choudhary

83) Which port city in Assam recently saw the inauguration of an elevated corridor and multiple waterways projects by PM Modi?

- A) Dibrugarh
- B) Silchar
- C) Guwahati
- D) Tezpur

84) India recently signed a trade and economic partnership agreement with which European group, featuring a \$100 billion FDI commitment?

- A) European Union
- B) EFTA (European Free Trade Association)
- C) OECD
- D) Schengen Area

85) What major regulatory reform did the Indian government approve regarding food business licences in March 2026?

- A) Annual renewal of licences
- B) Perpetual validity of FSSAI licences
- C) Ban on street food vendors
- D) Mandatory central licensing for all businesses

86) When will the Assembly elections results for Assam, Kerala, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal be announced as per the latest ECI schedule?

- A) April 23, 2026
- B) April 29, 2026
- C) May 4, 2026
- D) May 10, 2026

87) What initiative in Jammu Kashmir aims to provide employment to families affected by terrorism, as highlighted by the L-G in March 2026?

- A) Yuva Shakti
- B) Sharansthi
- C) Parivartan
- D) Samagra

88) Which city is set to host India's final AFC Asian Cup 2027 Qualifier match against Hong Kong?

- A) Margao
- B) Shillong

- C) Kochi
- D) Kolkata

89) A recent study found that having both adenomas and serrated polyps increases the risk of which disease fivefold?

- A) Lung cancer
- B) Bowel cancer
- C) Liver cirrhosis
- D) Pancreatitis

90) Which party became the largest in Nepal's House of Representatives in March 2026 under the proportional representation system?

- A) Nepali Congress
- B) Nepal Communist Party
- C) Rastriya Swatantra Party
- D) Rastriya Prajatantra Party

91) Which three hospitals are proposed to be integrated into a single AIIMS-style super medical hub in Delhi?

- A) Safdarjung Hospital, AIIMS, Lok Nayak Hospital
- B) Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital, Delhi State Cancer Institute, Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital
- C) Max Hospital, Fortis Hospital, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital
- D) All India Institute of Ayurveda, GTB Hospital, Apollo Hospital

92) According to the latest PLFS Bulletin (February 2026), what was the urban unemployment rate in India?

- A) 7.5%
- B) 6.6%
- C) 5.1%
- D) 8.7%

93) Which state has launched an intensive campaign against Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) under the National Animal Disease Control Programme in March-April 2026?

- A) Punjab
- B) Maharashtra
- C) Gujarat

D) Karnataka

94) What percentage of rural households in India have access to tap water supply under the Jal Jeevan Mission as of March 2026?

- A) 76.5%
- B) 81.71%
- C) 67.2%
- D) 58.4%

95) Who won the Sahitya Akademi Award 2025 for the English novel category?

- A) Mamta Kalia
- B) Prasun Bandyopadhyay
- C) Navtej Sarna
- D) N. Prabhakaran

96) Which country currently leads global coconut production, as per the latest government announcement in 2026?

- A) Indonesia
- B) Philippines
- C) India
- D) Sri Lanka

97) What milestone did India achieve in coal production from captive and commercial mines in the current financial year?

- A) 100 million tonnes
- B) 150 million tonnes
- C) 200 million tonnes
- D) 500 million tonnes

98) As of January 2026, approximately how many Indian startups have at least one woman director or partner?

- A) 10,000
- B) 25,000
- C) 1,02,000
- D) 2,12,000

99) On which day is National Vaccination Day observed in India, as highlighted in 2026?

- A) January 16
- B) March 16
- C) April 7

D) December 1

100) According to the latest data, what is the full immunisation coverage rate in India as of January 2026?

- A) 62%
- B) 80%
- C) 90.4%
- D) 98.4%

101) What is the main objective of the newly approved Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojna (BHAVYA) scheme?

- A) Developing rural roads
- B) Establishing new agricultural universities
- C) Setting up 100 modern industrial parks
- D) Promoting textile exports

102) Which state recently announced the establishment of a 'Sovereign AI Park' to support AI startups?

- A) Maharashtra
- B) Karnataka
- C) Gujarat
- D) Telangana

103) What is the outlay of the newly approved Small Hydro Power (SHP) Development Scheme for FY 2026–27 to FY 2030–31?

- A) ₹1,500 crore
- B) ₹2,584.60 crore
- C) ₹6,969 crore
- D) ₹33,660 crore

104) Which app, according to the Railway Minister, has logged 2.57 crore downloads and enables both reserved and unreserved ticket booking?

- A) IRCTC Rail Connect
- B) RailOne
- C) UTS Mobile
- D) Rail Yatri

105) What is the primary goal of India's IOS SAGAR initiative launched by the Navy in March 2026?

- A) Enhancing agricultural exports

- B) Strengthening maritime cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region
- C) Developing urban infrastructure
- D) Promoting inland waterways

106) What major global event caused Indian stock markets to fall sharply on March 19, 2026?

- A) US interest rate hike
- B) Rise in COVID-19 cases
- C) Escalating Middle East conflict
- D) Weak corporate earnings

107) Which country did PM Modi thank for helping evacuate Indian nationals amid West Asia tensions in March 2026?

- A) Saudi Arabia
- B) Qatar
- C) Jordan
- D) Kuwait

108) What was the approximate value of India's bioeconomy in 2025, as highlighted by Union Minister Jitendra Singh?

- A) \$10 billion
- B) \$100 billion
- C) \$165 billion
- D) \$195 billion

109) What was the main reason cited for the sharp fall in gold and silver prices on March 19, 2026?

- A) US Fed kept rates unchanged
- B) Rupee appreciation
- C) Increased mining output
- D) Reduced demand in India

110) Which Indian state recently approved a health budget of Rs 25,403 crore, with increased maternal benefits and insurance coverage?

- A) Maharashtra
- B) Tamil Nadu
- C) Gujarat
- D) West Bengal

111) What is the primary objective of the 'PRARAMBH 2026' campaign launched by the Union Finance Minister?

- A) To introduce a new GST structure
- B) To promote cashless payments
- C) To build awareness about the new Income Tax Act, 2025
- D) To reduce government spending

112) Which technology initiative was launched to assist taxpayers under the new Income Tax Act, 2025?

- A) Aadhar Samarth
- B) Kar Saathi chatbot
- C) GST Parichay
- D) e-TDS Portal

113) Which Indian government portal recorded over 10,000 complaints about misleading advertisements in traditional medicine systems by March 2026?

- A) Ayush Suraksha Portal
- B) eSanjeevani
- C) Swachh Bharat Portal
- D) eNAM

114) What is the aim of the National Youth Policy 2026 proposed by the Indian government?

- A) To provide free education for all
- B) To align youth participation with Viksit Bharat 2047 goals
- C) To implement universal basic income
- D) To privatise higher education

115) Which state recently signed the Jal Jeevan Mission 2.0 MoU with the Centre to focus on sustainable rural water supply?

- A) Maharashtra
- B) Gujarat
- C) Tamil Nadu
- D) Rajasthan

116) Which government body is leading the drive to achieve 100% school enrolment in India by 2030 using open schooling?

- A) University Grants Commission
- B) Department of School Education and Literacy
- C) National Council of Educational Research and Training

D) Central Board of Secondary Education

117) The Election Commission of India recently completed the first randomisation of EVM-VVPATs for Assembly elections in which of the following Union Territories?

- A) Lakshadweep
- B) Puducherry
- C) Jammu & Kashmir
- D) Andaman & Nicobar Islands

118) As per the Economic Survey 2025-26, what is the projected value of the Indian domestic pharmaceutical market by 2030?

- A) \$60 billion
- B) \$100 billion
- C) \$130 billion
- D) \$200 billion

119) Which technology-focused initiative was launched by India's Department of Telecommunications in March 2026?

- A) Digital India Mission
- B) 5G Hackathon 2026
- C) Make in India Summit
- D) Smart Cities Challenge

120) Which scheme provided drones specifically to women self-help groups for agricultural purposes?

- A) PM-KISAN
- B) Namo Drone Didi
- C) Krishi Unnati Yojana
- D) Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana

121) Which key initiative was announced at the maiden Bharat Electricity Summit 2026 to support India's energy transition?

- A) Launch of the Indian Carbon Market Portal
- B) Introduction of GST on electricity
- C) Privatization of all DISCOMs
- D) Merger of coal and renewable sectors

122) Who currently holds the key departments such as Home, Finance, and Disaster Management in the Uttarakhand government after the 2026 Cabinet expansion?

- A) Satpal Maharaj
- B) Subodh Uniyal
- C) Pushkar Singh Dhama
- D) Dhan Singh Rawat

123) Which Indian naval ship participated for the first time in the tri-services Exercise Lamitiye 2026 with Seychelles?

- A) INS Vikrant
- B) INS Trikand
- C) INS Taragiri
- D) INS Kolkata

124) What major defense asset is scheduled to be commissioned by the Indian Navy on April 3, 2026?

- A) INS Vikramaditya
- B) INS Taragiri
- C) INS Arihant
- D) INS Shivalik

125) Who emphasized yoga and naturopathy as important for tackling lifestyle disorders at an event in Pune in March 2026?

- A) Prime Minister Narendra Modi
- B) Vice-President C. P. Radhakrishnan
- C) Union Health Minister
- D) Ayush Secretary

126) What percentage of rural households in India had access to tap water under the Jal Jeevan Mission as of March 2026?

- A) 48%
- B) 67%
- C) 81%
- D) 95%

127) Which initiative did Health Minister J.P. Nadda launch on World TB Day 2026 to intensify India's fight against tuberculosis?

- A) TB Mukh Bharat 100-Days Campaign
- B) Fit India Movement
- C) Ayushman Bharat Expansion
- D) National Polio Drive

128) What is the main objective of India's GARBH-INi pregnancy cohort study launched recently?

- A) To study waterborne diseases
- B) To develop AI-driven solutions for preterm births
- C) To research childhood immunisation
- D) To assess malnutrition among infants

129) What recent step did the Election Commission of India (ECI) take to ensure fair political campaigning ahead of Assembly polls?

- A) Introduced blockchain-based voting
- B) Allotted digital time vouchers for DD and AIR broadcasts
- C) Banned exit polls
- D) Made voting compulsory

130) Which Indian government scheme crossed 11.69 crore hospital admissions by February 2026?

- A) PM-Kisan
- B) Ayushman Bharat
- C) Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana
- D) Jal Jeevan Mission

131) Which innovative measure was introduced under the 2026 'Reform Express' initiative of Indian Railways to combat misuse of ticketing systems?

- A) Manual ticket checks at stations
- B) Removal of sleeper class
- C) Aadhaar-based OTP verification
- D) Limiting ticket sales to counters only

132) The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026, passed by the Lok Sabha, notably excludes which key provision from the 2019 Act?

- A) Certificate of identity by District Magistrate
- B) Recognition of self-identification
- C) Coverage for intersex variations
- D) Consultation with medical experts

133) India's total exports reached what value during April 2025 to January 2026, as per government data?

- A) \$497.90 billion
- B) \$828.25 billion
- C) \$714.73 billion
- D) \$679.02 billion

134) Which Indian state achieved a 94% target in TB registration and treatment as per recent government data?

- A) Maharashtra
- B) Uttar Pradesh
- C) Gujarat
- D) Kerala

135) What is the main focus of the Integrated Disease Surveillance Program (IDSP) launched by the Health Ministry?

- A) Eradicating malaria
- B) Monitoring water quality
- C) Early warning and response to bio-emergencies
- D) Providing insurance to patients

136) Who currently holds the highest global approval rating among world leaders, as per the March 2026 Morning Consult survey?

- A) Guy Parmelin
- B) Donald Trump
- C) Narendra Modi
- D) Lee Jae-myung

137) Which Indian organisation is credited with constructing over 64,000 kilometers of roads and 1,179 bridges in border areas since 1960?

- A) National Highways Authority of India
- B) Border Roads Organisation
- C) Central Public Works Department
- D) Indian Army Corps of Engineers

138) What major advisory did the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) issue to hotels and restaurants in March 2026?

- A) Ban on service tax
- B) Prohibition of LPG or fuel-related surcharges
- C) Mandatory digital payments
- D) Restriction on takeaway orders

139) India aims to achieve what annual domestic production capacity of rare earth permanent magnets by 2030?

- A) 1,000 tonnes
- B) 2,000 tonnes

- C) 4,000 tonnes
- D) 5,000 tonnes

140) What is the total outlay approved for the extension of the IVFRT scheme in India from 2026 to 2031?

- A) ₹1,200 crore
- B) ₹1,800 crore
- C) ₹2,500 crore
- D) ₹3,000 crore

141) Which country will NOT participate in the G7 leaders' summit in Evian-les-Bains in June 2026?

- A) India
- B) Brazil
- C) Kenya
- D) China

142) Which Indian airport was inaugurated by Prime Minister Modi on March 28, 2026, as the NCR's second international airport?

Varanasi International Airport

- A) Noida International Airport
- B) Chandigarh International Airport
- C) Lucknow International Airport

143) Which government scheme has been extended to 2028, focusing on rural tap water supply and sustainability?

- A) Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana
- B) Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban
- C) Jal Jeevan Mission
- D) Ayushman Bharat

144) Which Indian state recently launched a new Dehradun–Pithoragarh flight service under the UDAN scheme?

- A) Himachal Pradesh
- B) Uttarakhand
- C) Sikkim
- D) Jammu Kashmir

145) Which major sporting initiative was launched in Chhattisgarh in March 2026 to promote tribal talent?

- A) Fit India Movement

- B) Khelo India Tribal Games
- C) Youth Olympics
- D) National Tribal Sports Meet

146) Who was honoured with the Major Dhyan Chand Lifetime Achievement Award at the Hockey India 8th Annual Awards in March 2026?

- A) Hardik Singh
- B) Navneet Kaur
- C) Zafar Iqbal
- D) Harbinder Singh

147) Which bill did the Indian Parliament approve in March 2026 to give legislative backing to the Union Budget 2026-27?

- A) Appropriation Bill
- B) Goods and Services Tax Bill
- C) Finance Bill
- D) Banking Regulation Bill

148) What was a key focus of PharmaMed 2026, held in March 2026 in New Delhi?

- A) Increasing pharmaceutical exports only
- B) Building a value-driven, innovative pharma ecosystem
- C) Reducing drug prices through subsidies
- D) Privatizing public health infrastructure

149) Why did the Indian government cancel over 6,900 fertilizer licences during the Rabi 2025-26 season?

- A) To introduce a new subsidy scheme
- B) Due to fertilizer hoarding and black marketing
- C) To promote organic fertilizers exclusively
- D) For environmental violations

150) Which Indian state became the 12th to sign a reform-linked MoU under Jal Jeevan Mission 2.0 in March 2026?

- A) Assam
- B) Kerala
- C) Meghalaya
- D) Odisha

ANSWERS**1) Correct Answer: C**

Narendra Modi became the first Indian Prime Minister to address the Israeli Parliament, Knesset. This historic event marks a significant milestone in India-Israel bilateral relations. Modi's address solidified India's growing strategic partnership with Israel.

2) Correct Answer: B

PM Modi was awarded the 'Speaker of the Knesset Medal', the highest honour of the Israeli Parliament. He is the first leader to receive this medal. The award recognised his leadership in strengthening India-Israel relations.

3) Correct Answer: C

As of February 2026, India and Israel are actively negotiating an ambitious Free Trade Agreement. The talks aim to boost trade, innovation, and economic cooperation between the two nations. This FTA is expected to create new opportunities for both economies.

4) Correct Answer: B

The Maharaja of Nawanganar, also known as Jam Saheb of Gujarat, offered refuge to Polish and Jewish children during the Holocaust. PM Modi mentioned this humanitarian act in his 2026 Knesset address. This reflects India's tradition of compassion and acceptance.

5) Correct Answer: C

President Droupadi Murmu launched the 'Golden Era of Maharashtra through Unity and Trust'. The initiative aims to inspire social, economic, and cultural development in Maharashtra. It draws on historical legacies and modern innovation.

6) Correct Answer: C

India's UPI will be linked with Israel's fast payment system as part of recent agreements. This integration is expected to enhance interoperability and boost economic ties. UPI's global recognition as a real-time, low-cost payments solution makes this move significant. It demonstrates India's fintech leadership on the world stage.

7) Correct Answer: B

Prime Minister Modi announced the 'Villages of Excellence' initiative to expand Israeli agricultural technology to Indian villages. This builds on the success of Centres of Excellence and aims to increase productivity and income for lakhs of farmers. The move underscores Indo-Israel innovation in agriculture. It will support rural development and food security in India.

8) Correct Answer: B

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Fisheries and Aquaculture was signed during PM Modi's visit. The agreement focuses on sustainable, technology-driven systems including advanced aquaculture and R&D. It aims to enhance food security and rural income. This partnership supports environmental conservation and economic growth.

9) Correct Answer: B

The Chungthang–Lachen road and Taram Chu Bridge in North Sikkim were restored by BRO. These efforts followed cloudbursts, a cyclone, and glacial floods from 2023-2025. The project improves mobility for residents and security agencies. It aligns with Sikkim's development vision and disaster resilience.

10) Correct Answer: C

Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw announced the full digitisation of the Railway Claims Tribunal (e-RCT). This is part of the '52 Reforms in 52 Weeks' initiative to digitise and streamline railway services. The reform enables online case filing and hybrid hearings. It increases transparency and access to justice for claimants.

11) Correct Answer: B

MoS for Power and New and Renewable Energy, Shripad Y. Naik, inaugurated the solar plant in Tripura. This marks the formal launch of the state's plan to solarise all district HQs. The project is part of the Solar Sankalp initiative and aims to promote renewable energy in government offices.

12) Correct Answer: B

PM Modi inaugurated Micron's ATMP facility in Sanand, Gujarat. The plant will produce semiconductor memory modules, marking India's entry into advanced semiconductor manufacturing. This facility is crucial for integrating India into global value chains and advancing self-reliance in technology

13) Correct Answer: C

Assam launched the distribution of land pattas to over one lakh families under Mission Basundhara 3.0. The initiative addresses long-pending land grievances and formalises land ownership for indigenous people. This promotes social justice and improves access to institutional benefits in Assam.

14) Correct Answer: B

Exercise Vayu Shakti 2026 took place at Pokhran, Jaisalmer. The exercise showcased the IAF's operational preparedness and the use of advanced indigenous platforms. It strengthens India's air power and deterrence posture, highlighting the nation's focus on self-reliance in defence.

15) Correct Answer: B

India and Italy held defence talks in Rome, focusing on industry partnerships and resilient supply chains. They discussed joint ventures and technology co-development. This deepens bilateral cooperation and supports India's vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat in defence manufacturing.

16) Correct Answer: C

Gold and silver prices surged due to escalating tensions between Israel and Iran in February 2026. Investors sought safe-haven assets amid fears of a broader regional conflict. This led to a sharp rise in bullion prices globally and domestically.

17) Correct Answer: C

Jammu and Kashmir clinched their maiden Ranji Trophy title in February 2026. They defeated Karnataka on first-innings lead in the final at Hubballi. This historic win ended a 67-year wait and marked a major achievement for the state in Indian domestic cricket.

18) Correct Answer: C

The United States and Israel jointly launched strikes on Iran on February 28, 2026. The operation, named

"OPERATION EPIC FURY," targeted Iranian leadership and military assets. This event marked a significant escalation in Middle East tensions.

19) Correct Answer: C

Amid US-Israel military strikes on Iran, the Indian Embassy in Tehran advised Indian nationals to exercise utmost caution and remain indoors. The advisory aimed to ensure the safety of Indians during heightened conflict. Emergency contact numbers were provided for assistance.

20) Correct Answer: B

Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal inaugurated Customs and Immigration Complexes at Bogibeel and Dhubri and the renovated Heritage Building of IWAI in Dibrugarh. These projects aim to enhance trade and tourism in the Northeast.

21) Correct Answer: C

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's Supreme Leader, was killed in joint US-Israeli strikes on March 1, 2026. The attack marked the most significant escalation between the US/Israel and Iran in decades. Khamenei had ruled Iran since 1989, and his death creates a leadership vacuum.

22) Correct Answer: B

The 2026 National Science Day event adopted the theme 'Women in Science Catalysing Viksit Bharat.' The focus was on integrating women scientists and bridging science-policy gaps. It highlighted the need for inclusive research ecosystems and science-led national development.

23) Correct Answer: B

Sanath Jayasuriya, Sri Lanka's head coach, decided to step down following the team's poor performance in the T20 World Cup 2026. Sri Lanka finished at the bottom of their Super Eights group. Jayasuriya's exit marks the end of an era for Sri Lankan cricket.

24) Correct Answer: C

Operation 'Epic Fury' refers to the joint US-Israeli military campaign against Iran initiated in March 2026. The operation involved large-scale airstrikes targeting Iranian leadership and military assets. Its aim was to curb Iran's nuclear and missile programs.

25) Correct Answer: C

The University of Delhi (Delhi University) held its 102nd convocation in March 2026, awarding degrees to over 1.2 lakh students. The event reflects DU's massive academic footprint and its role in shaping Indian higher education. The convocation underscored the growing participation of women in higher education.

26) Correct Answer: B

India and Finland signed a Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement during President Stubb's March 2026 visit. This agreement facilitates the movement of skilled professionals between both nations. It reflects growing bilateral ties in technology and innovation. The pact is significant for boosting workforce mobility and talent exchange between India and Finland.

27) Correct Answer: C

The 'Jal Sanchay Jan Bhagidari' initiative centers on groundwater recharge through community participation. Farmers voluntarily dedicate five percent of their land for recharge ponds and terraced pits. This has improved soil moisture and raised groundwater levels by 3-4 meters. The program is a model for sustainable water management in India.

28) Correct Answer: D

A RedSeer 2026 report identifies nearly 7.5 crore working women as an untapped Rs 2.8 lakh crore market for India's BFSI sector. Despite high digital access, women's financial product adoption remains low. Bridging this gap can significantly boost financial inclusion and sector growth in India.

29) Correct Answer: B

The Union Budget 2026-27 allocates Rs 1,62,671 crore to the agriculture sector. This is a 7% increase from the previous year's revised estimate. The allocation aims to boost farmer incomes and promote high-value crops. The emphasis reflects India's ongoing priority on rural transformation and food security.

30) Correct Answer: C

Maharashtra's economy is expected to grow by 7.9% in 2025-26, surpassing the national growth rate. The state's strong GST collections and robust market conditions drive this growth. Maharashtra remains the largest

contributor to India's GDP. Its economic health is crucial for national fiscal stability.

31) Correct Answer: A

On March 2, 2026, Assam flagged off its first export of GI-tagged Karbi Anglong Ginger to London. This marked a significant milestone for Assam's agricultural sector. The GI tag adds value and authenticity to the produce in international markets.

32) Correct Answer: B

Indian PM Narendra Modi and Canadian PM Mark Carney announced an ambitious goal of USD 50 billion in bilateral trade by 2030. This reflects growing economic and strategic ties between India and Canada. The partnership includes cooperation in technology, energy, and defence.

33) Correct Answer: C

A total lunar eclipse was visible across India on March 3, 2026. During this event, the entire Moon passed through Earth's umbral shadow. Such celestial events have astronomical and educational significance. They offer an opportunity for observation and public engagement in science.

34) Correct Answer: C

Despite overall market decline on March 2, 2026, the Nifty Metal index closed 0.24% higher. Metals outperformed other sectors amid West Asia tensions. This resilience highlights metals as a defensive sector during global uncertainty. It is important for investors and the broader economy.

35) Correct Answer: C

Crude oil prices jumped over 7% on March 2, 2026, due to escalating military strikes between Israel, the US, and Iran. The conflict disrupted the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial oil transit route. For India, which imports most of its crude, such spikes threaten inflation and trade balance.

36) Correct Answer: B

A five-tier floral setup was arranged for the 'Phool Holi' at Kashi Vishwanath Dham. This eco-friendly celebration used flowers instead of chemical colours. The event aimed to promote safety and environmental consciousness.

37) Correct Answer: C

Virat Kohli will be seen in India's squad for the home series against Afghanistan in June 2026. Kohli, now playing only ODIs internationally, shared Holi greetings and confirmed his participation. His continued presence is crucial for India's cricket ambitions.

38) Correct Answer: C

The Indian women's cricket team was shortlisted for the Laureus World Team of the Year Award in 2026. This recognition followed their historic ICC Women's Cricket World Cup victory in 2025. The nomination reflects the team's outstanding achievements and rising status globally.

39) Correct Answer: C

Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia inaugurated the Bharat Pavilion at MWC 2026. The event in Barcelona featured over 40 Indian telecom innovators. This showcases India's emergence as a trusted digital leader globally. Such participation demonstrates India's growing capabilities in telecom and digital infrastructure.

40) Correct Answer: B

Finland's President Alexander Stubb visited India in March 2026 to give the keynote at Raisina Dialogue. The visit aimed at strengthening bilateral ties and discussing regional and global issues. Such high-level engagements enhance India's diplomatic relationships with key global partners.

41) Correct Answer: C

Anuj Agnihotri secured AIR 1 in UPSC CSE 2025. He holds an MBBS from AIIMS Jodhpur and chose Medical Science as his optional subject. His achievement highlights the diverse backgrounds of successful candidates and inspires aspirants from medical and other fields alike.

42) Correct Answer: B

Maharashtra announced a farm loan waiver of up to ₹2 lakh per farmer in its 2026–27 budget. The scheme is called the Punyashlok Ahilyabai Holkar Farmers' Loan Waiver Scheme. This measure aims to support indebted farmers and improve rural prosperity.

43) Correct Answer: C

Maharashtra aims to expand its Metro network to 1,200 km by 2047. This ambitious infrastructure goal was outlined in the 2026–27 state budget. The expansion

supports rapid urbanisation and economic growth in the state. Enhanced connectivity will facilitate ease of living and boost urban development.

44) Correct Answer: B

The PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme has provided over ₹4 lakh crore to more than 10 crore farmers. This was highlighted by PM Modi in a March 2026 post-Budget webinar. The scheme offers direct income support to farmers, ensuring financial security.

45) Correct Answer: B

Ricky Martin performed at the closing ceremony of the 2026 ICC Men's T20 World Cup in Ahmedabad. The event took place ahead of the final between India and New Zealand. His performance adds global appeal to the cricket event.

46) Correct Answer: A

Prime Minister Modi laid the foundation stone for Kota Airport. The airport will be built for ₹1,500 crore, aiming to enhance connectivity and economic growth in Rajasthan's Hadoti region. This initiative is part of India's broader aviation expansion, supporting regional development.

47) Correct Answer: B

The Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) has enabled savings exceeding ₹40,000 crore. By March 2026, nearly 18,000 Jan Aushadhi Kendras offer quality, affordable medicines nationwide. This initiative enhances healthcare accessibility and reduces family healthcare expenses across India.

48) Correct Answer: C

Out of the top 25 in UPSC CSE 2025, 11 were women. This result, declared in March 2026, demonstrates increasing gender diversity and success among women aspirants. It underscores the growing participation of women in prestigious civil services in India.

49) Correct Answer: B

The Semicon 2.0 Programme, announced by the Ministry of Electronics and IT, aims to train 85,000 engineers in chip design over a decade. As of March 2026, India has made significant progress, strengthening its potential as a global semiconductor hub.

50) Correct Answer: B

President Droupadi Murmu participated in the national-level International Women's Day event at Delhi's Manekshaw Centre on March 8, 2026. The event celebrates women's achievements and government initiatives for gender equality, reflecting India's commitment to women-led development.

51) Correct Answer: B

The post-Budget webinar was themed 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas – Fulfilling Aspirations of People' and addressed key budget announcements. It involved breakout sessions across sectors like education, health, and tourism. The focus was on implementing budget initiatives to strengthen various pathways.

52) Correct Answer: B

PM Modi visited the GPRA Redevelopment Project in Sarojini Nagar and handed over Type-5 quarter keys to women allottees. This project is part of a ₹15,200 crore initiative to modernise government housing in Delhi. It aims to provide over 9,350 modern flats and extensive office space.

53) Correct Answer: C

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman stated that women now hold over 28 crore Jan Dhan accounts. The announcement came on International Women's Day 2026. This reflects the growing financial participation and independence among Indian women.

