

Monthly **CURRENT AFFAIRS**

By - Ilead Career Prep

Apr-2026

Contact Us +91 9306206317 www.ileadedu.in



Strait of Hormuz Crisis Tensions Rise Amid

IRAN-ISRAEL

CONFLICT

NATIONAL HEADLINES

- **Ladakh Sixth Schedule** : Demand for Constitutional Safeguards
- **Reliance Texas Refinery** : Major Project Announced
- **SC on Vaccine Impact** : Policy for Victims Sought
- **Life Support Withdrawal** : Rules Explained
- **Major Bills & Schemes** : Key Updates
- **India-Canada Uranium Deal** : Major Nuclear Boost
- **H.K. Dua & Kushal Das** : Nation Mourns Loss
- **Surya Midha Beats Zuckerberg** : Forbes Record
- **Leadership Exits** : WEF, Adobe, HDFC, IndiGo

GLOBAL HEADLINES

- **US Section 301 Probe** : India Among Targets
- **Nepal Polls 2026** : RSP Wins Big
- **NASA DART Mission** : Asteroid Orbit Shifted
- **Trump's Iran Strategy** : Reasons Behind War Explained

AWARDS & RANKS

- **Major Awards Update** : Key Highlights
- **Global Terrorism Index 2026** : Pakistan Tops List

SHARIAT CASE IN SC

Inheritance Law Challenge Explained



T20 WC 2026

India Wins

HISTORIC VICTORY

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Contact Info:
Phone No: +91 9306206317
Website: www.ileadedu.in



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Dear Aspirants,

In today's highly competitive examination environment, success is not achieved through last-minute preparation, but through consistent effort and regular study. Among all subjects, current affairs play a decisive role in general competitive examinations such as Banking, SSC, Railways, and various State-level exams. Questions based on current events appear not only in the General Awareness section, but also influence essay writing, interviews, and overall personality assessment. Therefore, regular and structured reading of current affairs is not just important, but essential for success.

This monthly magazine has been carefully designed to help aspirants stay updated in a simple, exam-oriented, and time-efficient manner. The objective is not just to provide information, but to build understanding, awareness, and analytical thinking. These are the qualities that every successful candidate and future nation builder must possess.

“Success in competitive exams is not the result of studying one day with full energy, but studying every day with full consistency.”

This edition covers a wide range of important national and international developments. Key highlights include the Shariat Case in the Supreme Court, which discusses an important challenge related to inheritance law, and the demand for Sixth Schedule Constitutional safeguards for Ladakh. In the economic sector, the announcement of the Reliance Texas Refinery project marks a major development, while the US Section 301 Probe includes India among key trade targets.

Important social and legal issues are also covered, including the Supreme Court's observations on vaccine impact and the demand for a policy for victims, as well as the rules related to withdrawal of life support, which raise significant ethical and legal questions. This issue also includes updates on major bills and government schemes, which are extremely useful for competitive examinations.

In international developments, the Nepal Polls 2026, the India–Canada Uranium Deal, and leadership exits from major global organizations such as WEF, Adobe, HDFC, and IndiGo are covered to help aspirants understand global and economic trends. The magazine also highlights major awards, and a proud moment for the nation—India's historic victory in the T20 World Cup 2026.

Science and technology remain an important segment for exams, and this edition covers the NASA DART Mission, which successfully shifted an asteroid's orbit, marking a significant milestone in space science. The nation also mourns the loss of respected personalities H.K. Dua and Kushal Das, while Surya Midha's Forbes record, surpassing Mark Zuckerberg, has been highlighted as an inspiring achievement.

From a security and defence perspective, this edition includes updates on major defence exercises, the Global Terrorism Index 2026, and rising tensions in the Strait of Hormuz amid the Iran–Israel conflict. We also explain major international developments such as Trump's Iran strategy and important operations like Operation Epic Fury and Operation True Promise.

This magazine is not just a collection of news, but a step towards your goal. If read consistently, revised regularly, and understood properly, it can become a powerful tool in your preparation journey.

Read consistently. Revise regularly. Succeed surely.

We hope this magazine becomes a reliable companion in your journey toward success and service to the nation.



This Edition Includes

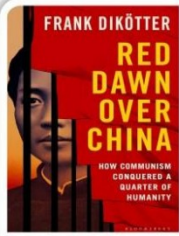
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Business News, Financial News, Economy News, Politics News, India News, Breaking News, Indian Economy, International News, Sports News, and many more topics covered.....