54) Correct Answer: C

The ASMITA league, launched nationwide in 2026, aims to boost women's participation in sports. Announced by Union Minister Raksha Khadse, it targets talent identification at the grassroots. Over 2 lakh girls participated in one-day events across 250 locations.

55) Correct Answer: B

The PM SVANidhi scheme provides credit cards and financial support to street vendors, as highlighted in March 2026. In Delhi, nearly 2 lakh vendors benefited with over ₹350 crore disbursed. The scheme promotes financial inclusion and entrepreneurship at the grassroots.

56) Correct Answer: C

Mojtaba Khamenei was named Iran's new Supreme Leader on March 9, 2026. His appointment came just

hours before Iran launched missile and drone strikes against Israel and Gulf states. The strikes escalated regional tensions and impacted global energy supplies.

57) Correct Answer: B

NIHFW celebrated its 49th Annual Day on March 9, 2026. The event showcased its contributions to building skilled health professionals and advancing digital health. The institute's role in supporting national health programmes was emphasized.

58) Correct Answer: B

Jwala, a Namibian cheetah, gave birth to five cubs at Kuno National Park in March 2026. This marked the 10th successful cheetah litter since Project Cheetah's launch. The cheetah population in India reached 53, advancing species reintroduction efforts.

59) Correct Answer: B

Seychelles is co-hosting the 11th 'Lamitiye' exercise with India from March 9 to March 20, 2026. The exercise enhances military cooperation and interoperability. It featured participation from all three Indian armed services.

60) Correct Answer: C

End-user spending on information security in India is projected to hit \$3.4 billion in 2026, per Gartner. This marks an 11.7% increase from 2025, driven by AI-based threats and regulatory demands. The sector's growth highlights rising cybersecurity needs.

61) Correct Answer: C

The new NDSA office and digital dam safety tools were inaugurated in New Delhi. The event was attended by Union Jal Shakti Minister C. R. Paatil and senior officials. Key launches included the GIS-based 'Specified Dams' map and NETRA, an AI-enabled platform.

62) Correct Answer: B

Madurai Airport was declared an international airport by the Union Cabinet. This upgrade enhances connectivity for southern Tamil Nadu. The move is expected to boost tourism, pilgrimage, and trade in the region. Improved international access is significant for economic growth and travel ease.

63) Correct Answer: B

Gujarat's 'Lake and Air Watch' initiative, announced on March 10, 2026, focuses on real-time monitoring of urban lakes and air quality. It uses satellite and digital platforms for data collection and alerts. The aim is to address urban pollution and climate resilience.

64) Correct Answer: B

The Tamil Nadu Forest Department planted 20,000 mangrove seedlings along the Buckingham Canal in Chennai in 2025–26. This effort is part of a phased coastal restoration project. Mangroves protect against erosion, cyclones, and improve biodiversity.

65) Correct Answer: B

On March 11, 2026, PM Modi flagged off the Podanur–Dhanbad and Nagercoil–Charlapalli Amrit Bharat Express trains. These expand the affordable, long-distance Amrit Bharat network. The new trains improve regional and inter-state mobility, supporting economic integration across southern and eastern India.

66) Correct Answer: B

Kavach 4.0, India's Automatic Train Protection system, is now active on 1,452 km of major routes. It automatically applies brakes if the driver fails and improves safety in low-visibility conditions. Launched in March 2026, Kavach 4.0 incorporates enhanced features and reduces accident rates.

67) Correct Answer: C

Indian Railways granted a subsidy of ₹60,239 crore on passenger fares in 2024–25. This amounts to an average concession of about 43% per passenger. The subsidy keeps train travel affordable for all, supporting inclusive mobility.

68) Correct Answer: B

The Lok Sabha faced a no-confidence motion against Speaker Om Birla in March 2026. Such a motion had not occurred in nearly 40 years. The motion was rejected by voice vote after a lengthy debate. This event highlighted the Speaker's constitutional role and the importance of parliamentary procedures in India.

69) Correct Answer: C

The 22nd PM-KISAN instalment, worth over ₹18,640 crore, will be released in March 2026. Over 9.32 crore farmers will benefit via direct transfer. Since 2019,

cumulative transfers will surpass ₹4.27 lakh crore. This scheme is a cornerstone of direct income support for India's farmers, especially women and marginal holders.

70) Correct Answer: C

Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB), the defending champions, will host Sunrisers Hyderabad in the IPL 2026 opener. The match is scheduled for March 28 at Chinnaswamy Stadium. This marks RCB's return as hosts after their maiden IPL title.

71) Correct Answer: B

On March 9, 2026, the government issued an LPG Control Order to maximize domestic production. This step was crucial due to disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz affecting LPG imports. Domestic LPG output was increased by 28% in five days.

72) Correct Answer: C

R.N. Ravi took oath as West Bengal Governor. He is a former Intelligence Bureau officer and ex-Governor of Tamil Nadu. His appointment followed the resignation of C.V. Ananda Bose. The timing is significant with West Bengal approaching Assembly elections.

73) Correct Answer: B

PM Modi inaugurated national highway and port development projects worth ₹18,680 crore on March 14, 2026. These include new highway corridors and port mechanization efforts. The projects aim to improve connectivity and economic growth in eastern India.

74) Correct Answer: B

The Machine Vision Inspection System (MVIS) uses AI and ML to detect train defects. Introduced in 2026, it inspects components of moving trains for safety. MVIS pilot deployments mark a step towards smarter, safer railway operations.

75) Correct Answer: C

The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) called for planting 2,036 trees per state/UT in March 2026. This was part of Olympic Day celebrations for environmental sustainability. The initiative aligns with the International Olympic Committee's Olympic Forest campaign.

76) Correct Answer: B

The upgraded Rajmarg Pravesh Portal was launched on March 13, 2026. It streamlines online access permission

and NOCs for highway-side facilities. The portal integrates multiple approvals into one digital system. This enhances efficiency and transparency in infrastructure projects along India's expanding National Highway network.

77) Correct Answer: C

Joha rice, with a GI tag, was exported to the UK and Italy in March 2026. This aromatic rice is grown across Assam and is known for its unique fragrance and taste. It is significant for boosting farmers' incomes and promoting indigenous varieties globally.

78) Correct Answer: C

The captive breeding programme for the Great Indian Bustard reached 70 birds in captivity in March 2026. Two new chicks were hatched at the Rajasthan conservation facility. This critically endangered bird is mainly confined to Rajasthan.

79) Correct Answer: C

The PM-Kisan scheme transferred over ₹18,000 crore to farmers in March 2026. PM Modi announced this during a visit to Assam. PM-Kisan provides direct income support to small and marginal farmers. It has become a major social security mechanism for India's agricultural sector.

80) Correct Answer: C

Jose Antonio Kast was sworn in as Chile's President in March 2026. PM Modi congratulated him and highlighted opportunities in trade, technology, and energy. Strengthening ties with Chile aids India's outreach in Latin America.

81) Correct Answer: C

NMDC Limited achieved the 50 million tonne iron ore production milestone in FY 2025–26. The state-run miner reached this historic mark days before the financial year's close. This reflects a fivefold growth since 1978 and consolidates NMDC's position as India's iron ore supply backbone.

82) Correct Answer: B

Lieutenant General (Retd) Syed Ata Hasnain took oath as Bihar's 43rd Governor on March 14, 2026. He succeeds Arif Mohammad Khan and is the first ex-Army officer in

this role. His appointment is significant for administrative and strategic governance.

83) Correct Answer: C

Guwahati's Pandu Port is now linked via a ₹180-crore elevated corridor to National Highway-27. PM Modi inaugurated this and other waterways projects worth ₹526 crore on March 13, 2026. The corridor addresses last-mile connectivity, boosting logistics and tourism along the Brahmaputra.

84) Correct Answer: B

India's agreement with EFTA (Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein) secures a legally binding \$100 billion foreign direct investment. Announced in March 2026, the pact aims to generate one million jobs and boost manufacturing and services.

85) Correct Answer: B

The government approved perpetual validity for Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) licences on March 14, 2026. Businesses no longer need periodic renewals, reducing compliance costs and paperwork. This reform supports ease of doing business and regulatory focus on food safety enforcement in India.

86) Correct Answer: C

The Election Commission of India announced that results for all Assembly elections and by-elections will be declared on May 4, 2026. This covers Assam, Kerala, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal. The single-day announcement streamlines the electoral process.

87) Correct Answer: B

The 'Sharansthi' initiative was mentioned by J L-G Manoj Sinha in March 2026. It provides compassionate appointments to next of kin of terror victims. This program supports affected families through job opportunities.

88) Correct Answer: C

Kochi's Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium will host India's final qualifier against Hong Kong on March 31, 2026. This marks the return of international football to Kochi after a decade. Hosting such matches boosts local sports culture.

89) Correct Answer: B

The March 2026 study linked the presence of both adenomas and serrated polyps to a fivefold increase in bowel (colorectal) cancer risk. Early detection and regular screening are vital. The findings stress the importance of colonoscopy for high-risk individuals.

90) Correct Answer: C

The Rastriya Swatantra Party emerged as the largest, securing 182 seats (including 57 PR seats). This was announced by Nepal's Election Commission on March 15, 2026. The party's rise reflects changing political dynamics in Nepal.

91) Correct Answer: B

Delhi CM Rekha Gupta proposed integrating Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital, Delhi State Cancer Institute, and Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital. The integration aims to create a super medical hub similar to AIIMS. This initiative will increase bed availability and streamline healthcare delivery.

92) Correct Answer: B

The urban unemployment rate declined to 6.6% in February 2026. This figure comes from the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) Monthly Bulletin by the Ministry of Statistics. The data shows improvement from 7.0% in January.

93) Correct Answer: C

Gujarat launched an intensive statewide FMD vaccination drive starting. The campaign is part of the National Animal Disease Control Programme (NADCP). It uses digital animal tracking for monitoring vaccination coverage.

94) Correct Answer: B

As of March 2026, 81.71% of rural households have tap water supply under Jal Jeevan Mission. This update was provided in the Rajya Sabha by the Minister of State for Jal Shakti. The mission was launched in 2019 to ensure potable water for every rural household.

95) Correct Answer: C

Navtej Sarna won the Sahitya Akademi Award 2025 for his English novel 'Crimson Spring.' The awards, announced on March 16, 2026, honor literary excellence in 24 Indian languages. The selection recognizes significant contributions to literature.

96) Correct Answer: C

India accounts for over 30% of the world's coconut output. The announcement was made by the Indian government in March 2026, highlighting India's leadership in coconut cultivation. The sector supports nearly 30 million livelihoods.

97) Correct Answer: C

Coal output from captive and commercial mines crossed 200 million tonnes for the first time. This was announced in March 2026 by the Ministry of Coal. The sector has seen a compound annual growth rate of 30% between FY 2021 and FY 2025.

98) Correct Answer: C

Over 1,02,054 Indian startups include at least one woman director or partner. Data was shared in Parliament in March 2026, reflecting growing female participation. This demonstrates the impact of government initiatives supporting women in entrepreneurship.

99) Correct Answer: B

National Vaccination Day is observed on March 16 each year in India. In 2026, this day was marked to celebrate India's immunisation achievements. The day highlights the transformative role of vaccines in public health.

100) Correct Answer: D

Full immunisation coverage in India reached 98.4% in January 2026. This statistic was highlighted in the context of National Vaccination Day. It shows a remarkable improvement from 62% in 2015. This achievement strengthens India's public health outcomes and global standing.

101) Correct Answer: C

The BHAVYA scheme aims to set up 100 plug-and-play industrial parks across India. It was approved by the Union Cabinet in March 2026 with an outlay of ₹33,660 crore. The scheme focuses on boosting manufacturing, attracting investments, and generating employment.

102) Correct Answer: C

Gujarat announced the creation of a Sovereign AI Park during a startup dialogue in Gandhinagar. This initiative will provide infrastructure and financial support to AI

startups, driving technological growth. It highlights the state's commitment to emerging technologies.

103) Correct Answer: B

The Union Cabinet approved the SHP Development Scheme with an outlay of ₹2,584.60 crore. Announced on March 18, 2026, it will support installation of small hydro projects totaling about 1,500 MW. The scheme focuses on clean energy, especially in hilly and North Eastern states.

104) Correct Answer: B

RailOne app has logged 2.57 crore downloads as of March 15, 2026. The app integrates reserved and unreserved ticketing, making railway services more accessible. It simplifies booking processes and promotes digital inclusion.

105) Correct Answer: B

The IOS SAGAR initiative aims to strengthen maritime cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region. It was launched in March 2026 by the Indian Navy, involving 16 member nations. The programme focuses on joint training and operations to build regional security.

106) Correct Answer: C

On March 19, 2026, Indian stock indices tumbled due to escalating conflict involving the US, Israel, and Iran. The crisis disrupted oil supplies and caused crude prices to spike. Stock markets, especially Sensex and Nifty, registered their sharpest single-day falls in two years.

107) Correct Answer: C

PM Modi conveyed appreciation to Jordan for facilitating the safe return of Indians during heightened tensions in West Asia. This was discussed in a call with King Abdullah II on March 19, 2026. India acknowledged Jordan's support amid attacks on energy infrastructure.

108) Correct Answer: D

Union Minister Jitendra Singh stated that India's bioeconomy reached over \$195 billion in 2025. The sector has grown nearly 20-fold since 2014, with a target of \$300 billion by 2030. Initiatives like BIRAC and BioE3 policy have accelerated biotech innovation.

109) Correct Answer: A

Gold and silver prices dropped sharply after the US Federal Reserve kept interest rates unchanged on March

18, 2026. Though geopolitical tensions persisted, the Fed's stance led to profit-taking and price corrections.

110) Correct Answer: C

Gujarat approved a Rs 25,403 crore health budget for 2026-27, marking an 8.63% increase from the previous year. The budget enhances maternal benefits, expands insurance schemes, and boosts infrastructure. These measures aim to extend quality healthcare to remote areas.

111) Correct Answer: C

The 'PRARAMBH 2026' campaign was launched on March 20, 2026, to educate citizens about the provisions of the new Income Tax Act, 2025. The campaign uses multi-platform communication to ensure widespread understanding. It aims to simplify tax compliance and encourage voluntary participation.

112) Correct Answer: B

The AI-enabled 'Kar Saathi' chatbot was launched as part of the PRARAMBH 2026 campaign. It helps taxpayers with queries about the new Act, rules, and forms. This tool enhances accessibility and guidance for citizens.

113) Correct Answer: A

The Ayush Suraksha Portal, launched on May 30, 2025, enables tracking of misleading advertisements and drug safety in AYUSH systems. Over 10,000 complaints were registered by March 2026. The portal is a key part of the government's efforts to regulate and ensure safety in traditional medicine.

114) Correct Answer: B

The National Youth Policy 2026 is designed to align youth aspirations and skills with India's long-term vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. It focuses on leadership, employment, innovation, and digital participation. The policy aims to make youth active stakeholders in national development.

115) Correct Answer: B

Gujarat signed an MoU with the Centre on March 20, 2026, under Jal Jeevan Mission 2.0. The agreement aims to ensure sustained and quality drinking water in rural areas. Gujarat achieved universal tap connections by 2022 and now focuses on regular supply and sustainability.

116) Correct Answer: B

The Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSEL) is spearheading the open schooling initiative. This effort, coordinated with NIOS, aims to bring out-of-school children back into education, supporting NEP 2020 goals. The initiative targets a 100% Gross Enrolment Ratio by 2030.

117) Correct Answer: B

The first randomisation of EVM-VVPATs was completed in Puducherry ahead of its Assembly polls. The process ensures transparency by randomly allocating machines to constituencies and polling stations. This step follows the poll schedule announced on March 15, 2026.

118) Correct Answer: C

India's domestic pharmaceutical market is projected to reach \$130 billion by 2030. The sector currently stands at \$60 billion and is growing due to strong manufacturing, exports, and policy support. India's pharma industry is third globally by volume.

119) Correct Answer: B

The DoT launched the 5G Innovation Hackathon 2026 in March to foster telecom solutions. The hackathon promotes 5G, AI, and IoT innovations, inviting students and startups nationwide. This initiative accelerates India's digital transformation in telecom.

120) Correct Answer: B

The Namo Drone Didi scheme distributed drones to women self-help groups for modern agricultural practices. With ₹1,261 crore allocated for 2023–26, 500 drones were provided under this scheme. The initiative boosts women's participation and technological adoption in farming.

121) Correct Answer: A

The Indian Carbon Market Portal was launched at the Bharat Electricity Summit 2026. This initiative marks a major step towards carbon trading in India. Trading is expected to begin soon, supporting India's renewable energy targets.

122) Correct Answer: C

Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami has retained major portfolios including Home, Finance, and Disaster Management after the latest Cabinet expansion. The

allocation was approved in March 2026. This ensures continuity and centralised leadership in Uttarakhand's governance.

123) Correct Answer: B

INS Trikand took part in the maiden tri-services edition of Exercise Lamitiye 2026 in Seychelles. This marks the Indian Navy's first participation in the exercise. The event enhanced interoperability and maritime cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region.

124) Correct Answer: B

INS Taragiri, an indigenous stealth frigate, will be commissioned into the Indian Navy on April 3, 2026. Built under Project 17A, it features advanced technology and over 75% indigenous content. Its induction enhances India's maritime security and defense self-reliance.

125) Correct Answer: B

Vice-President C. P. Radhakrishnan stressed the importance of yoga and naturopathy for addressing lifestyle diseases at the 81st Foundation Day of Nisargopachar Ashram in Pune. He highlighted their preventive health benefits. The event reflected Mahatma Gandhi's vision of holistic well-being.

126) Correct Answer: C

Over 81% of rural households now have tap water access under the Jal Jeevan Mission as of March 2026. The mission, launched in 2019, aims for universal piped water supply. More than 12.58 crore rural households have benefited.

127) Correct Answer: A

The 'TB Mukta Bharat 100-Days Campaign' was launched by Health Minister J.P. Nadda on World TB Day 2026. This campaign aims to boost case detection, treatment adherence, and TB services. It aligns with India's goal of eliminating TB before global deadlines.

128) Correct Answer: B

The GARBH-INi study aims to develop AI-driven solutions for preterm births. Launched with around 12,000 pregnant women, it integrates clinical and AI data for prediction and intervention. Preterm birth is a major cause of neonatal mortality in India.

129) Correct Answer: B

The ECI allotted digital time vouchers for political parties to broadcast on Doordarshan and AIR. This move ensures equitable airtime for all recognised parties. The system enables transparent, scheduled political messaging. It is crucial for free and fair elections in Indian democracy.

130) Correct Answer: B

Ayushman Bharat authorised 11.69 crore hospital admissions by February 2026. Out of these, over 6.74 crore were in private hospitals. The scheme has greatly expanded healthcare access in India. This strengthens the country's health insurance and public welfare framework.

131) Correct Answer: C

Aadhaar-based OTP verification is part of the 2026 'Reform Express' initiative. It aims to curb fraudulent bookings on the IRCTC platform. This digital measure enhances the authenticity of ticket purchases. Such reforms improve transparency and passenger convenience in Indian Railways.

132) Correct Answer: B

The 2026 amendment removes the provision for self-identification as transgender. This marks a shift from the 2019 Act, which allowed individuals to self-identify their gender. Now, certification requires scrutiny and recommendations.

133) Correct Answer: C

India's exports totaled \$714.73 billion from April 2025 to January 2026. This marks a 5.26% growth over the previous period. The steady export performance reflects resilience amid global uncertainties. Strong exports support India's economic growth and global trade presence.

134) Correct Answer: C

Gujarat reached 94% of its TB registration and treatment targets set by NITI Aayog. The state registered over 1.3 lakh TB cases and achieved a high recovery rate. Proactive screening and community support contributed to this success.

135) Correct Answer: C

The IDSP focuses on early detection and response to biological threats and emergencies. It strengthens India's crisis preparedness. Standard Operating Procedures and

NDRF training are integral parts. This enhances national readiness for future pandemics or bio-attacks.

136) Correct Answer: C

Prime Minister Narendra Modi leads with a 68% approval rating in the latest global survey by Morning Consult. This survey is based on adult opinions across multiple countries. Modi's rating surpasses other leaders like Switzerland's Guy Parmelin and South Korea's Lee Jae-myung.

137) Correct Answer: B

The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) has built over 64,000 km of roads and 1,179 bridges since its inception in 1960. BRO enhances border connectivity and supports defense mobility in remote and strategic regions. BRO's work is crucial for India's border infrastructure.

138) Correct Answer: B

The CCPA barred hotels and restaurants from levying additional 'LPG charges' or similar surcharges. Such practices were deemed unfair under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019. The advisory ensures menu prices are final, barring only applicable taxes.

139) Correct Answer: D

India is targeting 5,000 tonnes annual capacity for rare earth permanent magnets by 2030. This is in response to rising demand for sectors like electronics, EVs, and defense. The government is establishing new plants and rare earth corridors.

140) Correct Answer: B

The Union Cabinet approved ₹1,800 crore for extending the Immigration, Visa, Foreigners Registration and Tracking (IVFRT) scheme. The IVFRT modernizes immigration and visa processes using digital platforms. This extension will enhance national security and ease of travel.

141) Correct Answer: D

China will not attend the G7 summit scheduled for June 15–17, 2026, in France. France invited India, Brazil, Kenya, and South Korea to broaden support for economic reforms, but China was left out over legitimacy concerns.

142) Correct Answer: B

Noida International Airport at Jewar, Uttar Pradesh, was inaugurated on March 28, 2026. It is the second international airport for the National Capital Region and aims to ease congestion and boost connectivity. The project strengthens India's aviation infrastructure and supports economic growth.

143) Correct Answer: C

The Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) has been extended till 2028, as announced in March 2026. Launched in 2019, JJM increased rural tap water access from 17% to 82%. The extension emphasizes sustainability and community participation, vital for India's health and rural infrastructure.

144) Correct Answer: B

Uttarakhand inaugurated the Dehradun–Pithoragarh direct flight in March 2026 under the UDAN regional connectivity scheme. The service reduces travel time to one hour and boosts local economies. Enhanced air connectivity is critical for remote and border regions in hilly states like Uttarakhand.

145) Correct Answer: B

The Khelo India Tribal Games 2026 began in Chhattisgarh, aiming to identify and nurture sporting talent in tribal regions. Launched in March 2026, the initiative aligns with India's vision to expand sports inclusivity. It is vital for discovering new athletes, boosting sports culture and tourism.

146) Correct Answer: C

Zafar Iqbal received the Major Dhyan Chand Lifetime Achievement Award at the Hockey India 8th Annual Awards in New Delhi. He was a member of the 1980

Olympic gold medal-winning team for India. The award recognises his immense contribution to Indian hockey, spanning Olympic and Asian Games successes.

147) Correct Answer: C

The Parliament approved the Finance Bill 2026, completing the process for the Union Budget 2026-27. This bill provides legal authority for the budget's financial proposals. The 2026-27 budget includes increased infrastructure spending and fiscal deficit reduction.

148) Correct Answer: B

PharmaMed 2026 focused on shaping a resilient, innovation-driven, and globally competitive pharmaceutical sector. The event highlighted quality, last-mile access, and research in high-value drugs. Emphasis was placed on regulatory harmonisation and domestic API manufacturing.

149) Correct Answer: B

Over 6,900 licences were cancelled to crack down on fertilizer hoarding, diversion, and black marketing. Actions included inspections and legal measures to ensure farmers' access to essential fertilizers. The government maintained adequate supply and stable prices during the Rabi 2025-26 season.

150) Correct Answer: C

Meghalaya signed the reform-linked MoU with the Union government under Jal Jeevan Mission 2.0, marking its commitment to sustainable rural water supply. The agreement emphasizes service delivery, decentralisation, and community participation. Meghalaya has achieved around 83% rural tap water coverage.

SECTION 3

Detailed Analysis of Important Events



Economics

SEBI to Leverage AI and Tech to Crack Down on Market Manipulators



Why in the News?

The Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), Tuhin Kanta Pandey, announced that the market regulator will significantly expand the use of **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** and advanced technological tools to improve market surveillance.

The initiative aims to **detect market manipulation, prevent cyber fraud, and protect retail investors** as India's financial markets become increasingly digital and complex.

Tech-Driven Market Surveillance

SEBI plans to deploy **AI-powered analytics systems** capable of monitoring massive volumes of trading data in real time.

Key Objectives

- Detect **unusual trading patterns and algorithmic manipulation**
- Identify **insider trading and price rigging**
- Track coordinated trading activities across multiple accounts
- Monitor suspicious activity in derivatives and high-frequency trading

AI systems can analyse **millions of trades within seconds**, allowing regulators to identify patterns that

may not be visible through conventional surveillance methods.

This move is part of SEBI's broader effort to build a **technology-driven regulatory framework** for India's rapidly expanding capital markets.

"SEBI Check" Tool for Investor Protection

One of the key investor protection initiatives announced is the **"SEBI Check" verification tool**.

Features

- Integrated into the **UPI payment interface**
- Allows investors to **verify whether an intermediary is registered with SEBI**
- Helps identify **fake brokers or unregistered investment advisors**

This initiative targets the growing problem of **fraudulent investment schemes**, where scammers impersonate registered brokers and promise unrealistic returns.

The tool aims to ensure that investors verify credentials **before transferring funds to financial intermediaries**.

AI-Based Investor Awareness Campaigns

SEBI has also launched an **AI-enabled investor education program**.

Partnership with AI Firm

SEBI has collaborated with the Bengaluru-based AI company Sarvam AI to conduct multilingual outreach campaigns.

Pilot Programme

- AI-powered communication campaigns reached **3.85 lakh people** in the initial pilot phase.
- Messages were delivered in multiple Indian languages to improve accessibility.

Focus of the Campaign

The outreach warns investors about:

- Social media influencers promoting risky trading strategies
- "Get rich quick" investment schemes
- Claims of **"astronomical returns"** from unverified sources

SEBI emphasised the importance of **disciplined, long-term investing** rather than speculative trading.

Measures to Stabilise the Derivatives Market

India’s derivatives market, particularly **equity options trading**, has grown rapidly in recent years.

SEBI has introduced measures to **cool excessive speculation**, especially in **short-duration options contracts**.

Regulatory Concerns

- Rapid growth in retail participation in derivatives
- Risk of losses due to speculative trading
- Potential volatility in financial markets

Despite concerns, SEBI has stated that **there are currently no signs of systemic instability in the market**.

Enforcement and Regulatory Action

SEBI has intensified enforcement actions against market misconduct.

Key Enforcement Actions

- Action against **unregistered investment advisors**
- Investigations into **market manipulation networks**
- Crackdown on **fraudulent trading platforms**

According to SEBI, it has maintained a **high success rate in legal proceedings** before:

- the **Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT)**
- the Supreme Court of India

The regulator defended its structure, which combines **legislative, executive, and quasi-judicial powers**, arguing that this integrated authority is essential for effective market oversight.

Future Focus Areas for SEBI

SEBI outlined several strategic priorities to strengthen India’s financial markets.

1. Revitalising Agricultural Commodity Markets

Efforts will focus on improving participation and transparency in **commodity derivatives markets**, particularly those linked to agricultural products.

2. Deepening the Corporate Bond Market

SEBI aims to expand India’s **corporate debt market** to provide companies with alternatives to bank financing and improve long-term capital formation.

3. Scientific Policy Making

The regulator plans to adopt **data-driven and evidence-based policymaking**, including:

- Impact assessments of regulatory decisions
- Better use of financial data analytics
- Continuous monitoring of market behaviour

Significance

The adoption of AI-based surveillance reflects a broader shift toward **RegTech (Regulatory Technology)** in financial governance.

For India, this initiative is important because:

- Retail participation in stock markets has grown sharply in recent years.
- Online trading platforms and fintech apps have increased market access.
- Financial fraud and algorithmic manipulation risks have also increased.

GST Collections Rise 8.1% to ₹1.83 Lakh Crore in February



Why in the News?

India’s **Gross Goods and Services Tax (GST)** collections increased by **8.1% year-on-year to over ₹1.83 lakh crore in February 2026**, indicating steady economic activity, improved compliance, and robust consumption demand. The growth reflects continued stability in India’s indirect tax system under the Goods and Services Tax, which is administered by the Goods and Services Tax Council.

Key GST Collection Figures (February 2026)

Indicator	Amount	Growth
Gross GST collection	₹1.83 lakh crore	8.1% YoY

Indicator	Amount	Growth
Net GST revenue	₹1.61 lakh crore	7.9% YoY
Gross domestic revenue	₹1.36 lakh crore	5.3% YoY
Revenue from imports	₹47,837 crore	17.2% YoY
Refunds issued	₹22,595 crore	10.2% YoY

Cumulative Fiscal Data

- **Total GST collection in FY 2025–26 so far: ₹20.27 lakh crore**
- **Growth rate: 8.3% year-on-year**

This suggests that despite tax rationalisation and rate cuts, **GST revenue continues to show stable growth.**

Policy Context: GST Rate Rationalisation

Recent policy reforms have simplified the GST rate structure.

Major Changes

- Multiple tax slabs have been consolidated into **two major rates**:
 - **5% (lower rate)**
 - **18% (standard rate)**
- A **40% tax slab** has been retained for **ultra-luxury goods and tobacco products.**

Rate Reductions

Beginning **September 2025**, GST rates were reduced on **around 375 items**, aiming to:

- Reduce tax burden on consumers
- Boost consumption demand
- Simplify the GST framework

Short-Term Revenue Trends

The tax cuts initially caused a **temporary dip in GST collections in November 2025.**

However, revenues recovered strongly in subsequent months:

- **December 2025** – recovery begins
- **January 2026** – stable growth
- **February 2026** – strong collection at ₹1.83 lakh crore

This indicates that **higher economic activity offset the impact of rate cuts.**

State-Level GST Trends

Despite overall national growth, some states recorded weaker performance.

States with Negative Growth

- Tamil Nadu
- Madhya Pradesh
- Rajasthan

States Below National Average Growth

- West Bengal
- Haryana
- Uttar Pradesh
- Maharashtra

These variations may reflect **regional economic conditions, sectoral performance, and consumption patterns.**

Significance of the GST Data

1. Strong Consumption Demand

Rising GST collections suggest **stable domestic consumption**, which remains the key driver of India's economic growth.

2. Robust Import Activity

Import-related GST revenue grew **17.2%**, indicating:

- Higher trade volumes
- Increased demand for imported goods and raw materials
- Stronger industrial activity

3. Stable Revenue Despite Tax Cuts

Even after significant GST rate reductions on hundreds of goods, revenues remain strong, suggesting:

- Improved tax compliance
- Expanding tax base
- Growth in formal economic activity

4. Maturity of the GST Ecosystem

Nearly a decade after its implementation in 2017, the GST system is showing signs of **structural maturity**, including:

- Better digital tax administration
- Improved invoice matching and compliance
- Higher integration between central and state tax systems

Conclusion

The rise in GST collections to ₹1.83 lakh crore in February 2026 highlights the resilience of India's economy and the growing efficiency of its indirect tax system. Strong consumption, rising imports, and improved compliance have helped maintain revenue stability even after major tax rationalisation.

CPI Inflation Rises to 10-Month High in February 2026



Why in the News?

India's retail inflation, measured by the **Consumer Price Index (CPI)**, increased to **3.2% in February 2026**, marking the highest level in the last ten months. The data was released by the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)**. The rise reflects increasing price pressures in food items, precious metals, and services, though inflation still remains within the Reserve Bank of India's tolerance band.

What is Consumer Price Index (CPI)?

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) measures the average change in prices of a basket of goods and services consumed by households over time. It is the main indicator used by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for inflation targeting under the Monetary Policy Framework.

CPI Base Year

India currently uses **2012 as the base year** for CPI calculation.

CPI Categories

CPI is released for three categories:

- CPI (Rural)
- CPI (Urban)
- CPI (Combined)

The **Combined CPI** is considered the headline retail inflation number.

Key Highlights of Inflation Data

1. Increase in Inflation

- CPI inflation increased to **3.2% in February 2026** from about **3.0% in January 2026**.
- This is the highest inflation level since **April 2025 (3.3%)**.
- However, inflation remains well within the RBI's target band of **2–6%**, with a medium-term target of **4%**.

This indicates that inflation is rising but still remains under control from a monetary policy perspective.

2. Major Drivers of Inflation

The inflation increase was largely driven by rising prices in food items, personal goods, and precious metals.

Food and Beverages

- Inflation in this category increased to **3.35% in February** from **2.1% in January**.
- This segment alone contributed about **44 basis points** out of the total **47 basis point increase** in overall inflation.

Major contributors include:

- Vegetables
- Fruits
- Milk products
- Cereals
- Protein-based food items

Food inflation is particularly important because it carries the highest weight (around **45%**) in India's CPI basket.

Paan, Tobacco and Intoxicants

- Inflation increased to **3.5% from 2.9%**.
- This rise is linked to:
 - Higher taxation
 - Increased production costs
 - Supply chain adjustments

Though the weight of this category is small, it still contributed to the overall inflation increase.

Personal Care and Miscellaneous Goods

- Inflation remained very high at around **19.6%**.
- The main reason was the sharp increase in **gold and silver prices**.

Reasons for rising precious metal prices include:

- Global uncertainty
- Safe-haven demand
- Currency depreciation
- Central bank gold purchases globally

This category also includes:

- Healthcare services
- Education services
- Insurance
- Personal care products

Core Inflation

Core inflation excludes volatile food and fuel prices and is considered a better indicator of underlying inflation trends.

- Core inflation remained stable at **around 3.4%** between January and February.

This stability suggests:

- Demand conditions remain moderate.
- No major pressure from services inflation.
- Monetary policy remains effective in controlling demand-driven inflation.

Stable core inflation is generally viewed positively by policymakers.

Impact of Global Factors on Inflation

Economists warn that inflationary pressures may increase in the coming months due to several external risks.

1. Energy Supply Disruptions

The ongoing geopolitical tensions in West Asia may:

- Disrupt oil supply chains
- Increase crude oil prices
- Raise transportation costs
- Increase fertiliser costs

Since India imports about **85% of its crude oil**, global oil price volatility directly affects domestic inflation.

2. Rising Services Costs

Inflation pressures are also emerging from services such as:

- Electricity
- Gas supply
- Transport services
- Restaurants

- Hotels and accommodation

These increases reflect recovery in demand and higher input costs.

3. Depreciation of the Indian Rupee

A weaker rupee makes imports costlier, which can increase inflation through:

- Higher fuel costs
- More expensive electronics imports
- Rising fertiliser costs
- Increased edible oil prices

Currency depreciation also increases imported inflation risks.

RBI's Inflation Management Strategy

The Reserve Bank of India controls inflation through monetary policy tools such as:

- Repo rate adjustments
- Liquidity management
- Inflation targeting framework

The RBI aims to maintain inflation at **4% with a tolerance band of $\pm 2\%$** .

Since inflation remains below 4%, the RBI currently has some flexibility in balancing growth and inflation concerns.

Economic Implications

Positive Signals

- Inflation remains within RBI's comfort zone.
- Core inflation remains stable.
- Food inflation remains moderate compared to previous years.

Risks

- Global oil price shocks.
- Supply chain disruptions.
- Currency volatility.
- Climate-related food supply risks.

Way Forward

To maintain price stability, India may need to focus on:

- Strengthening food supply chains
- Increasing domestic energy production
- Improving logistics efficiency
- Maintaining prudent monetary policy
- Managing fiscal deficits

Supply-side reforms remain critical to controlling inflation sustainably.

Economic Stabilisation Fund to Tackle Global Headwinds



Why in the News?

The Government of India has created an **Economic Stabilisation Fund of ₹57,381 crore** through the **Second Supplementary Demand for Grants for FY 2025–26** to manage economic shocks arising from global uncertainties such as the West Asia conflict, volatile crude oil prices, and supply chain disruptions. The announcement was made by Finance Minister **Nirmala Sitharaman** in Parliament.

The fund is intended to provide fiscal flexibility to respond quickly to external economic shocks without disturbing the fiscal consolidation path.

What is Supplementary Demand for Grants?

Under **Article 115 of the Indian Constitution**, the government can seek additional funds from Parliament if the allocated budget is insufficient during a financial year.

Supplementary grants are required when:

- Actual expenditure exceeds budget estimates
- New services need funding
- Economic emergencies arise
- Global developments require fiscal intervention

This mechanism ensures parliamentary control over government expenditure while allowing flexibility in fiscal management.

Key Highlights

1. Supplementary Demand for Grants

The Lok Sabha approved the **Second Supplementary Demand for Grants** with the following financial details:

- **Gross additional expenditure:** about ₹2.81 lakh crore
- **Estimated savings and receipts:** about ₹80,000 crore
- **Net additional cash outgo:** about ₹2.01 lakh crore

This reflects the government’s attempt to balance new expenditure needs with internal savings and receipts to reduce fiscal pressure.

Major expenditure heads typically include:

- Fertiliser subsidy adjustments
- Food subsidy requirements
- Defence expenditure
- Welfare schemes
- Economic stabilisation measures

2. Economic Stabilisation Fund

Allocation

The government allocated **₹57,381 crore** for the Economic Stabilisation Fund.

Purpose

The fund aims to act as a financial buffer to deal with:

- Oil price volatility
- Global inflation shocks
- Supply chain disruptions
- Financial market instability
- Sector-specific crises
- Currency volatility

According to the Finance Minister, the fund will allow the government to **respond quickly to unexpected global developments without requiring disruptive fiscal adjustments.**

3. Context: Rising Global Economic Pressures

The creation of this fund comes amid growing global economic risks.

Major risks include:

Rising crude oil prices

- Global crude prices have hovered near **\$90–100 per barrel** due to geopolitical tensions.

- India imports nearly **85% of its crude oil requirement**, making it highly vulnerable to price shocks.

Impact on India:

- Higher fuel inflation
- Increased current account deficit
- Pressure on the rupee
- Increased subsidy burden

West Asia Conflict

Geopolitical tensions in West Asia have created risks such as:

- Disruption of shipping routes
- Energy supply uncertainty
- Increased insurance costs for cargo
- Commodity price volatility

Since West Asia is India's major energy supplier, instability directly affects India's macroeconomic stability.

Supply Chain Disruptions

Global crises have exposed vulnerabilities in supply chains due to:

- Geopolitical fragmentation
- Trade restrictions
- Shipping disruptions
- Commodity shortages

These disruptions can cause:

- Imported inflation
- Manufacturing cost increases
- Export uncertainty

4. Fiscal Deficit Assurance

Despite the additional expenditure, the government has reiterated that the **fiscal deficit target for FY 2025–26 will remain at 4.4% of GDP**.

This indicates the government's commitment to fiscal consolidation.

Fiscal Deficit

Fiscal deficit refers to:

Total expenditure – Total receipts (excluding borrowings)

It indicates how much the government needs to borrow.

India's Fiscal Consolidation Roadmap

The government aims to reduce fiscal deficit gradually through:

- Improved tax compliance
- Disinvestment
- Better expenditure targeting
- Growth-led revenue expansion

Maintaining fiscal discipline improves:

- Investor confidence
- Sovereign credit ratings
- Macroeconomic stability
- Capital inflows

Significance of the Economic Stabilisation Fund

1. Buffer Against External Shocks

The fund acts as a financial cushion during:

- Oil crises
- Financial crises
- Commodity price shocks
- Global recessions

This improves India's economic resilience.

2. Enhances Fiscal Flexibility

The fund allows the government to:

- Act quickly during crises
- Avoid sudden borrowing spikes
- Maintain budget stability

This reflects proactive fiscal risk management.

3. Supports Macroeconomic Stability

By preparing in advance for shocks, the government can:

- Control inflationary spillovers
- Protect growth momentum
- Prevent fiscal slippages

4. Strengthens Counter-Cyclical Policy Capacity

Such funds allow governments to follow **counter-cyclical fiscal policy**, meaning:

- Spending more during downturns
- Saving during growth periods

This stabilises the economic cycle.

5. Improves Investor Confidence

Maintaining fiscal discipline while preparing for shocks signals:

- Policy credibility
- Financial stability
- Responsible fiscal governance

This helps attract foreign investment.

Challenges

Despite its benefits, some concerns remain:

- Limited size relative to potential global shocks
- Risk of diversion for routine expenditure
- Need for transparent utilisation
- Dependence on global commodity cycles

Proper governance and transparency will determine effectiveness.

Way Forward

To maximise the effectiveness of the Economic Stabilisation Fund, India should focus on:

- Strengthening fiscal buffers
- Diversifying energy imports
- Expanding strategic petroleum reserves
- Improving domestic manufacturing resilience
- Enhancing export competitiveness
- Maintaining prudent fiscal discipline

Long-term resilience depends on structural economic strength rather than only fiscal buffers.

Impact of China’s Lithium Policy on India’s EV Sector



Why in the News?

China has recently imposed export controls and licensing requirements on critical lithium-ion battery components, materials, and manufacturing technologies. The move is being seen as a strategic step to protect its technological dominance in the global electric vehicle (EV) battery supply chain. Since India’s EV ecosystem is heavily dependent on imports—especially from China—the

decision has raised concerns about supply disruptions, rising battery costs, and delays in India’s clean mobility transition.

What are China’s Policy Changes?

China’s Ministry of Commerce has expanded its export control framework to include key battery-related materials and production technologies. Companies exporting these items must now obtain government licences, and approvals may be denied if exports are considered to affect China’s national economic or technological interests.

The restrictions cover:

- **High-performance lithium-ion batteries** with energy density of **300 Wh/kg or more**, which are typically used in premium EVs and advanced energy storage systems.
- **Cathode materials**, including lithium iron phosphate (LFP) and nickel-manganese-cobalt (NMC) compounds.
- **Artificial graphite anodes**, a crucial processed material used in almost all lithium-ion batteries.
- **Battery manufacturing technologies**, particularly those related to advanced cell design and processing.

China currently dominates the **midstream processing segment** of the EV battery supply chain—especially refining lithium, cobalt, nickel, and graphite into battery-grade materials. According to international energy assessments, China processes nearly:

- **60–70% of global lithium**
- **65–75% of cobalt**
- **over 90% of battery-grade graphite**
- **around 70% of cathode materials**

This dominance gives China significant leverage in the global EV ecosystem.

Impact on India’s EV Sector

1. Supply Chain Vulnerability

India currently lacks sufficient domestic reserves and processing capacity for key battery minerals. Although some lithium reserves have been identified (such as in Jammu & Kashmir and Rajasthan), commercial mining and refining capacity remain limited.

India imports:

- Almost **100% of lithium-ion cells**
- Around **70–80% of battery components from China**
- Significant quantities of processed graphite and cathode materials

China’s export restrictions could therefore expose India to supply bottlenecks and geopolitical risks.

2. Rising Battery Costs

Battery packs account for nearly **35–45% of the total cost of an electric vehicle**. Any disruption in the supply of lithium, cobalt, nickel, or graphite can significantly increase battery prices.

Possible consequences include:

- Increase in battery manufacturing costs
- Higher EV purchase prices
- Pressure on government subsidy schemes like FAME-II and state EV policies
- Reduced competitiveness of Indian EV manufacturers

Even a **5–10% rise in battery costs** could slow price parity between EVs and internal combustion engine vehicles.

3. Slower EV Adoption

India aims to achieve significant EV penetration by 2030, including:

- 30% private cars
- 70% commercial vehicles
- 80% two- and three-wheelers

However, rising costs and supply uncertainty could:

- Reduce affordability for consumers
- Delay fleet electrification
- Slow private investment in EV manufacturing
- Affect India’s net-zero and energy transition commitments

Government Response (India)

Recognising the strategic risks of import dependence, India has accelerated efforts to secure critical minerals and develop domestic battery supply chains.

1. National Critical Mineral Mission

India has launched the **National Critical Mineral Mission** to ensure long-term mineral security. The mission focuses on the entire value chain:

- Exploration of critical minerals
- Domestic mining development
- Processing and refining capabilities
- Recycling and circular economy development

The mission aims to reduce import dependence and build strategic reserves of essential minerals.

2. Domestic Mining and Auctions

The Government of India has auctioned **over 46 critical mineral blocks**, including lithium, cobalt, nickel, and rare earth elements.

Recent discoveries and exploration efforts include:

- Lithium reserves in Jammu & Kashmir (Reasi district)
- Exploration efforts in Karnataka, Rajasthan, and Chhattisgarh
- Private sector participation through mineral block auctions

These steps are intended to build a domestic raw material base for battery manufacturing.

3. Overseas Mineral Acquisition (KABIL)

India is also pursuing mineral diplomacy through **Khanij Bidesh India Limited (KABIL)**, a joint venture of public sector companies.

Key initiatives include:

- Lithium exploration projects in **Catamarca, Argentina**
- Engagement with Australia and Chile for mineral partnerships
- Negotiations for long-term supply agreements

This strategy aims to diversify supply sources and reduce dependence on any single country.

4. Push for Battery Recycling

India is promoting recycling as an alternative mineral source through:

- A **₹1,500 crore incentive scheme** for battery recycling
- Promotion of urban mining
- Recovery of lithium and rare minerals from industrial waste such as:
 - Fly ash
 - Mine tailings
 - Electronic waste

The **Battery Waste Management Rules (2022)** also mandate Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), encouraging manufacturers to recover and reuse battery materials.

Way Forward

To reduce vulnerability to global supply disruptions, India may need to accelerate:

- Domestic cell manufacturing under the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme
- Indigenous battery chemistry research (such as sodium-ion and solid-state batteries)
- Strategic mineral partnerships
- Recycling ecosystem development
- Localisation of EV component manufacturing

Developing an integrated battery ecosystem—from minerals to manufacturing—will be crucial for India’s EV ambitions and energy security.

Conclusion

China’s export controls highlight the geopolitical nature of clean energy supply chains and the risks of excessive import dependence. While India’s EV transition remains on track, the episode underlines the urgent need for supply chain diversification, domestic capability building, and strategic mineral security. Strengthening these areas will be essential for achieving India’s long-term electric mobility and climate goals.

PRARAMBH 2026 – Income Tax Awareness Campaign



Why in the News

The Government of India has launched **PRARAMBH 2026**, a nationwide taxpayer awareness campaign to

facilitate the smooth implementation of the **Income Tax Act, 2025**, which comes into force from **1 April 2026**. The campaign aims to familiarise taxpayers, professionals, and businesses with the new simplified tax framework and promote voluntary compliance.

About PRARAMBH 2026

PRARAMBH stands for **Policy Reform and Responsible Action for Mission Viksit Bharat**. It is a large-scale outreach initiative designed to support the transition to the new tax regime through awareness, education, and digital support.

Nature of the Campaign

PRARAMBH 2026 is a multi-platform communication and engagement programme involving:

- Print media campaigns
- Television and radio outreach
- Digital platforms and social media
- On-ground workshops and taxpayer interaction programmes
- Professional stakeholder consultations

The campaign reflects the government’s shift toward a **citizen-friendly and technology-driven tax administration system**.

Key Objectives of PRARAMBH 2026

The campaign focuses on three major outcomes:

1. Promoting Tax Awareness

The government aims to improve taxpayer understanding of:

- New provisions of the Income Tax Act, 2025
- Filing procedures
- Compliance requirements
- Taxpayer rights and responsibilities

2. Improving Ease of Compliance

The campaign seeks to reduce procedural complexity by:

- Simplifying information access
- Providing guided compliance tools
- Enhancing digital services

3. Behavioural Transformation

A major objective is to shift taxpayer behaviour:

- From fear-driven compliance to **trust-based compliance**
- From confusion to clarity

- From enforcement-centric administration to facilitation-centric governance

Key Features of PRARAMBH 2026

1. Taxpayer Outreach Programme

The government has developed extensive guidance material to support taxpayers:

Resources provided:

- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
- Brochures
- Step-by-step compliance guides
- Tutorial videos

Language accessibility:

- Materials available in **10 regional languages**
- Also available in **English and Hindi**

This multilingual approach aims to improve financial inclusion and ensure last-mile awareness.

2. Digital Initiatives

Digital transformation is a central pillar of the campaign.

Income Tax Website 2.0

A redesigned income tax portal has been introduced with:

- Better user interface
- Simplified navigation
- Faster processing systems
- Improved grievance redressal

AI Chatbot – Kar Saathi

A major innovation is the AI-based virtual assistant **Kar Saathi**.

Functions:

- Clarifies provisions of the new Act
- Provides guidance on rules and forms
- Answers taxpayer queries
- Assists with compliance procedures

This reflects the increasing use of **Artificial Intelligence in governance** to improve service delivery.

3. Capacity Building Measures

PRARAMBH 2026 also focuses on strengthening administrative capacity.

Major initiatives include:

- **300+ workshops** across the country
- Training programmes for tax officials
- Stakeholder engagement sessions

- Professional consultations with chartered accountants and tax practitioners

Objectives:

- Ensure uniform interpretation of the new law
- Reduce disputes due to misinterpretation
- Improve taxpayer service quality

4. Citizen-Centric Governance Approach

The campaign is guided by the principle:

“Nagrik Devo Bhava” (Citizen is Supreme)

This reflects a governance philosophy that emphasises:

- Empathy in tax administration
- Trust-based compliance
- Service orientation instead of enforcement
- Reduced human interface through technology

The emphasis on faceless processes and digital interaction also aims to:

- Reduce corruption opportunities
- Increase transparency
- Improve efficiency

New Income Tax Act, 2025

The **Income Tax Act, 2025** replaces the older Income Tax Act, 1961 with the objective of modernising India’s tax framework.

Key Aims of the New Act

The new legislation focuses on:

- **Simplicity** – Reduction of complex provisions
- **Clarity** – Removal of ambiguous language
- **Reduced litigation** – Clear definitions and fewer interpretational disputes
- **Better compliance** – Technology-driven monitoring and support

The law is part of broader tax reforms aimed at improving India’s **ease of doing business environment**.

Governance Philosophy Behind the Reform

The new tax administration framework is based on the

M.A.N.A.V. governance model:

M.A.N.A.V. Framework

M – Moral and ethical systems

- Encouraging honest tax behaviour
- Promoting voluntary compliance

A – Accountable governance

- Transparent procedures

- Clear responsibility structures

N – National sovereignty

- Strengthening domestic revenue systems
- Supporting fiscal stability

A – Accessible and inclusive AI

- Using AI tools for taxpayer services
- Ensuring technology inclusion

V – Valid systems

- Legally robust and technologically reliable frameworks
- Standardised procedures

Significance of PRARAMBH 2026

PRARAMBH represents a structural shift in India’s tax governance model.

Administrative Significance

- Smooth transition to the new tax law
- Better prepared tax administration
- Reduced compliance errors

Economic Significance

- Improved tax compliance
- Higher revenue stability
- Support for formalisation of the economy

Governance Significance

- Trust-based administration
- Citizen-centric reforms
- Digital governance expansion

Technological Significance

- Integration of AI in public administration
- Movement toward faceless compliance systems
- Data-driven governance

Conclusion

PRARAMBH 2026 is not just an awareness campaign but a governance reform initiative aimed at transforming India’s tax culture. By combining legal simplification, digital innovation, administrative training, and citizen-centric values, the government aims to create a **transparent, efficient, and trust-based tax ecosystem** aligned with the vision of **Viksit Bharat**.

Environment & Diversity

India–Nepal MoU on Forests, Wildlife & Climate Cooperation



Why in the News?

India and Nepal have signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** to strengthen bilateral cooperation in the areas of **forest management, wildlife conservation, biodiversity protection, and climate change mitigation**. The agreement reflects growing regional recognition that ecological challenges such as biodiversity loss and climate change require cross-border

cooperation, especially between countries sharing fragile Himalayan and Terai ecosystems.

The MoU also strengthens India–Nepal environmental diplomacy and supports regional commitments under global biodiversity and climate frameworks.

Key Features of the MoU

1. Areas of Cooperation

The agreement provides a framework for cooperation in multiple environmental sectors:

Forest management

- Sustainable forest management practices
- Prevention of forest degradation
- Promotion of community forestry models (where Nepal has global recognition)

Wildlife protection

- Strengthening conservation programmes
- Joint monitoring of migratory wildlife
- Habitat protection initiatives

Biodiversity conservation

- Scientific research collaboration

- Ecosystem restoration projects
- Knowledge sharing on conservation technologies

Climate change mitigation and adaptation

- Nature-based solutions
- Climate-resilient ecosystems
- Carbon sink enhancement through forests

Restoration of wildlife corridors

- Identification of degraded corridors
- Habitat connectivity programmes
- Reduction of human-wildlife conflict

Exchange of technical expertise

- Training programmes
- Joint workshops
- Sharing conservation best practices
- Technology transfer in wildlife monitoring

2. Focus on Transboundary Conservation

Because India and Nepal share extensive ecological landscapes such as the **Terai Arc Landscape (TAL)** and Himalayan biodiversity zones, the MoU emphasises coordinated conservation planning.

Key focus areas include:

Landscape-level biodiversity planning

- Ecosystem-based conservation rather than isolated protected areas
- Integrated watershed and habitat management

Transboundary conservation landscapes

Examples include:

- Terai Arc Landscape (India–Nepal)
- Kangchenjunga Landscape (India–Nepal–Bhutan)

Interlinking protected areas

This includes coordination between national parks and wildlife reserves located near international borders.

Examples include:

- Valmiki Tiger Reserve (India) – Chitwan National Park (Nepal)
- Dudhwa National Park (India) – Shuklaphanta National Park (Nepal)

Smart green infrastructure

- Wildlife-friendly highways
- Eco-bridges and animal passages

- Biodiversity-sensitive infrastructure planning

This approach is important because infrastructure development is a major cause of habitat fragmentation in the Himalayan region.

3. Key Species Identified

The MoU prioritises conservation of several flagship and migratory species requiring cross-border protection:

Elephant

- Asian elephants migrate across India–Nepal borders.
- Require large connected habitats.

Gangetic Dolphin

- India’s National Aquatic Animal.
- Found in the Ganga and its tributaries flowing through both countries.

One-horned Rhinoceros

- Found in Assam, West Bengal and Nepal’s Terai region.
- Conservation success story due to joint protection.

Snow Leopard

- Found in high Himalayan ecosystems.
- Indicator species for climate change impact.

Tiger

- India and Nepal are part of the Global Tiger Recovery Programme.
- Both countries have recorded increases in tiger populations through conservation cooperation.

Vultures

- Critically endangered due to diclofenac poisoning.
- Joint breeding and conservation programmes already exist.

These species are considered **transboundary species**, meaning their conservation requires coordinated habitat protection beyond political borders.

4. Combating Wildlife Crime

Wildlife trafficking remains a major threat in South Asia. The MoU focuses on strengthening joint enforcement mechanisms.

Key provisions include:

Joint action against wildlife crime

- Intelligence sharing
- Joint patrols in border regions
- Monitoring illegal trade routes

Capacity building

- Training forest guards
- Modern surveillance techniques
- Wildlife forensic tools

Improved institutional coordination

Coordination between:

- Forest departments
- Border security agencies
- Wildlife crime control agencies
- Customs authorities

This also aligns with regional cooperation under the **South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN)**.

Institutional Context

The MoU was signed between:

India

- Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)

Nepal

- Ministry of Forests and Environment

These ministries will act as nodal agencies for implementation through:

- Joint Working Groups
- Technical committees
- Periodic review meetings

Strategic Significance

The agreement has broader environmental and geopolitical importance:

1. Strengthening India–Nepal relations

Environmental cooperation acts as a confidence-building measure in bilateral relations.

2. Supporting global biodiversity goals

The MoU supports targets under:

- Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (30x30 target)
- Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
- Paris Climate Agreement

3. Climate resilience in the Himalayas

The Himalayan region is highly vulnerable to:

- Glacier melting

- Flood risks
- Ecosystem shifts

Joint ecosystem management improves climate adaptation.

4. Regional ecological security

Healthy ecosystems support:

- Water security
- Disaster resilience
- Livelihoods
- Sustainable tourism

Way Forward

Key priorities for effective implementation include:

- Joint biodiversity databases
- Satellite-based wildlife monitoring
- Community participation in conservation
- Expansion of transboundary protected areas
- Strengthening wildlife corridors
- Integrating conservation into infrastructure planning

Ice patches on melting glaciers greater threat than thought: ISRO scientists



Why in the News?