NEWS CREDIT

BBC, Reuters, Aljazeera, PIB, PTI, Business Standard, The Hindu, Indian Express, Times of India, Economic Times, Business Line, India Today, Money control And all other leading Newspapers

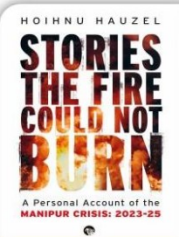
Books & Authors



Book: Red Dawn Over China

Author: Frank Dikötter

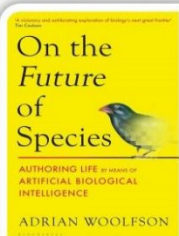
About: Explains how Soviet support influenced Communist China's rise and highlights the Chinese Communist Party's governance and control mechanisms.



Book: Stories the Fire Could Not Burn

Author: Hoihnu Hauzel

About: Narrates Manipur's violence, institutional failures, and human suffering, presenting a deeply emotional and balanced account of conflict and loss.



Book: On the Future of Species

Author: Adrian Woolfson

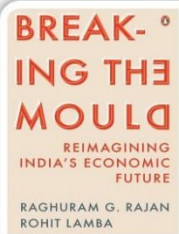
About: Explores how humans may design future lifeforms and examines the ethical and scientific implications of controlling evolution.



Book: Plastic Inc.

Author: Beth Gardiner

About: A gripping investigation into the global plastic industry, exposing environmental damage, corporate influence, and health consequences.

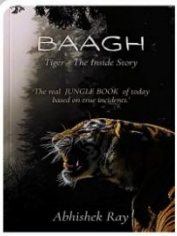


Book: Breaking the Mould: Reimagining India's Economic Future

Author: Raghuram Rajan & Rohit Lamba

About: Analyzes India's economic challenges and suggests reforms for inclusive and sustainable growth.

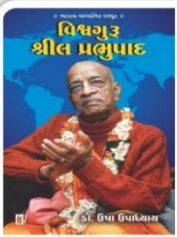
Books & Authors



Book: Baagh Tiger – The Inside Story

Author: Abhishek Ray

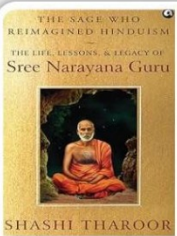
About: A wildlife crime thriller focusing on conservation, human-wildlife conflict, and a poacher's journey toward redemption.



Book: Vishwaguru Srila Prabhupada

Author: Dr Usha Upadhyay

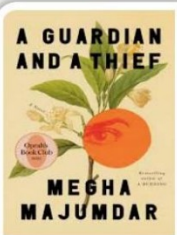
About: The book highlights how Srila Prabhupada carried Indian spirituality and Vedic wisdom to the global stage and spread the message of Lord Krishna across continents.



Book: The Sage Who Reimagined Hinduism

Author: Shashi Tharoor

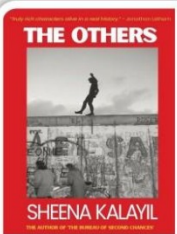
About: Highlights Sree Narayana Guru's ideas on social reform, equality, and inclusive Hinduism, challenging caste discrimination and promoting unity.



Book: A Guardian and a Thief

Author: Megha Majumdar

About: Set in a climate-ravaged future Kolkata, it follows a mother whose stolen visa triggers a moral conflict involving survival and desperation.



Book: The Others

Author: Sheena Kalayil

About: Explores lives shaped by historical upheaval, focusing on personal relationships and identity against the backdrop of major socio-political changes.