A recent study by scientists from the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has identified **exposed ice patches on retreating Himalayan glaciers** as an important early warning indicator of potential flash floods. The study analysed the **5 August 2025 Dharali flash flood in Uttarakhand**, which killed nine people and caused major damage to settlements along the Bhagirathi River valley.

Using high-resolution satellite imagery, scientists detected exposed ice patches in the **nivation zone of the**

Srikanta glacier shortly before the disaster. These observations point to accelerating glacier retreat and increasing instability in the Himalayan cryosphere due to climate change.

This finding is significant because it expands the understanding of Himalayan hazards beyond **Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs)** to include smaller but dangerous cryosphere instabilities such as ice collapses, debris flows, and meltwater surges.

What are Exposed Ice Patches?

Exposed ice patches are areas of **ancient and compact glacier ice** that become visible when the protective layers of seasonal snow and firn (partially compacted snow that later becomes glacial ice) melt away.

Unlike the main glacier body, which behaves like a slow-moving river of ice, these patches are usually stationary and may preserve very old ice layers, sometimes described as **natural cryogenic archives**.

Major reasons for their formation

1. Thinning of insulating snow layers

Rising temperatures reduce the thickness of seasonal snow and firn that normally protect deeper glacier ice from melting. When this insulation weakens, older ice becomes exposed.

2. Ablation processes

During the ablation season (summer melt period), glaciers lose more mass than they gain. This exposes deeper ice, especially on steep slopes and shaded nivation hollows where snow traditionally persists.

3. Wind erosion

In some cold regions such as Antarctica and Greenland, strong winds remove surface snow layers and expose dense blue ice beneath.

4. Climate warming trends

Scientific studies show the Himalayas are warming faster than the global average. According to several climate assessments, the Hindu Kush Himalayan region has warmed by about **0.3°C per decade since the 1980s**, accelerating glacier mass loss.

How Exposed Ice Patches Indicate Accelerated Glacier Retreat

The presence of exposed ice patches is considered a strong indicator of glacier stress and retreat.

Key indicators include:

Deglaciation signal

The appearance of exposed ice in the ablation zone of the Srikanta glacier suggests thinning snow cover and negative glacier mass balance.

Satellite evidence

Pre-disaster satellite images showed persistent exposed ice on north-northeast facing slopes where snow accumulation normally occurs. This abnormal exposure indicates climatic stress.

Cryosphere destabilisation

Loss of insulating layers increases heat absorption, accelerating melting and weakening glacier structure.

Global parallels

Similar exposed ice phenomena have been observed in rapidly warming cryosphere regions such as:

- Canadian Arctic
- Greenland ice sheet margins
- Scandinavian mountain glaciers

These comparisons strengthen the conclusion that exposed ice is a marker of climate-driven glacier instability.

Role of Nivation Processes in the Dharali Flash Flood

Nivation refers to the **erosion and weathering of land beneath persistent snow patches** caused by freeze–thaw cycles, meltwater action, and gravitational movement of debris.

Key processes involved:

Formation of nivation hollows

Repeated snow accumulation and melting gradually form depressions called nivation hollows.

Accumulation of unstable material

These hollows may collect:

- Meltwater
- Ice fragments
- Rock debris
- Sediments

Structural weakening

In steep Himalayan terrain, such hollows can become unstable due to continuous freeze–thaw weathering.

Trigger mechanism in Dharali flood

Scientists believe the collapse of an exposed ice patch within a nivation hollow released trapped meltwater and debris, which rapidly moved downstream as a debris flow.

Result

This sudden surge of water, ice, and sediment triggered the Dharali flash flood.

Why Himalayan Glaciers are Becoming More Vulnerable

Himalayan glaciers are increasingly exposed to climate-induced hazards due to a combination of environmental and geomorphological factors.

Major vulnerability factors:**Rapid glacier retreat**

Studies suggest Himalayan glaciers have lost significant ice mass since the late 20th century, with some estimates indicating ice loss has **doubled since 2000**.

Reduction in snow cover

Declining snowfall and earlier snowmelt reduce glacier stability.

Steep topography

The Himalayas' extreme relief increases the risk of landslides, debris flows, and ice avalanches.

Fragmentation of glaciers

As glaciers shrink, they break into smaller ice bodies that are structurally unstable.

Emerging hazard categories

New types of hazards are being identified such as:

- Ice collapses
- Permafrost thaw failures
- Debris-covered glacier failures
- Cryosphere mass movements

Role of Satellite Observations in Early Warning

Earth observation satellites are becoming essential tools for monitoring glacier hazards.

Key advantages:**Pre-disaster detection**

Satellite data helped identify exposed ice patches before the Dharali flood, demonstrating early warning potential.

Continuous monitoring

Remote sensing allows:

- Glacier mass balance tracking
- Snow cover mapping
- Surface temperature monitoring
- Terrain change detection

Disaster reconstruction

Satellite imagery helps reconstruct the sequence of events leading to disasters.

Early warning systems

Regular monitoring of exposed ice zones could help authorities identify high-risk areas and issue timely warnings.

India already uses satellite platforms such as:

- Cartosat series
- Resourcesat series
- ISRO's cryosphere monitoring programmes

Why Disaster Monitoring Must Expand Beyond Glacial Lakes

Traditionally, Himalayan disaster monitoring has focused mainly on GLOFs. However, recent studies suggest this approach is too narrow.

Need for a broader monitoring approach:**Changing hazard profile**

Climate change is creating new hazard pathways beyond glacial lakes.

Overlooked small-scale instabilities

Even small ice collapses or debris releases can trigger destructive floods.

Widespread geomorphological similarity

Similar nivation zones and unstable glacier slopes exist across:

- Uttarakhand
- Himachal Pradesh
- Sikkim
- Arunachal Pradesh
- Nepal Himalayas

Policy implications

Disaster risk reduction strategies must include:

- Mapping exposed ice patches
- Monitoring nivation hollows
- Cryosphere risk zonation

- Integration into NDMA guidelines

Climate adaptation necessity

As Himalayan warming continues, proactive monitoring will be essential to protect mountain communities and infrastructure.

‘Super El Niño’ Alert: Risk of Record Global Heat



Why in the News?

Global climate agencies, including the **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Climate Prediction Center**, have indicated increasing probability of an **El Niño event developing in 2026**, with some models suggesting a small chance that it could intensify into a **“super El Niño.”** Such an event could temporarily push global temperatures to record highs and disrupt weather patterns worldwide, including the Indian monsoon.

What is El Niño?

El Niño is the **warm phase of the El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO)**, a periodic climate pattern caused by interactions between the Pacific Ocean and the atmosphere.

ENSO has three phases:

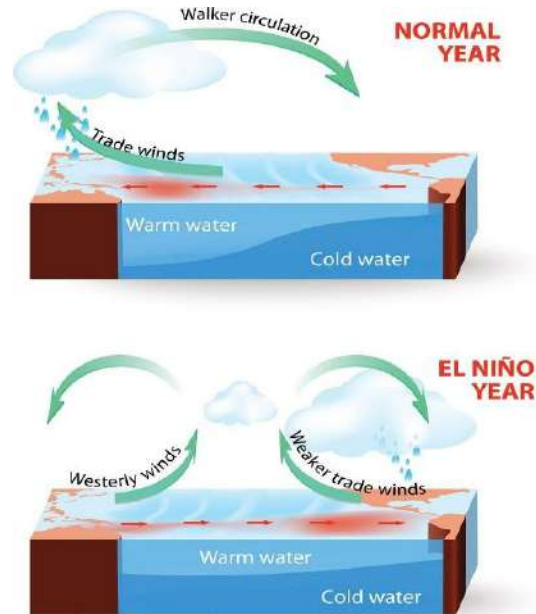
- **El Niño** – Warm phase
- **La Niña** – Cool phase
- **Neutral phase** – Neither warm nor cool

During El Niño:

- Sea surface temperatures in the **central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean** become warmer than normal.
- Trade winds weaken.
- Ocean heat spreads eastward.

- Global weather circulation patterns change.

How El Niño Works



The El Niño process involves a chain of ocean-atmosphere interactions:

1. **Weakening of trade winds**
Normally, easterly trade winds push warm water toward Indonesia and Australia. During El Niño, these winds weaken.
2. **Eastward movement of warm water**
Warm surface water shifts toward the eastern Pacific (towards South America).
3. **Suppression of cold upwelling**
Normally, cold nutrient-rich water rises near the South American coast. El Niño suppresses this process.
4. **Shift in atmospheric circulation**
Changes in ocean temperatures alter pressure systems and jet streams, affecting rainfall and temperature globally.

What is a “Super El Niño”?

A **Super El Niño** refers to an exceptionally strong El Niño event.

It is generally defined when:

- Sea surface temperature anomaly reaches **2°C or more above average** in the Niño-3.4 region of the Pacific.

Characteristics:

- Much stronger disruption of global weather
- Greater risk of heat waves
- Severe droughts and floods
- Stronger impact on agriculture and ecosystems

Major super El Niño events occurred in:

- **1982–83**
- **1997–98**
- **2015–16** (one of the strongest on record)

Current Situation (2026 Outlook)

Recent global forecasts suggest:

- The current **La Niña** phase is weakening.
- ENSO-neutral conditions may develop first.
- About **60–65% probability of El Niño by mid-2026**.
- Around **10–20% probability of a super El Niño** (still uncertain).

Climate models also indicate that even a moderate El Niño could combine with long-term global warming to produce unusually high global temperatures.

Possible Global Impacts

If El Niño develops, likely global impacts include:

Temperature effects

- Temporary spike in global average temperatures
- Increased probability of hottest year records
- More marine heatwaves

Rainfall changes

- Drought risk in Australia, Indonesia, and parts of India
- Heavy rainfall in western Americas
- Flood risks in parts of South America

Ocean impacts

- Coral bleaching due to warmer oceans
- Fishery disruptions due to reduced nutrient upwelling

Possible Impact on India

El Niño is historically associated with weaker Indian monsoons (though not always).

Possible impacts include:

Monsoon variability

- Below-normal rainfall risk
- Uneven spatial distribution of rainfall

Agriculture risks

- Impact on rain-fed crops such as rice, pulses, and oilseeds
- Possible food price pressures

Heat waves

- Higher summer temperatures
- Increased electricity demand

Water stress

- Pressure on reservoirs and groundwater in drought-prone regions

However, the monsoon is influenced by multiple factors such as the **Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD)** and Eurasian snow cover, so El Niño alone does not determine outcomes.

Conclusion

The possible emergence of El Niño in 2026 highlights the growing interaction between natural climate variability and long-term global warming. While forecasts remain probabilistic, governments—especially monsoon-dependent countries like India—are closely monitoring developments to prepare for possible impacts on agriculture, water resources, and disaster management.

India Submits First National Report on Nagoya Protocol (ABS)



Why in the News?

India submitted its **First National Report (NR1)** on the implementation of the **Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS)** to the **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**, fulfilling its reporting obligations under **Article 29 of the Protocol**.

The report highlights India's progress in biodiversity governance, benefit-sharing mechanisms, institutional development, and community participation between **November 2017 and December 2025**.

About the Nagoya Protocol

The Nagoya Protocol is a supplementary international agreement to the Convention on Biological Diversity that came into force in **2014**.

Objective

Its main objective is to ensure:

- Fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources
- Prevention of biopiracy
- Protection of traditional knowledge of indigenous communities
- Promotion of sustainable use of biodiversity

Core Principles

The protocol is based on three major pillars:

- 1. Access**
 - Regulates how genetic resources can be accessed by researchers and companies.
- 2. Benefit Sharing**
 - Ensures monetary and non-monetary benefits are shared with local communities.
- 3. Compliance**
 - Establishes international monitoring mechanisms to ensure transparency.

India became a Party to the Nagoya Protocol in **2012** and has since developed a strong legal and institutional ABS framework.

Key Highlights of India's National Report

1. Reporting Period

The report covers the implementation period from:

1 November 2017 to 31 December 2025

India had earlier submitted an **interim report in 2017**, and this is the first comprehensive national report assessing implementation outcomes.

2. Legal and Institutional Framework

India's ABS implementation is based on a strong domestic legal framework:

Key Laws and Rules

- Biological Diversity Act, 2002
- Biological Diversity Rules, 2004
- ABS Regulations, 2005

These laws regulate:

- Access to biological resources
- Protection of traditional knowledge
- Benefit sharing with local communities

Three-Tier Biodiversity Governance Structure

India follows a decentralised governance model:

1. National Biodiversity Authority (NBA)

- Apex body regulating access to biological resources by foreign entities.
- Grants approvals for research, intellectual property rights (IPR), and commercial use.

2. State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs) / UT Biodiversity Councils

- Regulate commercial utilisation by Indian entities.

3. Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs)

- Established at the local body level.
- Responsible for People's Biodiversity Registers (PBRs) and conservation efforts.

Grassroots Expansion

India has established:

2,76,653 Biodiversity Management Committees

This represents one of the largest decentralised biodiversity governance systems in the world and shows strong grassroots participation in conservation.

3. Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) Performance

The report shows significant regulatory activity.

Total ABS approvals (2017–2025):

12,830 approvals

Breakup:

NBA approvals: 5,913

Includes:

- Research approvals
- Intellectual property rights
- Commercial utilisation
- Transfer of research results

SBB/UTBC approvals: 6,917

Focused mainly on:

- Commercial utilisation by domestic industries

- Biodiversity-based businesses

This demonstrates growing economic use of biological resources under regulatory oversight.

4. India's Global Leadership in Compliance

India has emerged as a global leader in ABS transparency.

Internationally Recognised Certificates of Compliance (IRCCs)

India published:

3,556 IRCCs

This accounts for:

More than 60% of global IRCCs

Importance of IRCCs

IRCCs:

- Act as proof of legal access
- Promote transparency
- Prevent illegal use of biodiversity
- Build trust in global biodiversity governance

This shows India's leadership in implementing compliance mechanisms under the Nagoya Protocol.

5. Financial Benefits Generated

ABS mechanisms generated significant financial resources.

Monetary benefits:

₹216.31 crore

mobilised through NBA approvals.

Distribution:

₹139.69 crore disbursed to:

- Local communities
- Farmers
- Traditional knowledge holders

State-level collections:

₹51.96 crore

generated through SBBs and UT Biodiversity Councils.

Significance

These funds help:

- Support conservation efforts
- Strengthen rural livelihoods
- Incentivise biodiversity protection
- Promote equitable development

6. Non-Monetary Benefits

Apart from financial benefits, ABS agreements also generated knowledge-based benefits.

395 approvals included:

- Technology transfer
- Capacity building
- Training programmes
- Collaborative research
- Knowledge sharing

These benefits are important because they:

- Improve scientific capacity
- Strengthen local institutions
- Promote innovation
- Enhance sustainable use practices

7. Monitoring of Foreign Biological Resources

India also monitors the use of foreign genetic resources.

Key data:

41 declarations received

for use of foreign bioresources.

Purpose:

- Ensure compliance with international ABS norms
- Prevent misuse of foreign biodiversity
- Maintain reciprocal compliance standards

This reflects India's responsible approach to global biodiversity governance.

8. Capacity Building and Awareness

India has invested heavily in awareness and training.

Achievements:

2,56,393 individuals trained

Through:

- **3,724 workshops**
- **600+ capacity-building programmes**

Focus Areas:

- ABS compliance
- Biodiversity conservation
- Documentation of traditional knowledge
- Sustainable bioresource use

Importance:

Capacity building strengthens:

- Community participation
- Regulatory compliance
- Conservation outcomes
- Scientific engagement

9. Strategic Contribution to India's Biodiversity Goals

The ABS framework supports:

Target 13 of India's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP)

Contributions include:

Biodiversity conservation

- Incentivises protection of ecosystems

Livelihood security

- Financial benefits to rural communities

Community participation

- Local governance through BMCs

Sustainable development

- Linking biodiversity with economic benefits

Overall Significance

India's first National Report demonstrates that the country has built one of the most comprehensive ABS implementation systems globally.

Key achievements include:

- Strong legal framework
- Decentralised biodiversity governance
- Global leadership in compliance certificates
- Significant benefit sharing with communities
- Large-scale capacity building
- Integration of biodiversity with livelihoods

Way Forward

Going ahead, India may focus on:

- Strengthening digital biodiversity databases
- Expanding People's Biodiversity Registers
- Enhancing benefit distribution efficiency
- Promoting biodiversity-based bioeconomy
- Strengthening international cooperation

Erratic Weather in March 2026



Why in the News?

March 2026 witnessed highly unusual and rapidly changing weather conditions across India. The month began with early heatwave conditions, particularly in northern and western parts of the country, but soon shifted to thunderstorms, hailstorms, and widespread rainfall in many regions. These sudden changes led to a noticeable drop in temperatures and affected agriculture, transportation, and daily life.

A notable weather phenomenon observed during this period was the **Nor'westers (Kalbaisakhi)** in eastern India—violent pre-monsoon storms characterised by strong winds, lightning, heavy rain, and sometimes hail.

What Happened?

The weather pattern during March showed three clear phases:

Early March

- Heatwave conditions in North and West India
- Temperatures significantly above normal

Mid to Late March

A sudden transition due to changing atmospheric systems resulted in:

- Thunderstorms
- Hailstorms
- Heavy rainfall
- Gusty winds

Impact

- Sudden fall in temperatures
- Relief from heatwave conditions
- Crop damage in some regions due to hailstorms
- Disruptions in local transport and power supply

Main Reasons for the Weather Changes

1. Western Disturbances (WDs)

Western Disturbances were the most important factor behind the sudden weather changes.

Origin:

- Mediterranean region
- Travel eastward through West Asia into India

Role:

- Bring winter and pre-monsoon rainfall
- Cause snowfall in the Himalayas
- Trigger thunderstorms in plains

In March 2026, two strong Western Disturbances around **13 March and 18 March** significantly altered weather conditions by interacting with local weather systems.

2. Cyclonic Circulation

A cyclonic circulation refers to a low-pressure system in the lower atmosphere where winds circulate inward.

Effects:

- Promotes cloud formation
- Enhances rainfall activity
- Supports development of thunderstorms

During this period, persistent cyclonic circulation over parts of central and northern India helped intensify rainfall activity.

3. Moisture Influx

Moisture supply is essential for storm development.

Sources of moisture:

- Bay of Bengal
- Arabian Sea

Result:

- Increased humidity in the atmosphere
- Formation of rain-bearing clouds
- Intensification of thunderstorms

The convergence of moisture from both seas created favourable conditions for severe weather.

4. Wind Convergence

Wind convergence occurs when different air masses meet.

Interaction involved:

- Warm moist winds from seas
- Cold dry winds from northern regions

Outcome:

- Strong vertical air movement (convection)
- Formation of cumulonimbus clouds
- Thunderstorms and hailstorms

This interaction explains the sudden and intense nature of storms during the month.

5. Seasonal Transition (Winter to Summer Shift)

March is a transition period between winter and summer in India.

Characteristics of this transition:

- Rising land temperatures
- Increasing atmospheric instability

- Availability of moisture

These factors together create ideal conditions for:

- Pre-monsoon thunderstorms
- Lightning events
- Hailstorms

Special Phenomenon: Nor'westers (Kalbaisakhi)

Nor'westers are severe convective storms common in:

- West Bengal
- Bihar
- Jharkhand
- Assam
- Odisha

Key features:

- Occur mainly in March–May
- Develop in afternoon or evening
- Associated with:
 - Thunder
 - Lightning
 - Strong winds (often 60–100 km/h)
 - Heavy rain
 - Hail

Importance:

- Provide temporary relief from heat
- Beneficial for some crops like jute and mango
- Can also cause damage to standing crops and infrastructure

Geographical Spread

The unusual weather affected multiple regions:

Western Himalayas

- Rain and snowfall due to Western Disturbances

Northeast India

- Thunderstorms and Nor'westers

Central and Northwest India

- Rain, hailstorms, and temperature drop

Parts of South India

- Isolated thunderstorms due to moisture and instability

Conclusion

The unusual weather seen in March 2026 highlights the complex interaction between Western Disturbances, cyclonic circulations, moisture influx, and seasonal transition. Such events demonstrate how even small

atmospheric changes can produce large variations in weather patterns across India.

India Targets 60 Percent Non Fossil Power Capacity by 2035



Why in the News

India has updated its **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)** under the **Paris Agreement**, setting more ambitious climate targets for the **2031–2035 period**. The revised commitments reflect India’s strengthened climate action roadmap and its progress in renewable energy expansion, emissions reduction, and forest conservation.

What are Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)?

Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) are national climate action plans submitted by countries under the **Paris Agreement** to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change.

Key features:

- Each country sets its own targets based on national capacity.
- Updated every **five years**.
- Focus on mitigation, adaptation, and climate finance.
- India was required to submit updated targets by **2025** for the next commitment cycle.

Key Climate Targets for 2035

1. Energy Transition Target

India has set a target of achieving:

60% of installed electricity capacity from non-fossil fuel sources by 2035.

Non-fossil energy sources include:

- Solar energy

- Wind energy
- Hydropower
- Biomass energy
- Nuclear energy

This reflects India’s long-term strategy to reduce dependence on coal while expanding clean energy infrastructure.

2. Emissions Reduction Target

India has committed to:

Reducing emissions intensity of GDP by 47% from 2005 levels by 2035.

Emissions intensity means:

- The amount of greenhouse gas emissions per unit of GDP.
- Reduction indicates cleaner and more efficient economic growth rather than absolute emission cuts.

This approach balances:

- Climate responsibility
- Development needs
- Energy security

3. Carbon Sink Target

India aims to create an additional **carbon sink of 3.5 to 4 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent** through:

- Increasing forest cover
- Expanding tree cover
- Afforestation programmes
- Agroforestry initiatives

A carbon sink refers to ecosystems such as forests that absorb more carbon dioxide than they emit.

India’s Current Progress Toward Climate Goals

1. Non-Fossil Energy Capacity

India has already made substantial progress:

- **52% of installed electricity capacity** is from non-fossil sources.
- However, actual power generation from non-fossil sources is about **25%** due to coal still dominating baseload power supply.

This indicates:

- Strong renewable capacity addition.
- Need for storage technologies and grid modernisation.

2. Emissions Reduction Progress

India has already achieved:

36% reduction in emissions intensity between 2005 and 2020.

This progress has been supported by:

- Renewable energy expansion
- Energy efficiency programmes
- LED distribution under UJALA scheme
- Perform Achieve Trade (PAT) scheme

3. Carbon Sink Progress

According to official assessments:

- Carbon sink created (2005–2019): **1.97 billion tonnes CO₂ equivalent**

Major contributors:

- Green India Mission
- Compensatory afforestation
- State forest programmes

4. Forest Cover Status

India's forest and tree cover (2021):

- **24.6% of geographical area**
- National policy target: **33% forest cover**

This shows steady but gradual progress toward long-term ecological goals.

Comparison with Earlier NDC Targets for 2030

Target Area	Earlier 2030 Target	Updated 2035 Target
Non-fossil electricity capacity	50%	60%
Emissions intensity reduction	44%	47%
Carbon sink	2.5–3 billion tonnes	3.5–4 billion tonnes

The updated NDC shows India's enhanced ambition consistent with global climate expectations.

Paris Agreement Context

Under the Paris Agreement framework:

- Countries must submit updated NDCs every five years.
- Targets become progressively more ambitious.
- Focus is on limiting global warming to **well below 2°C**, preferably **1.5°C** above pre-industrial levels.

India's updated NDC aligns with:

- Climate justice principle
- Common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR)
- Sustainable development priorities

Significance of India's Updated NDC

Environmental Significance

- Supports global climate mitigation efforts.
- Promotes biodiversity conservation.
- Encourages sustainable land use.

Economic Significance

- Accelerates green investment.
- Promotes renewable manufacturing.
- Creates green jobs.

Strategic Significance

- Strengthens India's global climate leadership.
- Improves energy security.
- Reduces fossil fuel import dependence.

Challenges Ahead

Key challenges in achieving the targets include:

- Renewable energy storage constraints.
- Grid integration issues.
- Financing green transition.
- Balancing development and decarbonisation.
- Increasing forest cover amid urbanisation.

Way Forward

India may need to focus on:

- Expanding battery storage and green hydrogen.
- Strengthening carbon markets.
- Promoting climate-resilient agriculture.
- Scaling up afforestation.
- Enhancing climate finance access.

Conclusion

India's updated NDC targets for 2035 demonstrate a calibrated approach that balances climate responsibility with developmental priorities. With significant progress already achieved in renewable energy and emissions intensity reduction, the revised commitments signal India's intent to play a constructive role in global climate governance while ensuring sustainable economic growth.

Governance

India–Canada 10 Year Uranium Supply Deal



Why in the News

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney announced a **\$1.9-billion uranium supply agreement** during bilateral talks in **New Delhi**. The meeting also revived negotiations on a **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)** and signaled renewed efforts to strengthen **energy, trade, and security cooperation** between India and Canada.

The announcement comes amid efforts to **stabilize diplomatic ties** that had been strained in recent years.

Uranium Supply Agreement

Key Details

- **Supplier:** Cameco
- **Value:** **\$1.9 billion**
- **Duration:** **2027–2035 (10 years)**
- **Quantity:** Approximately **10,000 tonnes of uranium concentrate**
- **Purpose:** Fuel supply for **Indian nuclear power reactors**

Canada is among the **world's largest producers of uranium**, making it an important partner for countries expanding nuclear energy capacity.

Significance for India

1. **Energy Security**
 - Uranium imports are essential for India because **domestic uranium reserves are limited**.

- The agreement ensures **long-term fuel supply for nuclear reactors**.
2. **Expansion of Nuclear Power**
 - India aims to increase the share of **nuclear energy in its clean energy mix**.
 - Reliable uranium supply helps operate reactors at **higher capacity factors**.
 3. **Continuation of Earlier Cooperation**
 - India and Canada had an earlier uranium supply agreement between **2015 and 2020**, under which **about 2,700 tonnes** were supplied.

CEPA Negotiations

India and Canada also resumed discussions on a **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)**.

Key Features

- **Terms of Reference** for negotiations have been issued.
- Both countries aim to **conclude CEPA by 2026**.
- The agreement is expected to:
 - Reduce tariffs
 - Promote services trade
 - Encourage investment
 - Facilitate technology transfer

Trade Target

The two countries have set a goal to **double bilateral trade by 2030**.

Current trade between India and Canada includes:

- **Energy resources**
- **Agricultural products**
- **Fertilizers**
- **Technology and services**

Strategic Energy Partnership

The talks also highlighted a broader **India–Canada strategic energy partnership**.

Areas of Cooperation

- **Uranium supply for nuclear power**
- **Renewable energy collaboration**

- **Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) supply**
- **Critical minerals and emerging technologies**

Canada possesses large reserves of **critical minerals**, including lithium, cobalt, and nickel, which are crucial for **electric vehicles, batteries, and clean energy technologies**.

International Climate Initiatives

Canada also expressed interest in joining global clean-energy platforms led by India:

- International Solar Alliance
- Global Biofuel Alliance

Participation in these initiatives would strengthen **global cooperation on renewable energy and climate action**.

Security and Counterterrorism Cooperation

Both countries agreed to strengthen security collaboration.

Key Initiative

A meeting of the **Joint Working Group on Counterterrorism** will be held soon.

Areas of Focus

- **Violent extremism**
- **Organised crime networks**
- **Information sharing on security threats**

Security cooperation is expected to **improve intelligence coordination and law-enforcement collaboration** between the two countries.

Diplomatic Context

Relations between India and Canada had recently faced tensions following allegations by Canadian authorities related to the killing of **Hardeep Singh Nijjar** in 2023.

Key points in the dispute:

- Canadian agencies suggested possible foreign involvement.
- India **rejected the allegations**, calling them **unfounded and politically motivated**.

The high-level visit and agreements are therefore viewed as efforts to **restore dialogue and rebuild strategic trust**.

Strategic Importance of the Visit

The agreements reflect broader geopolitical and economic considerations:

1. **Energy diversification**

- Strengthens India's access to **nuclear fuel and clean energy resources**.

2. **Trade expansion**

- CEPA could significantly **increase trade and investment flows**.

3. **Geopolitical cooperation**

- Enhances collaboration between two **major Indo-Pacific democracies**.

4. **Climate and technology partnership**

- Joint initiatives on **renewable energy and emerging technologies**.

In summary:

The **India–Canada uranium supply agreement and revived CEPA negotiations** represent a major step toward rebuilding bilateral relations. The deal enhances **India's nuclear energy security**, expands economic cooperation, and signals renewed diplomatic engagement between the two countries.

Centre Directs Refiners to Maximise LPG Production



Why in the News

The Government of India has invoked provisions of the **Essential Commodities Act, 1955 (ECA)** to direct oil refining companies to maximise the production of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) and prioritise domestic supply. This step comes amid global energy supply disruptions caused by geopolitical tensions, shipping bottlenecks, and volatility in crude oil and gas markets. The move aims to ensure uninterrupted availability of cooking gas for households and prevent price spikes or

shortages, particularly affecting vulnerable sections dependent on subsidised LPG connections.

About Essential Commodities Act, 1955 (ECA)

The **Essential Commodities Act, 1955** is a key economic regulatory law that empowers the Government of India to regulate the production, supply, distribution, and pricing of essential commodities.

Objectives:

The Act aims to:

- Ensure availability of essential goods
- Prevent hoarding and black marketing
- Control artificial price rise
- Maintain equitable distribution
- Protect consumer interests

The Act allows the government to impose:

- Stockholding limits
- Movement restrictions
- Licensing requirements
- Price controls in extreme situations

Essential commodities have historically included:

- Food grains
- Pulses
- Edible oils
- Sugar
- Petroleum products
- Fertilisers

LPG falls under essential petroleum products due to its critical role in household energy security.

Amendment and Reforms (2020)

In **2020**, major reforms were introduced through the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act to liberalise agricultural markets and encourage private investment in storage infrastructure.

Key Changes:

- Cereals
- Pulses
- Oilseeds
- Edible oils
- Onions
- Potatoes

were removed from the essential commodities list under normal conditions.

However, regulation can still be imposed under extraordinary circumstances such as:

- War
- Famine
- Natural calamities
- Extraordinary price rise
- Severe supply disruptions

The amendment also introduced price triggers:

- **100% increase in retail price** for horticultural produce
- **50% increase** for non-perishable food items

These reforms aimed to reduce excessive government intervention while retaining emergency powers.

Key Government Directive on LPG Production

To address supply concerns, the government has issued specific operational directions to refiners.

Key Instructions:

- Oil refineries must prioritise LPG production.
- Propane and butane streams must be diverted mainly for LPG.
- Diversion of these gases to petrochemical production is restricted.
- LPG output must be supplied to public sector oil marketing companies.

This ensures that domestic cooking needs take precedence over industrial consumption.

Role of Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies

The LPG produced under this directive will be distributed through India's major public sector oil marketing companies (OMCs):

- Indian Oil Corporation Limited
- Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited
- Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited

Their Role:

These companies are responsible for:

- LPG bottling and distribution
- Managing supply chains
- Providing subsidised LPG connections
- Ensuring last-mile delivery

They distribute LPG mainly through schemes such as:

- **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)**
- Regular domestic LPG distribution networks

As of recent government data:

- India has over **31 crore LPG connections**
- More than **10 crore connections** were provided under PMUY
- LPG coverage has increased from about **55% (2014)** to nearly **100% household coverage**

Why LPG Supply is Strategically Important

Energy Security:

India imports about **60% of its LPG consumption**, making it vulnerable to global price and supply fluctuations.

Social Welfare:

LPG is critical for:

- Clean cooking fuel access
- Reducing indoor air pollution
- Women's health and welfare
- Rural energy transition

Environmental Benefits:

LPG supports:

- Reduction in biomass burning
- Lower carbon emissions compared to coal and firewood
- Improved public health outcomes

Significance of Invoking the Essential Commodities Act

The government's decision reflects a precautionary approach to:

- Prevent shortages
- Stabilise prices
- Protect household consumption
- Maintain supply chain resilience

Supreme Court on Paid Menstrual Pain Leave



Why in the News

The **Supreme Court of India** recently expressed concern that making paid menstrual leave legally mandatory across workplaces could unintentionally affect women's employment opportunities and career growth. The Court observed that while menstrual leave is an important welfare issue, a compulsory legal framework may create unintended workplace biases.

The observations came during the hearing of a petition seeking a uniform national policy granting paid menstrual leave to working women and female students.

Key Observations by the Court

1. Possible Impact on Women's Careers

A Bench led by Justice Surya Kant highlighted that a mandatory menstrual leave law could have unintended consequences such as:

- Employers becoming reluctant to hire women due to perceived additional costs.
- Women being overlooked for leadership roles or critical assignments.
- Potential discrimination in hiring, promotions, and workplace responsibilities.
- Reinforcement of gender stereotypes about productivity.

The Court cautioned that protective laws must not unintentionally reduce women's participation in the workforce.

2. Preference for Voluntary Institutional Policies

The Court distinguished between:

- **Statutory rights** imposed through legislation.
- **Voluntary welfare policies** adopted by organisations.

It suggested that voluntary policies may be more effective because they:

- Encourage gender-sensitive workplaces without legal rigidity.
- Allow flexibility depending on organisational capacity.
- Avoid creating compliance burdens for smaller employers.

The Court encouraged governments and institutions to promote best practices rather than imposing a nationwide mandate.

Context of the Petition

The petition requested the government to frame a law providing menstrual leave to:

- Working women
- Female students in educational institutions

The petitioner argued that menstrual leave is connected to:

- **Health rights**
- **Dignity**
- **Gender equality**

These were linked to **Article 21 of the Indian Constitution**, which guarantees the Right to Life and Personal Liberty.

The petition also argued that menstrual pain (dysmenorrhea) affects productivity and requires recognition similar to other health conditions.

Constitutional and Legal Dimensions

Article 21 (Right to Life)

Article 21 has been interpreted broadly by the Supreme Court to include:

- Right to health
- Right to dignity
- Right to safe working conditions

The petitioner argued menstrual leave falls within these protections.

Gender Equality Provisions

Relevant constitutional provisions include:

- Article 14 – Equality before law
- Article 15 – Prohibition of discrimination based on sex
- Article 42 – Provision for just and humane working conditions

The debate therefore lies between:

protective discrimination vs equal opportunity concerns.

Existing Menstrual Leave Policies in India

India currently does not have a national law on menstrual leave, but some states and organisations have introduced policies.

State-level initiatives

Examples include:

- **Odisha** – Provides one day of menstrual leave for women government employees under a special casual leave provision.
- **Kerala** – Some universities introduced menstrual leave for female students.
- **Karnataka** – Discussions on menstrual leave policies in certain sectors.

Institutional policies

Some private companies and universities have introduced menstrual leave such as:

- Zomato (10 days per year policy announced earlier)
- Byju’s (select internal policies reported)
- Certain IITs and central universities

These examples show a growing trend toward workplace menstrual health recognition without a central law.

Global Practices on Menstrual Leave

Several countries already provide menstrual leave through law or workplace policy.

Countries with menstrual leave provisions:

- **Spain** – Became the first European country (2023) to introduce paid medical menstrual leave.
- **Japan** – Menstrual leave available since 1947 under labour law.
- **South Korea** – Provides unpaid menstrual leave monthly.
- **Indonesia** – Provides two days of menstrual leave per month.
- **Vietnam** – Provides 30 minutes daily rest or leave options.
- **Zambia** – Provides one day monthly leave called “Mother’s Day”.

These models vary widely in implementation, ranging from optional leave to medical certification-based leave.

International Commitments

The petition also cited India's commitments under the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**.

CEDAW requires signatory countries to:

- Eliminate workplace discrimination.
- Ensure gender-sensitive labour protections.

- Promote women’s health rights.

India ratified CEDAW in 1993, making gender-responsive workplace policies part of its international obligations.

Arguments in Favour of Menstrual Leave

Supporters argue that menstrual leave:

- Recognises biological realities.
- Improves workplace inclusivity.
- Reduces stigma around menstruation.
- Improves productivity by allowing recovery.
- Supports menstrual health awareness.

Medical data suggests that nearly **50–80% of women experience menstrual discomfort**, while around **5–15% suffer severe symptoms** affecting daily work.

Concerns Against Mandatory Leave

Critics argue mandatory leave could:

- Reinforce stereotypes about women's productivity.
- Increase hiring bias.
- Increase compliance costs.
- Reduce workplace competitiveness.
- Lead to misuse concerns (as argued by some employers).

Economists also note that labour laws must balance welfare and employability impacts.

Alternative Policy Suggestions

Experts suggest alternatives such as:

- Flexible work-from-home options.
- Wellness leave applicable to all genders.

- Workplace health support programmes.
- Menstrual health infrastructure (sanitary products, rest rooms).
- Gender-neutral sick leave reforms.

Some experts recommend integrating menstrual leave into general sick leave instead of creating a separate category.

Significance of the Debate

This issue highlights an important policy dilemma between:

- **Gender justice**
- **Labour market realities**

The debate reflects broader questions such as:

- How to design gender-sensitive labour laws?
- How to avoid unintended discrimination?
- Whether welfare policies should be mandatory or voluntary?

The Court’s observations emphasise that well-intentioned policies must be carefully designed to avoid adverse economic consequences.

Way Forward

Possible balanced approaches include:

- Encouraging voluntary menstrual leave policies.
- Creating gender-sensitive workplace guidelines.
- Promoting menstrual health awareness.
- Strengthening workplace equality safeguards.
- Conducting impact assessments before legislation.

History

Return of 16th Century Bronze Statue of Thirumangai Alvar



Why in the News

The **Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (UK)** has returned a **16th-century bronze idol of Thirumangai Alvar** to the Government of India after detailed provenance research established that the sculpture originally belonged to the **Sundararaja Perumal Temple in Tamil Nadu**.

The repatriation reflects increasing global recognition of India’s claims over stolen antiquities and strengthening international cooperation against illegal trafficking of cultural artefacts.

Key Facts

- The idol was formally handed over to the **Indian High Commission in London** for repatriation to India.
- The Ashmolean Museum had acquired the sculpture in **1967** from a private collector named **J.R. Belmont**.
- Scientific provenance research later connected the idol to a **1957 archival photograph** from the Sundararaja Perumal Temple.
- The photograph was preserved in archives maintained by:
 - Institut Français de Pondichéry (IFP)
 - École française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO)
- In **2020**, temple authorities discovered that the original idol had been replaced by a replica and subsequently filed a police complaint.
- Investigation confirmed that the original idol had been illegally removed and smuggled abroad decades earlier.

This case highlights the growing role of archival documentation and digital databases in tracing stolen heritage objects.

About Thirumangai Alvar

Thirumangai Alvar is an important figure in South Indian religious and literary traditions.

Key facts about Thirumangai Alvar:

- He was one of the **12 Alvars**, the Tamil poet-saints devoted to **Lord Vishnu**.
- The Alvars were central to the **Bhakti movement** in South India between the 6th and 9th centuries.
- Thirumangai Alvar is considered the **last of the Alvars** chronologically.
- He is known for composing devotional hymns praising Vishnu temples (Divya Desams).

Literary Contribution

- His hymns form part of the **Divya Prabandham** (Nalayira Divya Prabandham).
- This collection of **4000 Tamil devotional verses** is considered a foundational text of the **Sri Vaishnava tradition**.

- His works contributed significantly to the spread of devotional Hinduism and temple culture in South India.

Religious Importance

In temple traditions:

- Alvar idols are worshipped along with Vishnu.
- They represent the Bhakti tradition of personal devotion.
- Their idols are part of temple festivals and processions.

Thus, the return of such idols has both religious and cultural importance.

About Idol Repatriation Efforts of India (Additional Context)

India has intensified efforts in recent years to recover stolen artefacts through:

- Diplomatic engagement
- Legal claims
- Provenance research
- International conventions

According to government data:

- Since **2014**, **more than 600 antiquities** have been repatriated to India from different countries.
- Major returns have come from the **USA, UK, Australia, Canada, and Germany**.

India also maintains a **national database of stolen antiquities** through the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).

Legal and Institutional Framework Against Illicit Trafficking

International Conventions

India is part of important global frameworks such as:

- **UNESCO 1970 Convention** on preventing illicit import and export of cultural property.
- **UNIDROIT Convention (1995)** on stolen cultural objects.

National Laws

Key Indian laws include:

- Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972
- Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958

These laws regulate export and ownership of antiquities.

Significance of the Repatriation

1. Restoration of Cultural Heritage

The return restores the idol to its:

- Original religious setting
- Cultural ecosystem
- Historical continuity

This is important because temple idols are living heritage objects rather than mere museum artefacts.

2. Boost to India’s Cultural Diplomacy

Such returns:

- Strengthen India’s global cultural presence
- Demonstrate trust in India’s heritage claims
- Improve bilateral cultural cooperation

3. Fight Against Illegal Antiquities Trade

The case demonstrates:

- Importance of provenance research
- Role of museums in ethical restitution
- Growing intolerance towards smuggled artefacts

4. Technological Role in Heritage Recovery

Use of:

- Archival photographs
- Digital databases
- AI-assisted provenance tracking

is increasingly helping identify stolen artefacts.

5. Strengthening Temple Heritage Protection

The incident highlights the need for:

- Better temple inventory management
- Digitisation of idols
- Surveillance mechanisms

Way Forward

Experts suggest several measures:

- Digitisation of all temple idols and artefacts
- 3D documentation of heritage objects
- Stronger international legal cooperation
- Capacity building for heritage crime investigation
- Public awareness about heritage protection

India is also strengthening the role of the **Idol Wing CID (Tamil Nadu Police)** which specialises in idol theft cases.

International Relations

Iran–Israel Escalation After Killing of Khamenei



Why in the News?

Iran launched large-scale missile and drone strikes across Israel and parts of the Gulf region following reports that Iran’s Supreme Leader **Ayatollah Ali Khamenei** was killed in joint U.S. and Israeli bombardment targeting strategic locations in Tehran.

The attacks have triggered a major escalation in West Asia, raising fears of a wider regional war involving multiple countries and global powers.

What Happened?

U.S.–Israel Strikes on Iran

Reports indicate that the United States and Israel carried out coordinated air and missile strikes on several strategic targets in Tehran. These strikes reportedly targeted senior Iranian leadership, military infrastructure, and command centres.

The operation was believed to be aimed at weakening Iran’s military command structure and curbing its regional influence. However, the reported killing of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei dramatically intensified the crisis, as he had been Iran’s most powerful political and religious authority for decades.

Iran’s Retaliation

In response, Iran launched a wave of **ballistic missiles and armed drones** targeting multiple locations:

- Major Israeli cities and military facilities
- Gulf states hosting U.S. military bases
- Strategic regional targets linked to Western security infrastructure

Explosions were reported in **Tel Aviv**, while a strike also occurred in **Beit Shemesh**, indicating that central Israel was directly targeted.

Iran also reportedly launched attacks toward **Oman** and areas near **Abu Dhabi**, where debris and shrapnel incidents were reported following interception attempts. Casualties were reported among civilians and military personnel in **Israel, Iran**, and among **U.S. forces stationed in the region**.

Interim Leadership Council

Iranian President **Masoud Pezeshkian** announced the formation of an interim leadership council to ensure continuity of governance.

Members reportedly include senior clerical and political figures, including **Ayatollah Alireza Araf**.

Role of the Assembly of Experts

Under Iran's constitutional system:

- The **Assembly of Experts** (a body of senior clerics) is responsible for selecting the Supreme Leader.
- The council will oversee state affairs until the Assembly formally elects a permanent successor.

Foreign Minister **Abbas Araghchi** stated that the selection process for the new Supreme Leader would begin soon.

Wider Regional Impact

The conflict has rapidly expanded beyond Iran and Israel.

Escalation Across West Asia

Key developments include:

- Missile interceptions and explosions in **Tel Aviv**
- Strike reports in **Beit Shemesh**
- Debris and air-defense activity in **Abu Dhabi**
- Attacks extending toward **Oman**

This indicates that the conflict may involve a broader theatre spanning the Persian Gulf and Eastern Mediterranean.

U.S. Response

U.S. President **Donald Trump** warned that the United States would respond with **severe retaliation** if Iran continues attacks on U.S. forces or allied countries in the region.

Given the presence of multiple U.S. bases across the Gulf, the situation risks turning into a direct U.S.–Iran confrontation.

Strategic Significance

Risk of Full-Scale Regional War

The situation represents one of the most dangerous escalations in West Asia in recent decades because:

- Iran's top leadership has reportedly been targeted.
- Israel and the United States are directly involved.
- Multiple Gulf states are becoming part of the conflict environment.

If escalation continues, it could trigger a broader regional war involving state and proxy forces across West Asia.

Impact on Global Energy Security

The Persian Gulf is one of the world's most critical energy corridors.

Possible consequences include:

- Disruptions to oil exports from major producers such as Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, and Iraq
- Threats to shipping through the **Strait of Hormuz**, through which about one-fifth of global oil supply passes
- Rising global oil prices and volatility in energy markets

India's Oil Imports from Russia Fall to 44 Month Low



Why in the News?

India's crude oil imports from Russia declined sharply to a **44-month low in January 2026**, while imports from **Gulf countries and the United States increased significantly**. The shift has occurred amid **geopolitical tensions in West Asia, rising global oil prices, and evolving trade dynamics with the United States**.

The change highlights India's balancing act between **energy security, geopolitical pressures, and economic considerations** in a volatile global oil market.

Key Data Points

Recent data shows a notable decline in India's dependence on Russian crude:

- **Russian oil imports (January 2026):** about **\$1.98 billion**
- **Share of Russian oil: 19.3% of India's total crude imports**
- **Two months earlier:** around **27.5%**
- **Peak level in May 2025:** nearly **33%**
- **Lowest share since December 2022**

Russia had become India's largest supplier after the **Ukraine conflict in 2022**, as discounted crude made it economically attractive. However, recent geopolitical and market developments have reduced its share.

Rising Share of Other Suppliers

As Russian imports declined, India diversified its sources, particularly toward **Gulf countries and the United States**.

Gulf Countries

The Gulf region remains India's traditional energy supplier and has regained a larger share of the import basket.

- **Saudi Arabia:** 17.5% (highest share since April 2023)
- **Iraq:** 16.6%
- **United Arab Emirates:** 10.4%
- **Kuwait:** 6.1%

These countries benefit from **shorter shipping routes, stable supply chains, and long-term energy partnerships with India**.

United States

- **U.S. share of India's crude imports:** increased to **6.8%**, up from **about 5% a year earlier**.

U.S. crude shipments to India have grown due to expanding energy trade ties and Washington's strategic interest in reducing India's reliance on Russian oil.

Reasons Behind the Shift

1. U.S. Trade Pressure

The United States had previously linked **tariff relief and trade concessions** to India reducing its purchases of Russian oil.

- The U.S. administration under **President Donald Trump** removed certain **penal tariffs on Indian exports**, citing India's commitment to gradually reduce Russian imports.
- However, the **U.S. Supreme Court later struck down the tariff mechanism**, weakening the direct policy link.

Despite this, the episode influenced India's diversification strategy.

2. Geopolitical Risk and Sanctions Environment

Russian oil purchases involve:

- Complex payment mechanisms
- Shipping and insurance restrictions
- Secondary sanctions risks

These factors have encouraged refiners to diversify supply sources.

3. Market and Logistics Considerations

Changing freight costs, shipping routes, and insurance premiums during geopolitical crises also influence sourcing decisions.

Why the Shift May Become Costly

Although diversification reduces geopolitical risk, it may also increase India's energy costs.

1. Rising Global Oil Prices

Conflict in **West Asia** has pushed crude oil prices **above \$80 per barrel**.

- For India, **every \$1 increase in crude prices raises the annual import bill by roughly \$2 billion**.

Since India imports **over 85% of its crude oil requirements**, price volatility directly affects the economy.

2. Strategic Risk Around the Strait of Hormuz

The **Strait of Hormuz** is a critical maritime chokepoint through which a large portion of the world's oil trade passes.

Any disruption could affect supplies from:

- Iraq
- Saudi Arabia
- UAE
- Kuwait

A blockade or conflict in this region could significantly disrupt India's energy imports.

3. Higher Freight and Logistics Costs

Oil shipments from the **United States travel significantly longer distances** than supplies from Russia or the Gulf.

This leads to:

- Higher shipping costs
- Increased marine insurance premiums during conflicts
- Greater transportation time and logistical complexity

These factors can increase the **landed cost of crude oil for Indian refiners**.

Strategic Implications for India

1. Energy Security Concerns

India's strategy has long focused on **diversifying energy suppliers**. However, rising geopolitical tensions mean:

- Supply routes remain vulnerable
- Overdependence on any region can create risks

Therefore, India must maintain **balanced sourcing across Russia, the Middle East, the U.S., and other suppliers**.

2. Pressure on Trade Deficit

Higher oil prices can significantly widen India's **current account deficit**.

- Oil accounts for a major share of India's import bill.
- Rising prices increase foreign exchange outflows.

3. Currency Impact

Higher crude imports can put **downward pressure on the Indian rupee**, as demand for dollars increases to pay for energy imports.

4. Inflationary Impact

Crude oil prices influence:

- Transport costs

- Manufacturing input costs
- Fuel prices

This can lead to **higher inflation**, affecting both consumers and businesses.

Conclusion

India's reduction in Russian oil imports and increased sourcing from Gulf countries and the United States reflects a **complex interplay of geopolitics, trade relations, and energy security considerations**.

While diversification strengthens strategic flexibility, it may also **raise costs and expose India to new supply risks**, particularly amid rising global oil prices and tensions in West Asia.

Why is the U.S investigating India?



Why in the News?

The United States government has initiated two **Section 301 investigations** targeting India and several other economies to examine concerns related to excess industrial capacity and the use of forced labour in supply chains. The development comes amid changes in U.S. trade policy following a U.S. Supreme Court ruling that upheld the President's authority to impose tariffs under the **International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA)**.

The move reflects a broader shift toward stricter trade enforcement and strategic tariff use by the United States.

What is Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974?

Section 301 of the U.S. Trade Act of 1974 is a major trade enforcement provision that allows the U.S. government to act against unfair trade practices that harm American commerce.

Key features:

Purpose

Section 301 is intended to address foreign government policies considered:

- Unjustifiable
- Unreasonable
- Discriminatory

if they restrict U.S. trade.

Authority

It authorizes the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) to investigate foreign trade practices.

Possible actions

If violations are found, the U.S. may impose:

- Tariffs
- Trade restrictions
- Sanctions
- Withdrawal of trade concessions

Unilateral tool

Section 301 is considered a unilateral trade policy instrument because the U.S. can act independently without waiting for World Trade Organization (WTO) dispute settlement outcomes.

What are Section 301 Investigations and Why Are They Significant?

Legal basis

Section 301 empowers the U.S. Trade Representative to investigate foreign trade barriers and recommend corrective measures.

Trade enforcement mechanism

It allows the U.S. to impose retaliatory tariffs or restrictions to counter practices considered harmful to American industries.

Historical importance

The provision gained global attention during the **U.S.–China trade war (2018 onwards)** when the U.S. imposed tariffs on over **\$300 billion worth of Chinese goods** following Section 301 findings.

Strategic pressure tool

Section 301 investigations are often used as leverage to push countries to change policies relating to:

- Industrial subsidies

- Intellectual property protection
- Labour standards
- Market access barriers

Thus, it is not just a legal instrument but also a geopolitical trade strategy.

What Allegations Has the U.S. Made Against India and Other Economies?

Excess industrial capacity

The U.S. is examining whether countries maintain production capacities exceeding domestic needs, potentially allowing exports at artificially low prices (dumping).

Sectors under observation include:

- Steel
- Petrochemicals
- Heavy manufacturing
- Industrial intermediates

Forced labour concerns

The investigation also examines whether supply chains exporting to the U.S. involve:

- Labour rights violations
- Weak compliance systems
- Inadequate traceability

This reflects the growing role of ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) standards in trade.

Market distortions

The U.S. is evaluating whether:

- State subsidies
- Industrial policies
- Export incentives

distort global competition and harm American firms.

Current U.S. Tariff and Trade Policy Context

The investigations must be seen within the broader evolution of U.S. trade protection measures.

Supreme Court ruling

On February 20, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld presidential tariff authority under IEEPA, reinforcing executive flexibility in trade actions during economic emergencies.

Reciprocal tariffs

Earlier U.S. tariff adjustments reportedly reduced duties affecting Indian exports from **26% to 25% in August 2025**, reflecting ongoing negotiations.

Temporary tariff measures

The U.S. imposed a **10% temporary tariff under Section 122 of the Trade Act** for about 150 days to address trade imbalances.

Risk of escalation

The U.S. administration has indicated that further tariffs could follow depending on investigation outcomes.

Sectors and Industries Under Scrutiny

Petrochemicals and heavy industries

Industries with significant production capacity are under review due to possible global price impacts.

Steel and aluminium

These sectors already face tariffs in several markets due to overcapacity concerns globally.

Automobile components

Previous tariff actions such as **50% duties on certain auto components** have already affected exporters including India.

Textiles and apparel

Given India's strong presence in global textile exports, any tariff changes could affect competitiveness.

Significance of India–U.S. Trade Relations

Trade surplus

India recorded a **\$58 billion trade surplus with the U.S. in 2025**, highlighting the economic stakes.

Goods trade balance

India's goods trade surplus stood at about **\$42.2 billion**.

Export dependence

The U.S. remains:

- India's largest export destination for goods and services
- A key market for engineering goods, pharmaceuticals, textiles, and IT services

Strategic partnership dimension

Trade tensions exist alongside cooperation in:

- Defence technology
- Semiconductor supply chains
- Critical minerals
- Indo-Pacific strategy

This reflects the complex nature of India-U.S. relations where competition and cooperation coexist.

Response of Indian Industry

Engineering sector concerns

The Engineering Export Promotion Council of India has warned that investigations may result in tariffs after the current tariff pause ends.

Textile sector worries

The Confederation of Indian Textile Industry highlighted uncertainty caused by:

- Changing tariff regimes
- West Asian geopolitical tensions
- Supply chain disruptions

Cautious optimism

Industry bodies believe:

- Investigations usually take time
- Immediate trade disruption is unlikely
- Diplomatic negotiations may mitigate risks

Government of India's Response

Limited official statement

India has not yet issued a detailed public response, suggesting discussions may be ongoing diplomatically.

Trade negotiation linkage

The issue may become part of broader bilateral trade talks, including discussions on:

- Market access
- Digital trade
- Supply chain diversification

Diplomatic engagement

India may address concerns through:

- Bilateral trade dialogues
- WTO consultations
- Technical compliance discussions

Implications for India

Export competitiveness risks

New tariffs could affect India's competitiveness in sectors such as:

- Steel
- Engineering goods
- Textiles
- Auto components

Pressure on trade surplus

India's large trade surplus may lead to pressure from the U.S. for:

- Greater market access
- Tariff reductions
- Regulatory changes

Supply chain compliance requirements

Indian exporters may need to strengthen:

- Labour compliance systems
- Supply chain traceability
- ESG reporting
- Due diligence frameworks

Sectoral vulnerability

Export-oriented sectors most exposed include:

- Petrochemicals
- Metals
- Engineering products

- MSME manufacturing exports

MSME impact

Small exporters integrated into global value chains may face reduced orders if tariffs increase.

Negotiation leverage

The investigation could become a bargaining tool in India-U.S. trade negotiations.

Conclusion

The Section 301 investigations represent a significant development in India-U.S. trade relations, reflecting the growing use of tariffs and regulatory scrutiny as strategic economic tools. While immediate impacts may be limited, the long-term implications could influence India's export competitiveness, supply chain standards, and bilateral trade negotiations.

Polity

16th Finance Commission Boosts Urban Local Bodies



Why in the News

The **16th Finance Commission (FC)** has recommended a significant increase in financial grants for **Urban Local Bodies (ULBs)** in recognition of India's rapidly rising urban population and the growing demand for urban infrastructure and services.

Key Highlights

Higher Share for Urban Bodies

The share of local body grants allocated to urban areas has increased substantially over successive Finance Commissions:

- **16th Finance Commission:** 45% of total local body grants for urban areas
- **15th Finance Commission:** 36%
- **13th Finance Commission:** 26%

This steady rise reflects the increasing importance of urban governance and the need for stronger municipal institutions.