Quick Bytes

- Andhra Pradesh launches Project HANUMAN addressing rising human wildlife conflict through rapid response teams early warning systems and wildlife monitoring
- India and Canada announce Strategic Energy Partnership revive CEPA negotiations expanding cooperation in uranium supply clean energy technology and trade
- Jio Platforms appoints telecom veteran Dan Bailey as President to lead global expansion strategy and international telecom technology partnerships
- Saba Shawl becomes first Kashmiri woman appointed head of Central Jail Srinagar marking milestone for women leadership in security services
- B P Singh assumes charge as Director General of Naval Armament strengthening operational readiness of Indian Navy weapon systems
- Global internet rankings show Google YouTube dominating traffic while ChatGPT enters top five highlighting rise of artificial intelligence platforms
- Veteran Congress leader K P Unnikrishnan former Union minister and six time Lok Sabha MP passes away at eighty nine
- Ashmolean Museum returns sixteenth century Saint Thirumankai Alvar bronze idol to India strengthening cultural diplomacy heritage restitution and temple traditions
- World Obesity Atlas reports India surpasses United States in childhood obesity highlighting rising health risks and urgent need policy action
- Scotland legalizes water cremation becoming first United Kingdom nation approving alkaline hydrolysis as environmentally friendly alternative to traditional cremation
- India signs ₹5083 crore defence deals for ALH MkIII helicopters and VL-Shtil missiles strengthening maritime surveillance naval air defence
- Indian women's cricket team nominated for Laureus World Team of the Year after historic ICC Women's World Cup triumph
- Strait of Hormuz gains global strategic attention amid rising Iran-Israel tensions as instability threatens one of the world's most critical energy routes
- DRDO accelerates development of Ghatak stealth combat drone programme to strengthen India's future air combat capabilities and autonomous strike missions
- Jio Platforms appoints Dan Bailey as President to lead international expansion strategy and strengthen global digital and telecom business initiatives
- United States launches military strikes on Iran under Donald Trump amid nuclear programme concerns and escalating geopolitical tensions
- President Droupadi Murmu launches Pink National Common Mobility Card in Delhi enabling free bus travel for women beneficiaries
- Union Minister Amit Shah launched digital tools and mascots Pragati Vikas marking India's first fully digital Census 2027 initiative milestone
- United Nations report reveals women globally possess only sixty four percent legal rights compared men highlighting persistent inequality discrimination worldwide
- SEBI deployed AI system Sudarshan removing over one lakh misleading influencer posts strengthening monitoring financial content across digital platforms effectively
- ACC reappointed Dr Rajeev Singh Raghuvanshi as DCGI extending tenure ensuring continuity in India's drug regulation system under CDSCO
- CCI approved Central Bank India stake increase in Generali insurance ventures strengthening bancassurance integration expanding insurance distribution capabilities nationwide
- Motilal Oswal Home Finance raises USD 100 million from ADB via NCDs to boost women-led affordable housing and green buildings
- BEL partners with Bellatrix Aerospace to develop advanced satellite systems for Very Low Earth Orbit enabling improved imaging and communication capabilities
- Ladakh launches Holistic Homestay Support Framework to boost rural tourism, employment, and sustainable community-based hospitality enterprises across remote regions
- Indonesia announces social media ban for minors under 16 aiming to curb cyber risks, addiction, and harmful online exposure among youth
- Japan approves first iPS stem-cell therapies for Parkinson's and heart failure, marking breakthrough in regenerative medicine and clinical innovation