Sharp Rise in Funds

The **16th Finance Commission has recommended ₹3.56 lakh crore for Urban Local Bodies**, marking a major increase in fiscal transfers.

- **More than double** the allocation made by the **15th Finance Commission**
- **Nearly 15 times higher** than the grants recommended by the **13th Finance Commission**

This expansion highlights the central government's recognition of the financial pressures faced by cities as they expand in population and economic activity.

Why the Shift Toward Urban Funding?

Several structural and demographic factors have prompted the increase in urban grants:

- **Rising Urbanisation:** India's urban population is projected to reach **41% by 2031**.

- **2011 Census Data:** Around **31% of India's population lived in urban areas.**
- **Migration Trends:** Continuous migration from rural to urban areas for employment and education is accelerating city growth.
- **Urban Expansion:** Many towns are transforming into larger urban agglomerations, requiring upgraded civic infrastructure.
- **Governance Needs:** Municipal bodies require stronger financial capacity to manage sanitation, transport, housing, and public services.

Distribution Pattern of Grants

The Finance Commission has adopted a **population-based formula** to distribute grants among states. However, the increase varies widely across states.

Examples of changes in allocation:

- **Kerala:** Increase of **over 400%**
- **Maharashtra:** Increase of **over 300%**
- **Odisha:** Increase of **13%**
- **Bihar:** **Decline of 8%**

These variations arise due to differences in urban population share, fiscal capacity, and performance indicators used in the allocation formula.

Significance of the Recommendation

1. Aligning Fiscal Transfers with Demographic Trends

As urbanisation accelerates, greater fiscal support to cities ensures that resource allocation matches population distribution and economic activity.

2. Strengthening Urban Governance

Higher grants will help **municipal corporations, municipalities, and town panchayats** improve governance capacity and service delivery.

3. Infrastructure Development

Additional funding can support key urban infrastructure sectors such as:

- Public transportation
- Water supply and sanitation
- Waste management
- Affordable housing
- Climate-resilient infrastructure

4. Preparing for Future Urban Growth

With the **next Census expected in 2027**, the recommendations help prepare cities for further population growth and expanding urban boundaries.

Supreme Court to Examine Definition of “Personal Data” under DPDP Law



Why in the News

The Supreme Court of India has agreed to examine the meaning of **“personal data”** and **“public data”** under the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023 amid concerns that the law could weaken transparency provisions of the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005. The case is significant because it raises constitutional questions regarding the balance between the **right to privacy and the right to information.**

The matter is scheduled for further hearing on **23 March 2026.**

Background of the Case

The petition was filed by journalist **Geeta Seshu** along with the Software Freedom Law Center India, and was argued by senior advocate Indira Jaising.

The petition challenges certain provisions of the DPDP Act and the DPDP Rules, 2025 on the grounds that they may violate fundamental rights under Articles 14, 19 and 21 of the Constitution.

The petitioners argue that the law may:

- Restrict journalists’ access to information necessary for investigative reporting
- Allow excessive government control over personal data processing
- Dilute transparency mechanisms under the RTI Act
- Reduce accountability of public authorities

The Supreme Court issued notice to the Union Government and tagged the matter with similar petitions challenging the Act.

About the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023

The DPDP Act is India's primary legislation governing the collection, storage and processing of personal digital data.

Key features of the Act

- Defines obligations of data fiduciaries (entities processing data)
- Establishes the Data Protection Board of India
- Provides penalties for data breaches
- Grants rights to individuals over their personal data
- Allows government exemptions on grounds such as national security and public order

The DPDP Rules, 2025 notified by the government operationalised the law and laid down implementation procedures.

Major Issues Raised in the Petition

1. Restriction on RTI access

One of the main concerns relates to Section 44(3) of the DPDP Act, which amended Section 8(1)(j) of the RTI Act. Earlier, personal information could be disclosed if:

- It related to public activity
- It served public interest

The petition argues this balancing test has effectively been removed, making it easier for authorities to deny information by classifying it as personal data.

This could particularly affect:

- Investigative journalism
- Anti-corruption reporting
- Access to information about public officials

2. Lack of clear definitions

The petition points out that the law does not clearly define:

- Personal data
- Public data
- Information in the public interest

This ambiguity could allow authorities to interpret the law broadly and deny disclosure of important governance information.

The Court noted that determining whether data related to public officials can be treated as private data is a key legal question.

3. Surveillance concerns

The petition also raises concerns that the Act gives the government wide powers to collect and process data, including exemptions granted to state agencies.

Concerns include:

- Lack of strong judicial oversight
- Risk of mass data collection
- Potential misuse of surveillance powers

Petitioners argue this may violate proportionality principles developed by the Supreme Court in privacy jurisprudence.

4. Compensation concerns

Another issue relates to the removal of direct compensation for individuals affected by data breaches.

Under earlier provisions of the Information Technology Act, affected individuals could claim compensation.

Under the DPDP framework:

- Penalties are imposed on violators
- Funds go to the government or regulatory bodies
- Individuals may not receive direct financial compensation

This has raised concerns about victim protection.

Court's Observations

The Bench led by Chief Justice Surya Kant observed that:

- A balance must be maintained between privacy and transparency
- Neither right should undermine the other
- Data has become a major economic and strategic resource
- Clear legal interpretation is required to define personal and public data

The Court described data as the "real wealth" of the modern digital economy, highlighting the growing importance of data governance globally.

The Court also emphasised that:

- Privacy is a fundamental right (Puttaswamy judgment, 2017)
- RTI supports democratic accountability

- Both must coexist within a balanced legal framework

What Happens Next

The Supreme Court has asked the petitioners to frame specific legal questions for detailed examination.

The next stages may involve:

- Interpretation of key provisions of the DPDP Act
- Clarification of RTI amendments
- Determining safeguards for journalism
- Defining limits of government data powers

The next hearing is scheduled for **March 23, 2026**.

Significance of the Case

This case is important for several reasons:

Governance impact

The judgment may define:

- What data governments can withhold
- What citizens can access under RTI
- Transparency standards in digital governance

Impact on journalism

The decision may determine how journalists can access:

- Information on public officials
- Governance decisions
- Public expenditure data

Digital rights framework

The ruling may shape India's future digital rights architecture, including:

- Data protection governance
- Privacy safeguards
- State surveillance limits
- Accountability mechanisms

Global relevance

The case may also influence how India aligns with global data protection regimes such as GDPR-style privacy frameworks.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's examination of the DPDP Act represents a crucial moment in India's digital governance evolution. The case highlights the growing tension between two democratic values:

- Protection of individual privacy
- Ensuring transparency and accountability

The eventual judgment could become a landmark ruling defining how India balances **digital privacy, press freedom, and the citizen's right to information** in the data-driven era.

Supreme Court Verdict on OBC Creamy Layer Criterion



Why in the News

The Supreme Court of India recently ruled that **income alone cannot be the determining factor** for identifying the "creamy layer" among Other Backward Classes (OBCs). The Court also clarified that children of private sector and Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) employees must be treated at par with those of government employees.

The judgment was delivered by a Bench comprising Justices **P. S. Narasimha and R. Mahadevan**, and is considered significant for ensuring equality in the implementation of OBC reservation policy.

What is the Creamy Layer?

The concept of creamy layer refers to the **relatively advanced and better-off members of the OBC category** who are excluded from reservation benefits to ensure that affirmative action reaches genuinely disadvantaged groups.

Origin of the concept

The concept originated from the landmark **Indra Sawhney v. Union of India (1992)** case (also known as the Mandal Commission case), where the Supreme Court held:

- Reservation for OBCs is constitutionally valid.
- Advanced sections within OBCs must be excluded.

- Reservation should target socially and educationally backward groups.

The Court introduced the creamy layer exclusion to maintain the constitutional principle of equality.

Present Creamy Layer Criteria

Currently, the main criteria include:

Income limit

- Annual family income ceiling: ₹8 lakh
- Periodic revision recommended by the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC)

Categories excluded regardless of income

Children of the following are excluded from OBC reservation:

- Constitutional functionaries
- Group A and certain Group B officers
- High-ranking defence officers
- Professionals with high social status

This shows that **social status and occupational hierarchy** are already recognised factors beyond income.

Key Observations of the Supreme Court

1. Income cannot be the sole criterion

The Court held that creamy layer identification must consider:

- Social status
- Nature of employment
- Position held by parents
- Level of influence and social advancement

The Court emphasized that:

Reservation aims to address social backwardness, not merely economic disadvantage.

Thus, high salary alone does not automatically indicate social advancement.

2. Equality between Government and Private Sector Employees

The Court examined a **2004 government clarification** which created unequal treatment.

Earlier position

Category	Treatment of salary
Government employees	Salary not counted
PSU employees	Salary counted
Private sector employees	Salary counted

This resulted in a situation where:

- A government officer with higher salary could still get OBC benefits.
- A private employee with similar salary could be excluded.

The Court called this **“hostile discrimination.”**

Constitutional Principles Involved

The Court said the classification violated:

Article 14 – Equality before law

State cannot treat similarly placed persons differently without reasonable justification.

Article 15 – Non-discrimination

Prohibits discrimination and allows affirmative action only on rational grounds.

Article 16 – Equality in public employment

Reservation must be implemented fairly and without arbitrary exclusion.

The Court held that differential treatment based only on employment sector lacks constitutional justification.

What Changes After the Judgment?

1. Equal treatment principle

The Court directed that:

- Private sector employees
- PSU employees
- Government employees

should be treated using **similar standards**.

Assessment should focus on:

- Rank of post
- Social standing
- Nature of duties
- Decision-making authority

rather than only salary figures.

2. Relief for affected candidates

The judgment may benefit candidates who were earlier denied OBC status in:

- Civil Services Examination
- SSC exams
- Banking exams
- Other central recruitments

The Court allowed the government to:

- Create **supernumerary posts** (extra posts beyond sanctioned strength)

- Protect the interests of affected candidates

This ensures no candidate loses opportunity due to earlier incorrect interpretation.

Background of the Dispute

1993 DoPT Guidelines

Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) guidelines stated:

Income excluded:

- Salary income
- Agricultural income

Income included:

- Business income
- Professional income
- Other sources

The focus was on **status of the post**, not salary.

2004 Clarification

A later clarification changed interpretation:

- Salary of private and PSU employees counted.
- Government employee salary excluded.

This created inconsistency and led to litigation.

Why This Judgment is Important

1. Strengthens substantive equality

The ruling promotes real equality rather than formal equality by ensuring similar treatment of similarly placed persons.

2. Improves reservation targeting

The decision reinforces that reservation is meant for:

- Social backwardness
- Educational disadvantage

Not purely economic criteria.

3. Impacts future OBC policy

The judgment may influence:

- Revision of creamy layer income limit
- New criteria combining income and social indicators
- Future reservation jurisprudence

4. Administrative reforms

Government may now need to:

- Issue revised creamy layer guidelines
- Standardise criteria across sectors
- Clarify classification methods

UPSC Rule on Appointment of State DGP



Why in the News

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has revised the procedure for empanelment of State Directors-General of Police (DGPs). Under the revised framework, State governments must now approach the Supreme Court of India if there is any delay in submitting the list of eligible officers for DGP selection.

This move aims to strengthen compliance with earlier Supreme Court directives on police reforms and ensure transparency and uniformity in the appointment of the Head of Police Force (HoPF).

Key Provisions of the New Rule

1. Supreme Court Approval for Delays

If a State fails to send the list of eligible DGP-rank IPS officers to UPSC within the prescribed timeline, it must now seek permission or clarification from the Supreme Court before the UPSC can proceed with the empanelment process.

This step is intended to:

- Prevent arbitrary delays by State governments
- Ensure adherence to judicial guidelines
- Maintain transparency in senior police appointments

2. Advance Submission of Names

States are required to send proposals to UPSC **at least three months before the retirement** of the incumbent DGP.

This provision ensures:

- Smooth leadership transition
- Continuity in policing administration
- Adequate time for scrutiny of service records

3. No Appointment of “Acting DGP”

The Court has reiterated that States should not appoint Acting or interim DGPs as a routine practice. This is in line with previous judicial rulings that emphasised appointing a regular DGP through a proper selection process.

The Court earlier clarified that:

- Temporary arrangements weaken institutional independence
- Acting appointments may allow political interference
- Regular appointments ensure stability in police leadership

4. Exceptional Circumstances for Delay

Delays may only be permitted under rare and unavoidable situations such as:

- Death of the incumbent DGP
- Resignation
- Premature retirement or removal
- Unexpected administrative contingencies

Even in such cases, justification must be provided to the Supreme Court.

Background: DGP Appointment Process

The DGP selection process follows a structured mechanism:

1. The UPSC prepares a panel of **three senior IPS officers** based on:
 - Length of service
 - Service record
 - Vigilance clearance
 - Experience in policing
2. The State government selects one officer from this panel.
3. The selected officer is appointed as the **Director General of Police (Head of Police Force)**.

This process is meant to reduce arbitrariness and promote merit-based appointments.

Judicial Basis: Prakash Singh Case (2006)

These reforms originate from the landmark judgment in Prakash Singh vs Union of India.

In this case, the Supreme Court issued directives to reform India’s policing system and reduce political interference.

Major Police Reform Directives Included:

- Fixed minimum tenure of **2 years for DGPs**
- Merit-based selection process
- Establishment of State Security Commissions
- Police Establishment Boards for transfers and postings
- Separation of investigation and law-and-order functions (recommended)

The judgment remains the foundation of police reforms in India.

Reason for the Change

The revision comes after several States:

- Delayed sending proposals to UPSC
- Appointed temporary or acting DGPs
- Attempted to bypass the prescribed process

Attorney General R. Venkataramani reportedly clarified that UPSC cannot condone such delays without approval from the Supreme Court, reinforcing judicial oversight.

Significance of the New Procedure

The revised procedure is significant because it:

1. Strengthens Transparency

A uniform national procedure reduces discretion and ensures accountability in senior police appointments.

2. Promotes Police Independence

Merit-based appointments reduce political influence and help professionalise policing.

3. Ensures Judicial Compliance

The move reinforces implementation of long-pending police reforms mandated by the Supreme Court.

4. Prevents Ad-hoc Appointments

Discouraging acting DGP appointments ensures stability in leadership and better long-term planning in policing.

5. Improves Governance and Rule of Law

Stable and professional police leadership improves:

- Law enforcement efficiency
- Internal discipline
- Public trust in police institutions

Conclusion

The UPSC’s revised DGP empanelment procedure marks an important step toward enforcing long-standing police reforms in India. By mandating timely submissions and requiring Supreme Court approval for delays, the new

rules aim to ensure transparency, professionalism, and continuity in police leadership. Ultimately, these measures are expected to strengthen institutional

integrity and improve the overall effectiveness of India's policing system.

Science, Technology, Art & Culture

SC to Examine Feasibility of Mandatory NAT for Blood Transfusion



Why in the News?

The **Supreme Court of India** has agreed to examine whether **blood banks across the country should be required to conduct Nucleic Acid Testing (NAT)** for screening donated blood.

The issue has been raised in the context of ensuring **safe blood transfusions**, which petitioners argue is an essential component of the **right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution**. The Court is assessing whether making NAT testing compulsory is feasible across all states, especially in public hospitals with limited resources.

What is NAT (Nucleic Acid Test)?

Nucleic Acid Testing (NAT) is an advanced molecular diagnostic technique used to detect **viral genetic material (DNA or RNA)** in blood samples.

Key Features

- Detects the **genetic material of viruses directly**
- Used to screen donated blood for:
 - **HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus)**
 - **Hepatitis B Virus (HBV)**
 - **Hepatitis C Virus (HCV)**

- Highly sensitive and capable of identifying infections during the **“window period”**, when traditional tests may fail.

The **window period** refers to the early phase of infection when the virus is present in the body but the immune system has not yet produced detectable antibodies.

Because NAT identifies **viral RNA or DNA itself**, it can detect infections **several days earlier than conventional tests**, significantly reducing the risk of **transfusion-transmitted infections (TTIs)**.

ELISA vs NAT

Blood banks in India currently rely primarily on **ELISA (Enzyme-Linked Immunosorbent Assay)** testing. The difference between the two techniques is important for understanding the debate.

ELISA Test

- Detects **antibodies produced by the immune system** in response to infection
- **Cheaper and widely used** across blood banks in India
- Reliable in many cases but may **miss infections during the early window period**
- Requires fewer technical resources

NAT Test

- Detects **viral RNA or DNA directly**
- Allows **earlier and more accurate detection of infections**
- Significantly reduces the risk of infected blood entering the supply chain
- **More expensive** and requires specialised laboratory infrastructure

Many developed countries have already made **NAT-based blood screening mandatory** because of its higher safety standards.

Legal Dimension of the Case

The petition before the Supreme Court argues that **safe blood transfusion is a fundamental right**.

Petitioner's Argument

- Access to **safe and contamination-free blood** is part of the **right to life under Article 21**.
- Failure to adopt advanced screening technologies like NAT could **endanger patients' lives**.
- Therefore, the government has a **constitutional obligation to ensure the safest possible blood supply**.

Court's Observation

A bench headed by **Justice Surya Kant** questioned whether:

- All **state governments can afford NAT testing**
- Public hospitals, especially in rural areas, have the **infrastructure and trained personnel** to implement it

The Court is therefore examining both **public health requirements and financial feasibility**.

Background Incidents Highlighting the Issue

Several recent incidents have drawn attention to the risks associated with inadequate blood screening.

Madhya Pradesh Incident

- Cases of **HIV infection among children in Satna district** were linked to contaminated blood transfusions.
- Many affected children had received transfusions during medical treatment.

Jharkhand Case

- **Thalassemia patients** reportedly contracted infections after blood transfusions.
- Allegations suggested inadequate screening of donated blood.

These incidents triggered calls from public health experts and civil society groups for **stricter blood safety protocols**.

Public Health Context

Thalassemia and Blood Transfusion

Thalassemia is a hereditary blood disorder in which the body cannot produce sufficient healthy haemoglobin.

Key characteristics:

- Genetic disorder passed from parents to children
- Causes **severe anaemia**
- Patients often require **regular blood transfusions throughout life**

India has one of the **highest burdens of thalassemia in the world**. According to health estimates:

- Around **10,000–15,000 babies with thalassemia major are born in India every year**
- Many patients depend on **lifelong transfusion therapy**

Frequent transfusions increase the risk of **transfusion-transmitted infections**, making safe screening crucial.

Policy Issues Involved

The debate over mandatory NAT testing raises several policy challenges.

1. Cost Effectiveness

- NAT testing is **significantly more expensive than ELISA**.
- Implementing NAT nationwide could substantially increase the **cost of blood screening**.
- Government hospitals and blood banks may struggle with the additional financial burden.

2. Infrastructure Gaps

Many state-run hospitals lack:

- Advanced molecular laboratories
- Skilled technicians trained in NAT testing
- Reliable electricity and equipment maintenance

These gaps are especially prominent in **rural and remote areas**.

3. Standardisation of Blood Screening

Currently, blood screening standards **vary across states and institutions**.

Some private hospitals already use NAT testing, while many public facilities rely only on ELISA. A nationwide mandate could help:

- Establish **uniform safety standards**
- Reduce disparities between private and public healthcare systems.

4. Centre–State Coordination

Health is primarily a **State subject under the Indian Constitution**, though the Union government plays a major role in policy formulation and funding.

Implementing NAT nationwide would require:

- Coordination between the **Central government, state governments, and health institutions**
- Financial assistance for states
- Expansion of **national blood safety infrastructure**

Conclusion

The Supreme Court’s decision to examine mandatory **Nucleic Acid Testing (NAT)** reflects growing concern about **blood transfusion safety in India**.

While NAT offers **earlier detection of viral infections and significantly reduces transfusion risks**, its nationwide implementation raises questions about **cost, infrastructure, and administrative capacity**.

India Ranks Second Globally in Childhood Obesity



Why in the News

The **World Obesity Atlas 2026**, released by the World Obesity Federation on **World Obesity Day (4 March 2026)**, highlights the growing burden of childhood obesity globally. The report states that India ranks **second in the world after China** in terms of the number of children living with overweight and obesity, raising serious public health concerns.

The findings are important as childhood obesity is increasingly linked with early onset of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes and cardiovascular disorders.

Key Findings of the Report

1. Scale of Childhood Obesity in India (2025 estimates)

The report provides alarming estimates regarding the number of children affected by high Body Mass Index (BMI):

- Children aged **5–9 years**: about **14.9 million**
- Adolescents aged **10–19 years**: about **26.4 million**
- Total children (5–19 years): about **41 million**

Among these, nearly **14 million children are living with obesity**, while the remaining are classified as overweight.

2. India’s Global Position

Countries with the highest number of children with high BMI:

- China – about **62 million**
- India – about **41 million**
- United States – about **27 million**

Thus, India ranks second globally in absolute numbers of affected children.

3. Future Projections

The report projects worsening trends if corrective measures are not taken:

- By **2040**, about **20 million Indian children may be obese**
- Around **56 million may be overweight or obese**
- Globally, about **507 million children** could be overweight or obese by 2040

This indicates that childhood obesity is becoming one of the fastest-growing health challenges worldwide.

Global Trend

The report highlights a rapid rise in childhood obesity across the world:

- **20.7% of children (5–19 years)** are overweight or obese globally.
- This has increased from **14.6% in 2010**.
- Obesity among school-age children has increased significantly over the last few decades, especially in low- and middle-income countries.

This trend shows a shift in global malnutrition patterns— from undernutrition to overnutrition.

Major Risk Factors Identified in India

The report identifies multiple behavioural, nutritional and systemic causes behind the rise in childhood obesity.

1. Low Physical Activity

- About **74% of adolescents (11–17 years)** in India do not meet recommended physical activity levels.
- Increasing screen time and sedentary lifestyles are major contributors.

2. Poor Dietary Habits

Major dietary risks include:

- Rising consumption of ultra-processed foods
- Sugary beverages and junk food
- High calorie but low nutrient diets

Urbanisation and lifestyle changes have accelerated this nutrition transition.

3. Inadequate School Nutrition

- Only about **35.5% of school-age children receive school meals**.
- Lack of balanced nutrition programmes increases obesity risk.

4. Sub-optimal Breastfeeding

- Around **32.6% of infants (1–5 months)** do not receive optimal breastfeeding.
- Early nutrition significantly influences long-term metabolic health.

5. Intergenerational Factors

Other contributing factors include:

- Maternal obesity
- Poor prenatal nutrition
- Gestational diabetes
- Urban lifestyle patterns

Health Risks Linked to High BMI

The report warns that rising childhood obesity may lead to increased incidence of metabolic disorders by 2040.

Major health risks include:

- Hypertension
- Hyperglycaemia
- High triglycerides
- Metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD)
- Type-2 diabetes
- Cardiovascular diseases

These conditions increase the long-term healthcare burden and reduce productivity.

Economic and Social Implications

Childhood obesity may also lead to:

- Increased healthcare expenditure
- Reduced workforce productivity
- Higher burden of non-communicable diseases
- Psychological issues such as low self-esteem

Experts warn that without intervention, obesity could become a major developmental challenge.

Recommended Policy Actions

The World Obesity Federation recommends several policy interventions:

1. Fiscal Measures

- Taxation on sugar-sweetened beverages
- Regulation of ultra-processed foods

2. Food Environment Regulation

- Restrict junk-food advertising targeting children
- Front-of-pack nutrition labelling
- Healthy food environments near schools

3. School-based Interventions

- Nutritious school meals
- Mandatory physical activity programmes
- Nutrition awareness education

4. Health System Measures

- Strengthening early screening programmes
- Promoting breastfeeding
- Expanding preventive healthcare

5. Behavioural Interventions

- Promoting sports and outdoor activities
- Reducing screen time
- Encouraging balanced diets

Government Efforts in India (Contextual Add-on)

India has already taken steps such as:

- POSHAN Abhiyaan (nutrition mission)
- Mid-Day Meal Scheme (PM POSHAN)
- Fit India Movement
- Eat Right India campaign by FSSAI

However, experts stress the need for stronger regulatory and preventive policies.

HPV Vaccine Policy: India-made Cervavac Yet to Enter National Programme



Why in the News

India has started a **large-scale Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination campaign** targeting adolescent girls using **Gardasil**, while the indigenous vaccine **Cervavac** has not yet been included in the Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP) due to ongoing research on its single-dose effectiveness.

HPV Vaccine Campaign in India

The Government of India is preparing a major public health initiative to reduce cervical cancer burden through preventive vaccination.

Key highlights of the campaign:

- Target group: **1.15 crore girls aged around 9–14 years (initial phase focuses on 14-year-olds).**
- Vaccine currently used: **Gardasil-4** developed by **Merck & Co.**
- Financial support: **Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance** is supporting vaccine procurement.
- Goal: Reduce cervical cancer incidence through early immunisation before exposure to HPV.

This campaign reflects India's growing focus on **preventive healthcare** and aligns with WHO's global strategy to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health problem by 2030.

About the Indigenous Vaccine: Cervavac

Cervavac is India's first domestically developed HPV vaccine and is considered a major step toward affordable cancer prevention.

Developed through collaboration between:

- Department of Biotechnology
- Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC)

- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- Serum Institute of India

Key features:

- Launched in **2022**.
- Targets major cancer-causing HPV strains (including HPV-16 and HPV-18).
- Expected government procurement cost: **₹200–400 per dose** (significantly cheaper than imported vaccines which may cost ₹2,000–₹3,500 in the private market).
- Designed to improve affordability and self-reliance under India's biotechnology mission.

Why Cervavac is Not Yet Included

Despite its advantages, Cervavac is not yet part of the national programme due to scientific and regulatory reasons.

1. Ongoing ICMR Study

The **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** is conducting studies to determine whether a **single dose of Cervavac provides durable immunity**.

- Focus: Antibody persistence and long-term protection.
- Expected completion: Around **2027**.
- Policy inclusion may depend on these results.

2. WHO Policy and Prequalification

The **World Health Organization** updated its HPV vaccine recommendations in 2022 to allow:

- Single-dose schedules
- Two-dose schedules
- Extended schedules depending on country strategy

Currently:

- Gardasil has WHO prequalification for flexible dosing strategies.
- Cervavac is still progressing through evaluation for similar recognition.

3. Availability of Gavi-Supported Vaccines

India has access to limited subsidised vaccine supplies through Gavi support, making Gardasil a practical short-term choice until domestic data becomes available.

Two-Dose vs Single-Dose Debate

HPV vaccination strategy is evolving globally.

Earlier recommendation:

- **2 doses** for girls aged 9–15 years (gap of 6 months).

New WHO guidance (2022):

- **Single-dose vaccination acceptable** for public programmes.
- Especially useful for low- and middle-income countries.

Advantages of single-dose strategy:

- Lower programme cost.
- Easier logistics.
- Higher coverage.
- Reduces drop-out between doses.
- Faster population-level protection.

This debate is crucial for India because a single-dose indigenous vaccine could dramatically reduce programme costs.

Burden of Cervical Cancer in India

Cervical cancer remains a major public health challenge.

Key statistics:

- **Second most common cancer among Indian women.**
- Around **80,000 new cases annually.**
- Approximately **42,000 deaths every year.**
- India accounts for nearly **one-fifth of global cervical cancer cases.**

Risk factors include:

- Persistent HPV infection.
- Early marriage and early pregnancy.
- Limited screening access.
- Poor awareness in rural areas.

HPV vaccination combined with screening can prevent most cases.

About HPV (Human Papillomavirus)

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is a group of more than 200 related viruses.

Key facts:

- Spread mainly through sexual contact.
- Most infections are asymptomatic and resolve naturally.
- High-risk strains like **HPV-16 and HPV-18 cause about 70% of cervical cancers.**

• Also linked to:

- Anal cancer
- Oropharyngeal cancer
- Genital warts (low-risk strains)

Prevention methods:

- HPV vaccination.
- Cervical screening (Pap smear, HPV DNA test).
- Awareness and reproductive health education.

Conclusion

India’s HPV vaccination campaign marks an important step toward reducing cervical cancer through preventive healthcare. While Gardasil is being used initially due to availability and WHO recognition, the inclusion of Cervavac could significantly reduce programme costs once scientific evidence confirms its single-dose effectiveness. The success of this initiative could play a crucial role in improving women’s health outcomes and reducing cancer mortality in India.

NavIC (Navigation with Indian Constellation)



Why in the News?

India’s indigenous satellite navigation system **NavIC (Navigation with Indian Constellation)** has suffered a setback after the failure of the last operational atomic clock onboard the **IRNSS-1F satellite in March 2026**. This has reduced the number of fully operational navigation satellites below the minimum requirement, potentially affecting the accuracy and reliability of positioning services.

This development is important because NavIC is a strategic technology meant to reduce India’s dependence on foreign navigation systems such as GPS.

What is NavIC?

NavIC is India's regional satellite navigation system developed by the **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** to provide accurate positioning services over India and surrounding regions.

Key Features

- Developed by ISRO as part of the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS).
- Provides **Position, Navigation and Timing (PNT)** services.
- Covers India and about **1500 km beyond its borders**.
- Offers two services:
 - **Standard Positioning Service (SPS)** – for civilian users.
 - **Restricted Service (RS)** – encrypted service for defence and strategic users.
- Designed constellation: **7 core satellites** (3 geostationary + 4 geosynchronous) plus replacement satellites.

NavIC is comparable to global systems such as:

- US GPS
- Russia's GLONASS
- Europe's Galileo
- China's BeiDou

However, NavIC is a **regional system** focused on India's strategic needs.

Role of Atomic Clocks in Navigation

Atomic clocks are the most critical component of any satellite navigation system.

Why atomic clocks are important:

- Navigation satellites send signals containing **precise timestamps**.
- Receivers calculate position by measuring the **time delay** between signals from multiple satellites.
- Since radio signals travel at the speed of light, even a tiny time error can cause major location errors.

For example:

- An error of **1 microsecond** can cause a location error of about **300 metres**.

Thus:

Clock failure → Timing error → Navigation error → Reduced reliability

What Exactly Has Happened?

Recent developments show a gradual weakening of the original NavIC constellation:

- The **last functional atomic clock of IRNSS-1F failed in March 2026**.
- Several earlier IRNSS satellites had already experienced clock failures.
- Many first-generation NavIC satellites have crossed their **10-year design life**.

Present situation (2026):

- Only about **3 satellites fully usable** for accurate navigation signals.
- At least **4 satellites are required** for reliable 3D positioning.
- Reduced redundancy affects accuracy and continuity of services.

Why This is a Major Concern

1. Weakening of India's GPS Alternative

NavIC was designed to ensure **strategic autonomy** in navigation services. Weak satellite availability may temporarily increase reliance on foreign systems.

2. Strategic and Security Risks

Navigation systems are critical in modern warfare for:

- Missile guidance
- Drone navigation
- Naval operations
- Aircraft movement
- Network-centric warfare

In times of conflict, access to foreign navigation systems could be degraded or denied. A weakened NavIC may therefore affect strategic preparedness.

3. Impact on Civilian Applications

NavIC is increasingly integrated into civilian infrastructure such as:

Transport sector

- Vehicle tracking systems
- Fleet logistics
- Maritime navigation

- Aviation support

Disaster management

- Search and rescue operations
- Cyclone tracking support
- Emergency response coordination

Critical timing infrastructure

- Banking networks
- Telecom synchronisation
- Power grid timing systems

Any reduction in accuracy may affect these applications.

Causes Behind the Problem

1. Dependence on Imported Atomic Clocks

Earlier IRNSS satellites used rubidium atomic clocks procured from foreign suppliers. Some of these clocks failed prematurely, highlighting technology dependence.

2. Ageing Satellite Fleet

Most first-generation NavIC satellites were launched between **2013–2018**, and several have exceeded or are nearing their operational life.

3. Technical Failures in Earlier Satellites

Previous missions like IRNSS-1A also faced atomic clock failures, reducing constellation redundancy.

4. Limited Backup Satellites

Replacement launches did not fully compensate for failures due to delays and technical challenges.

Steps Taken by India

1. Development of Indigenous Atomic Clocks

ISRO has developed **indigenous rubidium atomic clocks** to reduce import dependence.

Example:

- **NVS-01 satellite (launched in 2023)** carries an indigenous atomic clock.
- Represents a major technological milestone for India.

2. Launch of Second-Generation NavIC Satellites

ISRO is deploying **NVS series satellites** to replace ageing IRNSS satellites.

Features of second-generation satellites:

- Indigenous atomic clocks
- Improved navigation payloads
- Better signal accuracy

- Use of L1 band signals (compatible with mass-market devices)

3. Planned Replacement Launches

ISRO plans to launch **at least three additional replacement satellites by 2026–27** to restore constellation strength.

4. Expansion into Civilian Ecosystem

Government has mandated NavIC support in:

- Vehicle tracking systems
- Fishermen navigation devices
- Smartphones (selected chipsets now support NavIC)

Way Forward

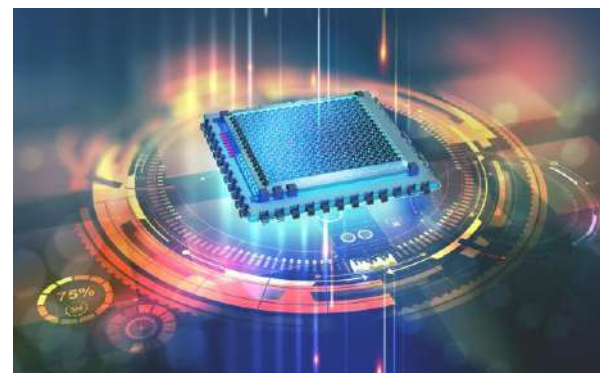
Experts suggest several measures to strengthen NavIC:

- Faster deployment of replacement satellites.
- Building redundancy with additional satellites.
- Improving reliability testing of atomic clocks.
- Promoting domestic semiconductor and timing technologies.
- Integrating NavIC with multi-constellation receivers for resilience.
- Expanding global coverage in the long term.

Conclusion

The failure of atomic clocks on NavIC satellites highlights the technological and operational challenges involved in maintaining an independent navigation system. While the temporary reduction in operational satellites is a concern, India's move toward **indigenous atomic clocks and second-generation NavIC satellites** shows progress toward technological self-reliance.

National Quantum Mission: Govt Clears 23 Institutions for Quantum Labs



Why in the News?

The Government of India has approved **23 institutions** to establish **quantum teaching laboratories** under the **National Quantum Mission (NQM)**, while nearly **100 additional proposals are under evaluation**. This step is aimed at strengthening India's quantum research ecosystem and building a skilled workforce in next-generation technologies.

About the National Quantum Mission (NQM)

The **National Quantum Mission (NQM)** was approved by the Union Cabinet in **2023** with a financial outlay of **₹6003.65 crore** for the period **2023–2031**.

Major Goals:

- Make India a global leader in quantum technologies.
- Build indigenous capabilities in quantum computing, communication, sensing, and materials.
- Develop a strong research and innovation ecosystem.
- Create a skilled quantum workforce.

The mission is similar in intent to quantum initiatives launched by major technological powers such as the US National Quantum Initiative and China's quantum research programmes.

Key Objectives of the National Quantum Mission**1. Quantum Computing**

The mission aims to develop quantum computers with **50 to 1000 qubits** over the next decade.

- Qubits (quantum bits) are the basic units of quantum computers.
- Unlike classical bits (0 or 1), qubits can exist in **superposition** (both states simultaneously).
- Higher qubits mean:
 - Greater computational capacity
 - Ability to solve complex problems
 - Faster processing of large datasets

Potential applications:

- Drug discovery
- Climate modelling
- Cryptography
- Financial modelling

- Artificial intelligence

2. Quantum Communication

The mission aims to develop **secure quantum communication networks**, including satellite-based systems.

Key focus areas:

- Quantum Key Distribution (QKD)
- Long-distance secure communication
- Quantum networks between cities

Importance:

Quantum communication is considered **virtually hack-proof** because any attempt to intercept quantum data changes its state and can be detected.

Applications:

- Military communication
- Government data protection
- Banking security
- Critical infrastructure protection

3. Quantum Sensing and Quantum Materials

The mission also focuses on developing:

Quantum sensing technologies

- Ultra-precise navigation systems
- Gravity sensors
- Magnetic field sensors
- Timing devices

Applications:

- Defence surveillance
- Submarine detection
- Geological exploration
- Navigation without GPS

Quantum materials

- Superconductors
- Photonic materials
- Advanced semiconductors

These materials are essential for building quantum devices.

What are Quantum Teaching Laboratories?

Quantum teaching labs are specialised **academic research and training facilities** to promote quantum education and experimentation.

Their main functions include:

- Training students in quantum computing and communication.
- Providing access to experimental setups.
- Developing practical quantum engineering skills.
- Promoting interdisciplinary research (physics, computer science, electronics, mathematics).

Focus Areas:

- Quantum algorithms
- Quantum cryptography
- Quantum hardware basics
- Quantum simulations

These labs aim to bridge the **quantum skills gap** in India.

Significance of Setting up Quantum Labs

1. Capacity Building

India currently faces a shortage of trained quantum scientists and engineers.

Quantum labs will:

- Create a talent pipeline.
- Strengthen university research capacity.
- Promote innovation culture.
- Encourage industry–academia collaboration.

This is critical because human capital is the foundation of emerging technology leadership.

2. Strengthening India’s R&D Ecosystem

Quantum labs will:

- Improve research infrastructure.
- Promote indigenous technology development.
- Reduce dependence on foreign technologies.
- Support startup ecosystems.

This aligns with initiatives like:

- Digital India
- Make in India
- Atmanirbhar Bharat

3. Strategic Importance

Quantum technologies are considered **strategic technologies** because of their defence and cybersecurity applications.

Key strategic uses:

- Secure military communication.
- Anti-jamming navigation systems.
- Intelligence encryption.
- Advanced sensing for surveillance.

Countries such as the **United States and China** are investing heavily in quantum supremacy. India’s investments aim to ensure it does not fall behind in this technological race.

4. Economic Potential

Quantum technology is expected to drive the **next wave of technological transformation**.

Global estimates suggest quantum technologies could contribute billions of dollars to the global economy through:

- Advanced computing services
- Secure communications markets
- Quantum software development
- New materials industries

For India, this could:

- Boost deep-tech startups.
- Create high-skill jobs.
- Drive innovation-led economic growth.
- Strengthen the semiconductor ecosystem.

Challenges India May Face

Despite progress, some challenges remain:

- Shortage of trained quantum researchers.
- Limited fabrication infrastructure.
- High cost of quantum hardware.
- Need for stronger industry participation.
- Global competition in quantum patents.

Addressing these will require long-term funding and policy continuity.

Way Forward

To maximise benefits, India may need to:

- Expand quantum education programmes.
- Encourage private sector participation.
- Promote international collaborations.
- Support quantum startups.
- Integrate quantum research with national security planning.

Conclusion

The approval of quantum teaching laboratories under the National Quantum Mission marks an important step toward building India’s capabilities in a technology that could redefine computing, communication, and security. By investing in infrastructure, research, and human

capital, India is positioning itself to become a significant player in the emerging global quantum technology landscape.

India's Nuclear Energy Mission



Why in the News

The Government of India has accelerated the **Nuclear Energy Mission** with a budget allocation of **₹20,000 crore in Union Budget 2026** to promote the development of **Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)** and strengthen India's long-term nuclear power capacity. The mission aligns with India's clean energy transition goals and the target of achieving **100 GW of nuclear power capacity in the long term**, supporting energy security and net-zero commitments.

India currently has about **8.2 GW of installed nuclear power capacity (2025–26)** and aims to significantly expand this as part of its strategy to diversify the energy mix and reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

Budget Allocation and Focus Areas

The ₹20,000 crore allocation is aimed at building domestic capability across the SMR value chain. The major focus areas include:

- **Research and innovation** in advanced nuclear technologies
- **Design and engineering** of compact and modular reactors
- **Indigenous manufacturing capability**
- **Prototype development and testing**
- **Commercial deployment of SMRs**
- **Public-private partnerships in nuclear technology**

The initiative also supports India's broader goals of:

- Net Zero emissions target by **2070**
- Expansion of non-fossil fuel electricity capacity
- Clean baseload power generation
- Hydrogen economy development

Key Institutions Involved

The Nuclear Energy Mission is being implemented through India's premier nuclear institutions:

Department of Atomic Energy (DAE)

- Apex body responsible for nuclear policy and research
- Oversees nuclear energy development and strategic programmes

Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC)

- India's premier nuclear research institution
- Responsible for reactor design and advanced technology development
- Leading SMR research and innovation

Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL)

- Public sector enterprise responsible for nuclear power generation
- Handles construction, commissioning, and operation of reactors
- Key agency for SMR deployment

These institutions are also expected to collaborate with Indian industry under the **Atmanirbhar Bharat** initiative.

What are Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)?

SMRs are **next-generation nuclear reactors** that are smaller, safer, and more flexible than conventional nuclear power plants.

Key Features of SMRs:

- Power capacity typically below **300 MW**
- Modular factory-based construction
- Faster installation compared to large reactors
- Enhanced passive safety systems
- Lower capital investment risk
- Suitable for remote and industrial locations
- Can support hydrogen production and desalination

Advantages over conventional reactors:

- Shorter construction time (3–6 years)
- Reduced land requirement

- Lower cooling water requirements
- Scalability (multiple units can be added gradually)
- Improved safety due to passive cooling systems

SMRs are being actively pursued globally by countries such as the US, Canada, Russia, and China as part of clean energy transitions.

Types of SMRs Being Developed in India

1. BSMR-200 (Bharat Small Modular Reactor)

Capacity: About 220 MWe

Developed by: BARC and NPCIL

Type: Pressurised Heavy Water Reactor (PHWR) based SMR

Construction timeline: Approximately 60–72 months

Key Features:

- Based on India's proven PHWR technology
- Uses natural uranium fuel
- High indigenous technology content
- Designed for industrial captive power use
- Enhanced passive safety systems

The Bharat SMR is expected to be the backbone of India's SMR programme due to its compatibility with existing nuclear expertise.

2. SMR-55

Capacity: Around 55 MWe

Key Objectives:

- Suitable for smaller grids
- Can provide power to remote regions
- Potential use in island territories and defence installations
- Demonstration of modular nuclear technology

This reactor category focuses on decentralised power generation.

3. HTGCR (High Temperature Gas-Cooled Reactor)

Capacity: Up to 5 MW thermal (MWth)

Key Features:

- High temperature output (useful for industrial processes)
- Gas-cooled reactor design
- Advanced fuel technology
- Very high safety margins

Major Uses:

- **Hydrogen production**
- Industrial heat applications
- Research purposes
- Future clean fuel economy

HTGCR technology is important because it connects nuclear power with India's **National Green Hydrogen Mission**.

Strategic Importance of SMRs for India

SMRs are becoming important for India due to multiple strategic advantages:

Energy Security

- Provides reliable baseload power
- Reduces coal dependence
- Supports growing electricity demand

Climate Commitments

- Helps reduce carbon emissions
- Supports clean energy transition
- Complements solar and wind energy (which are intermittent)

Industrial Applications

SMRs can power:

- Steel plants
- Refineries
- Fertiliser plants
- Hydrogen production units
- Data centres

Economic Benefits

- Promotes indigenous manufacturing
- Creates high-skill employment
- Encourages private sector participation
- Strengthens nuclear supply chains

Strategic Technology Leadership

SMR development places India among countries developing advanced nuclear technologies.

Challenges in SMR Development

Despite the potential, several challenges remain:

- High initial technology development cost
- Need for regulatory framework for SMRs
- Private sector participation limitations due to Atomic Energy Act
- Public concerns about nuclear safety
- Waste management challenges

The government is expected to introduce regulatory reforms and new partnership models to address these issues.

Way Forward

India’s Nuclear Energy Mission is expected to focus on:

- Demonstration SMR projects by early 2030s
- Policy reforms for private participation
- Export potential of Indian SMR technology
- Integration with hydrogen production
- Development of advanced fuels
- International cooperation in nuclear technology

If successfully implemented, SMRs could become a major pillar of India’s clean energy transition alongside solar, wind, and hydro power.

Conclusion

The ₹20,000 crore Nuclear Energy Mission marks a major push toward next-generation nuclear power in India. By focusing on Small Modular Reactors, India aims to achieve cleaner energy, technological self-reliance, and long-term energy security. With strong institutional support and indigenous technology development, SMRs could play a transformative role in achieving India’s future energy and climate goals.

Antibiotic Resistance Fuels 87 Percent of India’s Typhoid Economic Burden



Why in News

A 2026 study published in *The Lancet Regional Health – Southeast Asia* found that **antibiotic-resistant typhoid accounted for about 87% of India’s total typhoid economic burden in 2023**, highlighting the growing threat of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in public health. The study estimated that India recorded about **4.9 million typhoid cases and nearly 7,850 deaths in 2023**,

showing that the disease continues to be a major health challenge despite improvements in treatment and sanitation.

Key Findings of the Study

Economic burden

- Total economic burden: **₹123 billion**
- Share of antibiotic-resistant typhoid: **87%**
- Household expenditure share: **91%**
- Around **70,000 families** faced **catastrophic health expenditure**
- Children under 10 years contributed to **over 50% of total costs**

Disease burden

- Estimated cases: **4.9 million (49 lakh)**
- Estimated deaths: about **7,850**
- Hospitalisations: about **7.3 lakh**
- Resistant infections responsible for most hospitalisations

Age vulnerability

- Children aged **5–9 years** showed highest infection rates
- Children below **5 years** had highest hospitalisation and mortality risks

These findings highlight that typhoid is not just a health issue but also a major **economic and social burden**, especially for poorer households.

High Burden States

Five states accounted for about **51% of India’s total typhoid burden**:

- Maharashtra
- Uttar Pradesh
- Andhra Pradesh (including Telangana in earlier data grouping)
- Tamil Nadu
- West Bengal

These states have high population density, urban slums, and sanitation challenges, which increase transmission risk.

What is Typhoid?

Typhoid is a **life-threatening bacterial infection** caused by *Salmonella enterica* serotype Typhi.

Key features

- Type: Bacterial infectious disease
- Transmission: Fecal-oral route
- Spread through:
 - Contaminated water
 - Contaminated food
 - Poor hygiene practices

Symptoms

- Prolonged high fever
- Weakness and fatigue
- Abdominal pain
- Headache
- Loss of appetite
- Sometimes intestinal complications

If untreated, it can lead to serious complications such as intestinal perforation and sepsis.

What is Antibiotic Resistance?

Antibiotic resistance occurs when bacteria evolve mechanisms to survive drugs designed to kill them.

Causes

- Overuse of antibiotics
- Self-medication
- Incomplete treatment courses
- Misuse in livestock and agriculture
- Poor infection control

Consequences

- Reduced effectiveness of medicines
- Longer treatment duration
- Higher treatment costs
- Increased mortality risk
- Greater pressure on health systems

Typhoid has shown increasing resistance particularly to **fluoroquinolones**, which were once first-line treatments.

Why Antibiotic-Resistant Typhoid is a Major Concern

1. Economic impact

Resistant infections require:

- Costlier medicines
- Longer hospital stays
- Additional diagnostics

This increases financial burden on families.

2. Public health threat

Antimicrobial resistance is considered one of the **top global health threats** by international health agencies.

3. Inequality impact

The study shows households bear most costs, indicating:

- Weak insurance coverage
- High out-of-pocket spending
- Vulnerability of poor families

4. Child health concern

Higher burden among children affects:

- Nutrition
- School attendance
- Long-term human capital

Reasons for High Typhoid Burden in India

Structural factors

- Poor sanitation infrastructure
- Unsafe drinking water
- Rapid urbanisation
- Informal settlements

Health system factors

- Over-the-counter antibiotic access
- Limited diagnostic testing
- Delayed treatment

Behavioural factors

- Poor hand hygiene
- Unsafe street food consumption
- Lack of awareness

Government Initiatives to Address Typhoid

1. Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP)

Government is expanding coverage of **Typhoid Conjugate Vaccine (TCV)** based on expert recommendations.

2. National Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance (NAP-AMR)

Focus areas:

- Rational antibiotic use
- Surveillance systems
- Infection prevention
- Research promotion

3. Jal Jeevan Mission

Objective:

- Provide safe tap water to rural households
- Reduce water-borne diseases including typhoid

4. Swachh Bharat Mission

Focus on:

- Sanitation coverage
- Toilet construction
- Behavioural change

5. AMR Surveillance Network (ICMR)

Tracks resistance patterns to guide treatment protocols.

Prevention Strategies

Individual level

- Handwashing with soap
- Drinking boiled or filtered water
- Avoiding unsafe food
- Vaccination

Community level

- Waste management
- Safe sewage systems
- Food safety enforcement

Policy level

- Antibiotic stewardship programmes
- Regulation of drug sales
- Expansion of vaccination

Way Forward

Experts suggest a multi-pronged strategy:

Health measures

- Expand typhoid vaccination coverage
- Strengthen primary healthcare
- Promote early diagnosis

AMR control

- Strict antibiotic prescription norms
- Public awareness campaigns
- Surveillance expansion

Infrastructure measures

- Safe drinking water access
- Urban sanitation reforms
- Slum health interventions

Financial protection

- Expand health insurance coverage
- Reduce out-of-pocket expenditure

Conclusion

The study highlights that antibiotic-resistant typhoid is emerging as both a **public health crisis and an economic challenge** in India. Controlling it requires improvements in **sanitation, vaccination, antibiotic stewardship, and healthcare access**. Without strong interventions, antimicrobial resistance could make common infections increasingly difficult and expensive to treat.

Security Issues

Vayu Shakti 2026 Exercise



Why in the News

The **President of India, Droupadi Murmu**, witnessed the **Vayu Shakti 2026** exercise conducted by the Indian Air Force at the Pokhran Firing Range. The exercise

showcased the Air Force’s operational readiness and precision strike capabilities in a simulated combat environment.

About Vayu Shakti

Vayu Shakti is a major firepower demonstration exercise conducted periodically by the **Indian Air Force (IAF)** to exhibit its combat capabilities and technological advancements.

Key Features

- **Conducted by:** Indian Air Force
- **Venue:** Pokhran Firing Range
- **Nature of Exercise:** Live firepower demonstration
- **Participants:** Multiple frontline fighter aircraft, helicopters, transport aircraft, and ground-based air defence systems

The Pokhran range is one of India's largest testing and training ranges, suitable for large-scale aerial and ground combat simulations.

Objectives of the Exercise

1. Demonstrate Precision Strike Capability

Aircraft perform precision bombing using guided and unguided weapons to destroy simulated enemy targets.

2. Showcase Integrated Combat Operations

The exercise simulates a **theatre-level combat environment**, integrating fighters, helicopters, transport aircraft, drones, and ground-based air defence systems.

3. Validate Operational Readiness

It tests the preparedness of the IAF to respond to diverse threats across different operational scenarios.

4. Display Indigenous Defence Capabilities

The exercise often highlights the use of **indigenously developed weapons systems, sensors, and platforms**, supporting India's defence self-reliance goals.

Types of Operations Demonstrated

During **Vayu Shakti 2026**, the IAF demonstrated several combat operations, including:

- **Air-to-ground precision strikes**
- **Air-to-air missile engagements**
- **Suppression of enemy air defences**
- **Close air support for ground forces**
- **Night and day combat operations**
- **Special operations and logistics support**

Frontline fighter aircraft such as **Sukhoi-30 MKI, Rafale, Mirage-2000, Jaguar, and Tejas** typically participate in such demonstrations along with attack helicopters like **Apache and Rudra**.

Strategic Significance

1. Strengthening Deterrence

The exercise signals India's capability to carry out **rapid and precise air strikes** against hostile targets.

2. Enhancing Joint Warfare Capability

Integrated operations help improve coordination between different arms of the armed forces.

3. Training and Evaluation

It provides an opportunity to evaluate tactics, weapon

systems, and pilot proficiency under realistic combat conditions.

4. Public and Strategic Signalling

By inviting national leaders and observers, the exercise highlights India's evolving air power and technological progress.

U.N. Nuclear Watchdog Holds Emergency Meet in Vienna



Why in the News?

The **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)** convened an emergency meeting of its Board of Governors in Vienna on **2 March 2026** following escalating tensions in West Asia after coordinated **U.S.–Israeli military strikes on Iran**. The meeting was held amid global concerns about the safety of Iran's nuclear facilities and the possibility of radiological risks due to military operations near sensitive nuclear infrastructure. The emergency session was requested to assess nuclear safety risks, evaluate the status of Iranian nuclear installations, and prevent any nuclear accident that could threaten regional and global security.

About the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is an autonomous international organization established in **1957** following U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower's *Atoms for Peace* initiative.

Key facts about IAEA:

- **Headquarters:** Vienna, Austria
- **Members:** Over 175 countries

- **Parent body:** Works under the UN system but operates independently
- **Director General:** Rafael Mariano Grossi
- **Core mandate:** Promote peaceful use of nuclear energy and prevent military use of nuclear technology

Major objectives:

- Promote peaceful nuclear technology
- Prevent nuclear weapons proliferation
- Ensure nuclear safety and security
- Conduct nuclear inspections (Safeguards)
- Support nuclear science applications in health, agriculture and energy

The agency plays a critical role in monitoring nuclear programmes worldwide, especially in politically sensitive regions such as Iran and North Korea.

What the IAEA Said

IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi stated during the emergency session that:

- There was **no immediate evidence of damage** to Iran's nuclear facilities.
- No abnormal increase in radiation levels had been detected.
- The agency activated its emergency monitoring systems.
- Communication with Iranian nuclear regulators had been temporarily disrupted.

Facilities specifically mentioned include:

- Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant
- Tehran Research Reactor
- Nuclear fuel cycle facilities

The agency also stated that radiation monitoring networks in the region did not detect any unusual activity following the strikes.

However, the IAEA warned that attacks near nuclear facilities always carry serious risks and called for **maximum military restraint** to avoid a nuclear safety incident.

Concerns Raised by the IAEA

Despite no confirmed damage, the agency highlighted several concerns:

Nuclear safety risks

Military strikes near nuclear installations could trigger:

- Radioactive leaks
- Nuclear accidents
- Environmental contamination
- Civilian displacement

IAEA noted that even without direct hits, nearby explosions could damage support systems such as electricity supply and cooling mechanisms.

Monitoring challenges

The agency also noted:

- Limited inspector access to some facilities
- Reliance on satellite imagery
- Disruption in verification continuity

This creates uncertainty regarding Iran's enriched uranium stockpile and nuclear activities.

Iran's Position

Iran's representative to the IAEA claimed that the **Natanz uranium enrichment facility** had been targeted in the attacks, although no independent public evidence has confirmed this claim.

Iran has also previously reduced cooperation with IAEA inspections following earlier foreign strikes on its nuclear infrastructure.

Iran may use the situation to justify:

- Limiting IAEA inspections
- Expanding uranium enrichment
- Strengthening its nuclear deterrence narrative
- Framing actions as self-defence under international law

At the same time, Iran maintains that its nuclear programme is meant for peaceful purposes.

Background: Iran's Nuclear Programme

Iran's nuclear programme has long been a source of international concern due to uranium enrichment activities.

Key facts:

- Iran possesses uranium enriched up to **60% purity** (close to weapons grade of 90%)
- The IAEA estimates hundreds of kilograms of enriched uranium remain under monitoring concerns

- Iran operates multiple enrichment sites including Natanz and Fordow

Although this level of enrichment raises proliferation concerns, the IAEA continues to state that it has **no confirmed evidence of an active nuclear weapons programme.**

Strategic Significance of the Emergency Meeting

The emergency meeting highlights several important global security concerns:

1. Nuclear non-proliferation

The situation tests the global nuclear safeguards regime and the effectiveness of IAEA monitoring.

2. Regional stability

Any nuclear incident could destabilise the entire West Asian region.

3. Global energy security

Escalation involving Iran could disrupt oil routes such as the Strait of Hormuz.

4. International diplomacy

The situation may affect nuclear negotiations and sanctions regimes involving Iran.

Way Forward

The IAEA has emphasised the following priorities:

- Restoration of communication with Iranian authorities
- Continued monitoring of nuclear facilities
- Ensuring inspector access
- Diplomatic de-escalation
- Protection of nuclear infrastructure during conflicts

The agency has reiterated that **nuclear facilities must never be targeted during military conflicts** due to the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences.

Overall Significance

The IAEA’s emergency meeting reflects the growing intersection between geopolitical conflicts and nuclear safety concerns. While no immediate nuclear damage has been confirmed, the situation highlights the fragile nature of nuclear security during armed conflicts.

Sinking of Iranian Warship: Maritime Law Governing Naval Conflict



Why in the News

An Iranian warship **IRIS Dena** was reportedly torpedoed by a US submarine in the Indian Ocean near Sri Lanka after participating in **MILAN-2026** and the International Fleet Review at Visakhapatnam. The incident has triggered debate regarding the legality of naval attacks in international waters and the interaction between peacetime maritime law and wartime naval conflict rules.

This development comes amid rising geopolitical tensions in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), increasing naval deployments by major powers, and growing concerns over freedom of navigation and maritime security.

Key Legal Framework Governing Maritime Conflict

1. UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea)

The **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)** is the primary international legal framework governing maritime zones, ocean resources, navigation rights, and dispute settlement.

Key Features:

- Adopted in **1982** and entered into force in **1994**
- Ratified by **over 165 countries and the European Union**
- Provides a legal framework for:
 - Maritime boundaries
 - Navigation rights
 - Resource exploitation

- Marine environmental protection
- Dispute resolution mechanisms

Relevance to Naval Conflict:

- UNCLOS mainly regulates **peacetime maritime conduct**
- It defines rights of passage such as:
 - Innocent passage (territorial sea)
 - Transit passage (international straits)
 - Freedom of navigation (high seas)
- It **does not directly regulate wartime naval hostilities**

Important Limitation:

- The **United States has not ratified UNCLOS**, although it follows many of its provisions as customary international law.
- Military activities in EEZs remain a grey area, with differences between US interpretation (allowing military operations) and some coastal states that seek restrictions.

2. Law of Naval Warfare (Law of Armed Conflict at Sea)

During armed conflict, UNCLOS operates alongside the **Law of Naval Warfare**, which is derived from:

- Customary international humanitarian law
- The **San Remo Manual on International Law Applicable to Armed Conflicts at Sea (1994)**
- Geneva Conventions principles

Key Principles:

1. **Military Necessity**
 - Only legitimate military targets may be attacked.
2. **Distinction**
 - Parties must distinguish between:
 - Military vessels
 - Civilian ships
 - Neutral vessels
3. **Proportionality**
 - Attacks must avoid excessive collateral damage.
4. **Precautions in Attack**
 - Steps must be taken to minimise civilian harm.

Legitimate Targets:

Enemy warships are considered lawful military objectives. However:

- Hospital ships cannot be attacked.
- Merchant ships may only be attacked under certain conditions.
- Neutral vessels must generally be respected unless carrying contraband.

Naval Warfare Activities Regulated:

- Blockades
- Maritime exclusion zones
- Submarine warfare
- Prize law (capture of ships)
- Treatment of prisoners at sea

3. UN Charter and Use of Force

The **United Nations Charter** provides the overarching legal framework governing the use of force between states.

Key Provisions:

Article 2(4): Prohibition on Use of Force

- States must refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.

Article 51: Right to Self-Defence

- Allows use of force if:
 - An armed attack occurs
 - Response is necessary and proportionate
 - Action is reported to the UN Security Council

Legal Questions Raised in Such Incidents:

- Was there an armed conflict?
- Was the attack an act of self-defence?
- Was the vessel a legitimate military target?
- Did the action violate freedom of navigation?

4. UN Security Council Authorization

Under **Chapter VII** of the UN Charter, the **UN Security Council (UNSC)** can authorize the use of force to maintain or restore international peace.

Conditions:

- Requires at least **9 votes out of 15**

- No veto from the **five permanent members (US, UK, France, Russia, China)**

Examples of Maritime Force Authorisation:

- Anti-piracy operations off Somalia
- Maritime sanctions enforcement
- Naval embargo enforcement

However, in most sudden naval incidents, UNSC authorization is absent, raising questions about unilateral military action.

Maritime Zones Relevant to the Incident

Understanding maritime jurisdiction is crucial to assessing legality.

Territorial Sea (0–12 nautical miles)

- Full sovereignty of coastal state.
- Foreign warships allowed innocent passage.
- Armed attack here may be treated as violation of sovereignty.

Contiguous Zone (12–24 nautical miles)

- Coastal state can enforce customs, immigration and fiscal laws.

Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) (up to 200 nautical miles)

- Coastal state has:
 - Resource rights
 - Economic jurisdiction
- Other states retain:
 - Freedom of navigation
 - Military navigation rights (disputed interpretation)

The reported attack occurred in Sri Lanka’s EEZ, not its territorial waters, which complicates legality.

High Seas (Beyond EEZ)

- No state sovereignty.
- Governed by principle of:
 - Freedom of navigation
 - Freedom of military movement

Key Legal Debate in This Incident

The reported incident raises several unresolved legal questions:

1. **Was there an armed conflict between the US and Iran?**
 - If not, the legality of the attack becomes questionable.

2. **Was the Iranian vessel posing a threat?**

- Self-defence requires an imminent threat.

3. **Can military action occur in EEZs?**

- Major powers say yes.
- Some coastal states disagree.

4. **Was this an act of deterrence or escalation?**

- Such actions risk destabilising the Indian Ocean Region.

Strategic Significance for India and the Indian Ocean Region

The Indian Ocean is witnessing:

- Increased Chinese naval presence
- US strategic deployments
- Iranian naval outreach
- Growing importance of sea lanes (90% of India’s trade by volume moves by sea)

Such incidents highlight:

- Importance of maritime domain awareness
- Naval modernisation
- Legal clarity on maritime conflict

Conclusion

Naval warfare in international waters operates within a complex legal framework combining UNCLOS, the Law of Naval Warfare, and the UN Charter. However, grey areas remain, especially regarding military actions in EEZs and unilateral use of force.

Exercise LAMITIYE-2026 (India – Seychelles Joint Military Exercise)



Why in the News

The **11th edition of Exercise LAMITIYE-2026** is being conducted from **10–22 March 2026** at the Seychelles Defence Academy. The exercise highlights the growing

defence partnership between India and **Seychelles**, particularly in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), which is strategically important for maritime security.

The exercise reflects India's broader maritime outreach and security cooperation under its SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) vision.

About Exercise LAMITIYE

Exercise LAMITIYE is a **joint military training exercise** conducted between the armed forces of India and Seychelles. The word *Lamitiye* means "**friendship**" in the Creole language of Seychelles, symbolising strong bilateral relations.

The exercise is conducted periodically to improve:

- Military cooperation
- Operational coordination
- Counter-insurgency capabilities
- Peacekeeping preparedness

The 2026 edition marks an important milestone as it expands into a tri-services format.

Key Highlights of Exercise LAMITIYE-2026

1. First Tri-Services Edition

For the first time, the exercise involves participation from all three branches of the **Indian Armed Forces**:

- **Indian Army**
- **Indian Navy**
- **Indian Air Force**

They are training alongside the **Seychelles Defence Forces**.

This tri-services participation reflects the growing importance of **joint warfare doctrines**, where coordinated operations across land, sea, and air domains are essential.

2. Focus of the Exercise

The exercise focuses on:

- Joint tactical drills
- Counter-insurgency operations
- Counter-terrorism operations
- Peacekeeping scenarios
- Humanitarian assistance operations

Special emphasis is placed on **sub-conventional operations**, which include:

- Counter-terrorism

- Anti-insurgency operations
- Hybrid warfare situations
- Low-intensity conflicts

These are increasingly relevant due to evolving global security threats.

3. Training Environment

The exercise is being conducted in **semi-urban operational settings**, which simulate real-world conflict situations such as:

- Urban insurgency
- Hostage rescue
- Civilian protection operations
- Disaster response situations

Such training environments help prepare troops for modern conflict situations where military operations often take place near civilian populations.

4. Relevance to UN Peacekeeping

The exercise also aims to improve readiness for **United Nations Peacekeeping** missions.

India is one of the largest contributors to UN peacekeeping forces, having deployed more than **2.9 lakh troops** in over 50 missions since 1948.

Training areas relevant to UN operations include:

- Rules of engagement
- Civil-military coordination
- Protection of civilians
- Conflict stabilisation operations

Strategic Importance of India–Seychelles Defence Cooperation

1. Indian Ocean Region Importance

Seychelles occupies a strategically important position in the western Indian Ocean, making it important for:

- Sea lane security
- Anti-piracy operations
- Maritime surveillance
- Blue economy cooperation

India considers Seychelles a key partner in maintaining maritime security in the region.

2. SAGAR Vision

The exercise aligns with India's SAGAR doctrine (Security and Growth for All in the Region), which focuses on:

- Maritime cooperation

- Capacity building of island nations
- Disaster relief cooperation
- Maritime domain awareness

India regularly supports Seychelles through:

- Training programmes
- Defence equipment supply
- Hydrographic surveys
- Coastal surveillance radar systems

3. Capacity Building and Defence Diplomacy

Exercise LAMITIYE is also an example of India's **defence diplomacy**, which aims to:

- Build trust with partner nations
- Strengthen regional stability
- Counter external strategic influence in the Indian Ocean
- Promote indigenous defence cooperation

Such exercises also help India strengthen its role as a **net security provider** in the Indian Ocean Region.

India–Seychelles Defence Relations

Key areas of cooperation include:

- Joint military exercises
- Training of Seychelles personnel in Indian military institutions
- Maritime security cooperation
- Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) surveillance support
- Defence infrastructure cooperation

India has also provided patrol vessels and aircraft support to Seychelles for maritime security.

Significance of Exercise LAMITIYE-2026

The exercise is significant because it:

- Strengthens India's strategic presence in the Indian Ocean.
- Improves joint operational readiness.
- Enhances interoperability between friendly militaries.
- Promotes regional maritime security.
- Supports India's Act East and maritime diplomacy policies.
- Strengthens small island partner capacity.

It also demonstrates India's commitment to cooperative security frameworks rather than purely military alliances.

Conclusion

Exercise LAMITIYE-2026 reflects the deepening strategic partnership between India and Seychelles. By expanding into a tri-services format and focusing on modern operational challenges such as sub-conventional warfare and peacekeeping, the exercise strengthens defence preparedness while reinforcing India's role as a reliable security partner in the Indian Ocean Region.

Kharg Island



Why in the News

The United States conducted airstrikes on military installations on **Kharg Island**, Iran's main oil export hub, during the ongoing US–Israel conflict with Iran. While energy infrastructure was deliberately spared, the attack has heightened concerns about global oil supply disruptions and rising crude prices.

What is Kharg Island?

Kharg Island is a strategically important island in the Persian Gulf.

Key geographical facts:

- A small **coral island about 8 km long**
- Located roughly **50 km from Iran's mainland coast**
- Close to deep sea routes suitable for large oil tankers
- Developed as Iran's main oil terminal in the 1960s

The island acts as the backbone of Iran's petroleum export system and is therefore considered one of the most strategically sensitive energy locations in West Asia.

Why Kharg Island is Strategically Important

1. Iran's Main Oil Export Terminal

Kharg Island handles nearly **90% of Iran's crude oil exports**, making it the country's most critical energy export infrastructure. Pipelines from major Iranian oil fields connect directly to the island for storage and shipment.

2. Massive Oil Infrastructure

Major installations located on the island include:

- Falat Iran Oil Company (≈500,000 barrels/day production)
- Kharg Petrochemical Company
- Large crude storage terminals
- LNG handling facilities
- Export jetties for supertankers

These facilities make Kharg a complete oil export ecosystem rather than just a shipping terminal.

3. Suitable Geography for Large Tankers

Much of Iran's coastline is shallow, limiting access for Very Large Crude Carriers (VLCCs). Kharg Island's proximity to deep waters allows large oil tankers to dock efficiently, making it indispensable for Iran's export logistics.

Oil Trade Through Kharg Island

Key oil flow statistics:

- Normally about **1.5 million barrels per day** exported
- Iran reportedly increased exports to around **3 million barrels/day** before the strike
- Around **18 million barrels of oil stored** as strategic reserves

Any prolonged disruption could therefore significantly affect global supply, especially Asian markets that import Iranian crude.

Why the Attack Matters

1. Impact on Global Oil Prices

If Kharg's oil infrastructure were destroyed:

- Up to **90% of Iran's oil exports could halt**
- Global oil prices could spike sharply
- Some analysts warn prices could approach **\$120–150 per barrel** in extreme disruption scenarios

Already, the wider conflict has pushed oil prices above \$100 per barrel amid supply fears.

2. Strategic Signalling by the US

The US targeted military assets but avoided oil facilities, which analysts interpret as a calibrated move to:

- Avoid triggering a global energy crisis
- Maintain pressure on Iran militarily
- Signal capability without escalating economic warfare

Reports indicate over **90 Iranian military targets** were struck while oil infrastructure was spared.

3. Risk to Global Shipping Routes

Kharg Island lies close to the Strait of Hormuz, through which about **20% of global oil trade passes**.

Key risks include:

- Tanker attacks
- Naval blockades
- Insurance cost spikes for shipping
- Military escort operations by the US Navy

The US has considered escorting tankers to maintain energy supply routes amid rising tensions.

Broader Geopolitical Significance

Energy Security Concerns

The attack highlights how regional conflicts can threaten global energy stability because:

- The Middle East supplies a large share of global oil
- Supply shocks quickly affect global inflation
- Energy-importing countries like India are highly vulnerable

Strategic Chokepoint Politics

Control over areas like Kharg Island and the Strait of Hormuz demonstrates how geography shapes global geopolitics, particularly in:

- Energy security
- Maritime trade
- Military strategy

Escalation Risks

If oil infrastructure becomes a direct target:

- Iran may retaliate against Gulf energy assets
- Shipping disruptions could worsen
- Global markets could face severe volatility

Conclusion

The US strikes on Kharg Island underline the island’s enormous strategic importance as Iran’s primary oil export hub. Although oil facilities were not hit, the incident highlights the vulnerability of global energy

supply chains to geopolitical conflict. Any future escalation involving energy infrastructure or the Strait of Hormuz could have far-reaching economic consequences, making Kharg Island a critical focal point in the geopolitics of oil and security

Trivia

New GDP Series: Why Fiscal Targets and \$4 Trillion Goal Get Harder



Why in the News

The **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)** recently released a **revised national accounts series with 2022–23 as the new base year**. The revision has **reduced India’s nominal GDP estimates by about 3–4%**, leading to changes in several macroeconomic indicators such as the **fiscal deficit ratio, public debt calculations, and the timeline for India to reach the \$4-trillion economy milestone**.

Periodic revision of GDP base year is a standard statistical practice that incorporates **updated price structures, improved data sources, and methodological improvements** to better reflect the structure of the economy.

What Changed in the New GDP Series

1. Change in Base Year

The **base year has been shifted to 2022–23**, replacing the previous **2011–12 base year** used for GDP estimation.

A new base year is important because:

- It captures **structural changes in the economy**
- It incorporates **new industries and emerging sectors**
- It reflects **updated consumption and production patterns**

India typically updates the base year roughly **every decade** to maintain statistical accuracy.

2. Revised Growth Estimates

Under the new GDP series:

Year		Earlier Estimate	Revised Estimate
2023–24	GDP Growth	9.2%	7.2%

This downward revision suggests that earlier estimates **overstated real economic growth**, and the revised data now reflects more accurate production and value-added data.

3. Lower Nominal GDP

The revision also reduced **nominal GDP estimates**.

- **Nominal GDP for 2025–26** has been reduced by **about 3.3%**.
- This means the **size of India’s economy in rupee terms is slightly smaller than previously estimated**.

Nominal GDP is crucial because many macroeconomic indicators—such as **fiscal deficit, debt levels, and tax ratios**—are calculated as a percentage of GDP.

4. Improved Methodology: Double Deflation

The new GDP series introduces the **double deflation method** for estimating **Gross Value Added (GVA)** in certain sectors.

Double deflation method:

- Separately adjusts **output prices and input prices for inflation**
- Provides a **more accurate estimate of real value added**

Earlier methods sometimes **overestimated real growth** when input prices increased faster than output prices.

5. Integration of Better Data Sources

The revised series integrates **new high-frequency and administrative datasets**, improving reliability.

Major datasets used include:

- **GST (Goods and Services Tax) data**
- **ASUSE (Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises)**
- **PLFS (Periodic Labour Force Survey)**
- Corporate filings and administrative records

These datasets allow economists to better capture **informal sector activity and service sector expansion**, which were previously difficult to measure.

Impact on Fiscal Deficit

The **fiscal deficit** represents the gap between government expenditure and revenue.

It is expressed as:

$$\text{Fiscal Deficit} = \frac{\text{Government Borrowing}}{\text{GDP}} \times 100$$

Because the **GDP denominator has become smaller**, the fiscal deficit ratio automatically increases.

1. Current Year Impact (FY 2025–26)

- Earlier fiscal deficit estimate: **4.4% of GDP**
- After revision: **4.5% of GDP**

Even though **government borrowing remains unchanged**, the **smaller GDP base increases the ratio**.

Similarly, fiscal deficit ratios for **previous years are also revised slightly upward**.

2. FY 2026–27 Fiscal Target Challenge

The government aims to bring the fiscal deficit down to: **4.3% of GDP in FY27**

However, the arithmetic becomes more difficult under the new GDP series.

Budgeted Fiscal Deficit (FY27):

- Absolute deficit: **₹16.96 lakh crore**

To maintain the **4.3% ratio**, GDP must grow sufficiently.

Required Nominal GDP Growth

Economists estimate:

- Required nominal growth: **13–14%**
- Budget assumption: **10% nominal growth**

This creates a gap between **fiscal targets and realistic growth expectations**.

Possible Policy Adjustments

To meet the fiscal deficit target, the government may need one or more of the following:

1. **Higher economic growth**
2. **Lower government borrowing**
3. **Expenditure compression**
4. **Higher tax revenue**

This is why analysts say the **new GDP series makes fiscal consolidation mathematically tighter**.

Impact on Debt-to-GDP Ratio

Public debt is another indicator affected by the GDP revision.

Debt Ratio Projections

- Estimated debt ratio for **2025–26: ~58% of GDP**
- Government target: **55.6%**

Because the **GDP denominator is smaller**, the **debt ratio automatically increases**, even if total debt remains unchanged.

This may affect:

- **Fiscal sustainability metrics**
- **Credit rating assessments**
- **Investor perception of fiscal stability**

Impact on India's \$4 Trillion Economy Goal

India is expected to become the **world's fourth largest economy** and cross the **\$4 trillion GDP mark** soon.

Revised Dollar GDP Calculation

Using an exchange rate of roughly **₹90.98 per US dollar**:

- **India's GDP in 2025–26: about \$3.8 trillion**

If nominal GDP grows by **10% annually** and the rupee remains stable:

India could cross **\$4 trillion in 2026–27**.

Role of Exchange Rate

Dollar GDP depends on two factors:

1. **Domestic economic growth**
2. **Exchange rate movements**

If the **rupee depreciates significantly**, the milestone could be delayed even if the economy grows.

International Example

Countries like **Nigeria** have experienced situations where:

- Domestic GDP increased in local currency
- But **currency depreciation reduced GDP in dollar terms**

Thus, the **\$4 trillion target is sensitive to exchange rate fluctuations**.

Broader Economic Implications

1. Fiscal Ratios May Look Worse

Key indicators such as:

- Fiscal deficit
- Debt-to-GDP
- Government expenditure ratio

may **appear worse statistically**, even if policy remains unchanged.

2. Fiscal Planning Becomes Tighter

With a smaller GDP denominator:

- Fiscal consolidation requires **greater discipline**
- Government may need **careful borrowing management**

3. Market Expectations Become Crucial

Financial markets will closely track:

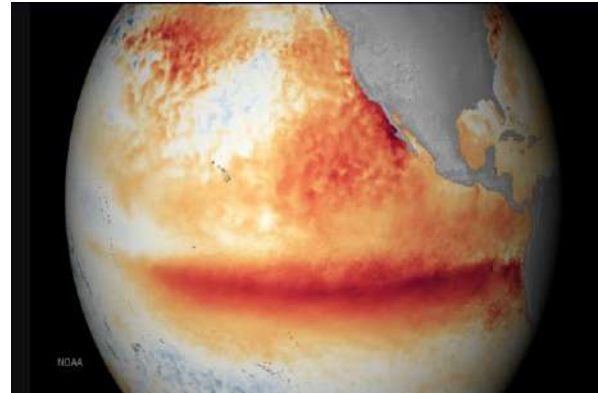
- **Nominal GDP growth**
- **Tax revenue trends**
- **Government borrowing levels**

Stronger growth could **offset the statistical tightening caused by the new GDP base**.

Conclusion

The new **GDP series with 2022–23 as the base year** improves the **accuracy and reliability of India's national accounts** by incorporating better data sources and advanced estimation methods. However, the revision has also **reduced nominal GDP estimates by around 3–4%**, which mathematically increases fiscal ratios such as **fiscal deficit and debt-to-GDP**.

El Niño Likely to Develop After July 2026: WMO



Why in the News

The **World Meteorological Organization (WMO)** has indicated a **high probability of El Niño developing in the second half of 2026**, as the current **La Niña conditions weaken and transition towards ENSO-neutral conditions**. Such developments are closely monitored because ENSO phases significantly influence global weather and India's monsoon performance.

What is El Niño?

El Niño is the **warm phase of the El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO)**, a large-scale ocean–atmosphere climate interaction occurring in the tropical Pacific Ocean.

It refers to the **periodic warming of sea surface temperatures (SSTs) in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean**, which alters atmospheric pressure patterns and trade winds. This leads to disruptions in global weather systems, affecting rainfall, temperature, cyclones, and drought patterns across continents.

Scientifically, El Niño occurs when:

- Trade winds weaken or reverse direction.
- Warm water that normally accumulates near Indonesia shifts toward the South American coast.
- Upwelling of cold water along the Peru coast reduces.
- Atmospheric circulation known as the **Walker Circulation** weakens.

As a result, weather patterns across Asia, Africa, Australia, and the Americas are altered.

ENSO Phases

ENSO has three major phases:

1. El Niño (Warm Phase)

- Above-normal sea surface temperatures in the Pacific.
- Weak trade winds.
- Often associated with **below-normal monsoon rainfall in India**.
- Increased chances of drought in South Asia and Australia.

2. La Niña (Cool Phase)

- Below-normal Pacific Ocean temperatures.
- Stronger trade winds.
- Generally associated with **stronger or above-normal monsoon rainfall in India**.
- Higher probability of floods in some regions.

3. ENSO Neutral

- Neither El Niño nor La Niña conditions.
- Ocean temperatures remain near average.
- Weather patterns are usually influenced more by regional factors.
- Currently, La Niña is weakening and neutral conditions are expected before a possible El Niño formation.

Impact on India

ENSO is very important for India because the country's agriculture and water security depend heavily on the monsoon.

Key facts:

- India receives about **70–75% of its annual rainfall during the southwest monsoon (June–September)**.
- **July and August contribute more than 50%** of seasonal rainfall.
- Nearly **50% of India's net sown area remains rain-fed**, making agriculture highly climate-sensitive.

Possible impacts if El Niño develops in late 2026:

1. Impact on Monsoon

- El Niño years are often linked with **below-normal monsoon rainfall**.
- Weak monsoon may lead to rainfall deficits, especially in central and northwest India.

2. Impact on Agriculture

- Reduced rainfall may affect **kharif crops** such as rice, pulses, maize, cotton, and soybean.
- Lower soil moisture can reduce crop productivity.
- May increase dependence on irrigation.

3. Impact on Water Resources

- Lower reservoir levels.
- Groundwater stress may increase.
- Drinking water availability could be affected in drought-prone regions.

4. Impact on Food Inflation

- Lower agricultural output may lead to **increase in food prices**.
- Pulses, cereals, and edible oil prices may rise.

5. Impact on Economy

- Agriculture still supports a large rural population.
- Weak monsoon may reduce rural demand and affect overall economic growth.

Global Impacts of El Niño

El Niño does not only affect India but has worldwide consequences:

- Droughts in Australia and Southeast Asia.
- Heavy rainfall in parts of South America.
- Warmer global temperatures.
- Coral bleaching due to ocean warming.
- Increased chances of extreme weather events.

World Happiness Report 2026



World Happiness Report 2026

Why in the News?

The **World Happiness Report 2026** has been released, with Finland retaining its position as the happiest country in the world for the ninth consecutive year. India ranked

116th among 147 countries, showing a slight improvement compared to its previous ranking.

About the World Happiness Report

The World Happiness Report is an annual publication that measures global happiness based on people's self-reported life evaluations and socio-economic indicators.

Publishing Organisations

The report is published by the **Wellbeing Research Centre** in partnership with:

- **Gallup**
- **United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network**
- An independent editorial board of global experts

The report uses data mainly from the Gallup World Poll covering more than 140 countries.

Top 10 Happiest Countries (2026)

The top rankings continue to be dominated by Nordic countries due to strong welfare systems, high institutional trust, and better quality of life.

1. Finland
2. Iceland
3. Denmark
4. Costa Rica
5. Sweden
6. Norway
7. Netherlands
8. Israel
9. Luxembourg
10. Switzerland

Why Nordic Countries Rank High

Common characteristics include:

- Strong social welfare systems
- Universal healthcare and education
- Low corruption
- High social trust
- Better work-life balance

Unhappiest Countries

Countries affected by conflict, poverty and political instability rank lowest.

- **Afghanistan** (147th) – lowest ranked country
- Followed by fragile economies and conflict-affected states.

Conflict, humanitarian crises and weak governance remain major contributors to low happiness scores.

India's Performance

India's Rank

- Rank: **116 out of 147 countries**
- Slight improvement from **118th rank in 2025**
- Life evaluation score: about **4.5 (on a scale of 0–10)**

Comparison with Neighbours

- Pakistan – 104
- Sri Lanka – 99
- Bangladesh – 127
- Nepal – 134
- Afghanistan – 147

Key Challenges Affecting India's Rank

Major factors affecting India's ranking include:

- Income inequality
- Social support gaps
- Urban stress and unemployment
- Mental health concerns
- Perception of corruption

Positive Trends

Some improvements are attributed to:

- Growth in digital access
- Financial inclusion schemes
- Welfare programmes
- Economic growth and infrastructure expansion

Key Indicators Used in the Ranking

The report uses six major indicators:

1. GDP per capita
2. Healthy life expectancy
3. Social support
4. Freedom to make life choices
5. Generosity
6. Perception of corruption

These indicators attempt to measure both economic and social dimensions of well-being.

Major Findings of the Report

1. Impact of Social Media

The report highlights the growing mental health impact of excessive digital use.

Key observations:

- High social media use linked with lower life satisfaction
- Strongest impact seen among teenagers
- Teenage girls using social media for more than 5 hours daily reported lower well-being
- Rising anxiety and depression trends among youth

2. Decline in Youth Happiness

Declining youth happiness observed in:

- USA
- Canada
- Australia
- New Zealand

Major reasons:

- Digital isolation
- Economic uncertainty
- Mental health issues
- Social comparison through online platforms

3. Why Finland Remains No.1

Finland's consistent top ranking is due to:

- Strong welfare state
- High income with low inequality
- Strong institutional trust
- Quality education system
- High life expectancy
- Social cohesion

Finland also benefits from strong governance and low corruption levels.

4. Conflict and Happiness

Countries affected by war and instability show the lowest happiness levels.

Key reasons:

- Economic collapse
- Displacement
- Food insecurity
- Governance breakdown
- Psychological stress

This shows the strong link between peace and well-being.

Broader Global Trends

The 2026 report highlights some important global trends:

- Happiness increasingly linked to social trust rather than just income.
- Community support emerging as a key factor.
- Environmental quality linked to well-being.
- Digital behaviour emerging as a new determinant of happiness.
- Youth mental health becoming a major global concern.

Conclusion

The World Happiness Report 2026 highlights that economic growth alone does not ensure happiness. Countries that perform well combine economic prosperity with social protection, trust, freedom and strong institutions.

For India, improving social support systems, reducing inequality, investing in healthcare, and strengthening community well-being will be essential to improve its ranking in the coming years.

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