- Shrishti Sharma sets world record in 50m limbo skating with 7.46 seconds, significantly improving her previous global performance benchmark
- Smriti Mandhana becomes first Indian cricketer featured in Barbie Dream Team, recognizing her influence and achievements in global women's cricket
- Thiruvananthapuram deploys AI-powered G-SPIDER robot to eliminate manual scavenging and ensure safe, automated cleaning of hazardous urban canals
- Maharashtra celebrates Women's Day with Guinness record Lezim dance participation of over nine thousand women in Dombivli promoting empowerment
- India becomes second largest arms importer globally between 2021 and 2025 accounting for eight point two percent share as per SIPRI
- RBI approves Ketan Merchant as interim CEO of Fino Payments Bank following leadership crisis ensuring operational continuity in banking sector
- Rashmika Mandanna wins Best Actress award at Telangana Gaddar Awards for outstanding performance in Telugu film The Girlfriend
- Indian Armed Forces participate in Exercise Lamitiye 2026 in Seychelles enhancing tri services coordination and strengthening bilateral defence cooperation
- George Russell wins Australian Grand Prix 2026 marking first victory of season under new Formula One regulations
- Vir Chakra awardee KG George passes away at ninety five remembered for bravery during Indo Pakistan War nineteen sixty five
- Shah Rukh Khan enters Hurun Global Rich List 2026 with one point three billion dollar net worth becoming billionaire celebrity
- India clinches historic third T20 World Cup title defeating New Zealand by 96 runs becoming first team to win consecutive editions
- Veteran Hollywood actor Corey Parker passes away at 60 after cancer battle in Memphis marking end of notable acting career
- Telugu megastar Chiranjeevi honoured with prestigious NTR National Film Award for outstanding lifelong contribution to Indian cinema industry
- RM Nachammai becomes first woman Chief Superintendent of operational nuclear power plant in India marking milestone in gender representation
- Sabrina Wittmann becomes Germany's first female head coach of professional men's football team with FC Ingolstadt historic appointment
- Vir Chakra awardee and 1965 war hero Lance Havildar KG George passes away at 95 remembered for bravery
- Lt Gen Dhiraj Seth appointed as Vice Chief of Army Staff effective April 1 2026 strengthening top military leadership
- Indian Railways launches SHINE app enabling women to report harassment confidentially ensuring faster grievance redressal and workplace safety
- Uttar Pradesh launches Project GANGA to provide high speed internet to 20 lakh rural households boosting digital connectivity
- Mizoram Assembly passes resolution to include Mizo language in Eighth Schedule promoting cultural recognition without affecting tribal rights
- Maharashtra Assembly passes revenue and stamp amendment bills improving governance unlocking land for development and administrative efficiency
- BCCI announces ₹131 crore reward for Team India after T20 World Cup victory recognising players staff and selectors
- Government invokes Essential Commodities Act to ensure stable LPG and gas supply prioritizing households transport and fertilizer amid geopolitical tensions
- Supreme Court withdrawal of life support Harish Rana reinforcing framework for passive euthanasia and dignity in end of life decisions
- Nagauri Pan Methi receives farmers variety registration granting legal rights protecting biodiversity enhancing income opportunities and preventing biopiracy in Rajasthan
- IndiGo CEO Pieter Elbers resigns Rahul Bhatia assumes interim leadership operational disruptions aims to restore stability and improve airline performance
- Dr Partha Biswas assumes charge as Member of National Commission for Scheduled Castes bringing academic expertise in governance policy and inclusion
- NITI Aayog releases Fiscal Health Index 2026 ranking states on financial strength with Odisha leading among major states and Arunachal Pradesh topping special category
- India becomes largest exporter of cotton products to United States in 2025 surpassing China due to competitive textile sector and integrated supply chain

- WHO Foundation partners Novo Nordisk to tackle childhood obesity in India through school based programs promoting healthy lifestyle awareness and early prevention
- Chhattisgarh cabinet approves Freedom of Religion Bill 2026 to curb illegal conversions while safeguarding constitutional rights and regulating religious practices
- Parthanil Ghosh appointed MD and CEO of HDFC ERGO strengthening leadership as insurance sector expands with digital adoption and innovation
- DRDO and Indian Navy test indigenous ADC 150 from P8I aircraft enhancing maritime logistics and emergency supply capabilities at sea
- Forbes 2026 list shows India billionaire count rising to 229 with Mukesh Ambani richest followed by Gautam Adani and Savitri Jindal
- Shailesh Kumar wins gold in high jump at World Para Athletics Grand Prix marking strong comeback after injury and focusing future events
- Iran withdraws from FIFA World Cup 2026 citing geopolitical tensions leaving FIFA to decide replacement in tournament lineup
- Veteran Tamil filmmaker Thakkali Srinivasan passes away at seventy two.
- ISRO and AIIMS sign agreement to advance space medicine research supporting human space missions and developing healthcare innovations for extreme environments
- Gujarat Titans appoint Vijay Dahiya as assistant coach strengthening support staff ahead of IPL 2026 season with experienced coaching leadership
- Meta acquires Moltbook platform enhancing development of autonomous AI agents and strengthening competition in artificial intelligence ecosystem
- Assam exports GI-tagged Joha rice to United Kingdom and Italy marking entry into premium global agricultural markets
- India to establish world's first autonomous maritime shipbuilding centre boosting unmanned vessel development and coastal technological capabilities
- R Vairamuthu receives 2025 Jnanpith Award becoming third Tamil writer after Akilan and Jayakanthan to earn India's highest literary honour
- Government launches Bal Vivah Mukta Bharat campaign to eliminate child marriage through awareness community mobilisation and institutional strengthening
- India tops World Para Athletics Grand Prix 2026 medal tally with record 208 medals dominating global competition
- Goa approves Advocate Protection Bill 2026 ensuring safety and legal safeguards for lawyers
- NASA targets April 1 2026 for Artemis II mission marking first crewed lunar flyby in 50 years
- Prof Yashwant Gupta receives MP Birla Memorial Award 2025 for contributions to radio astronomy
- Arpita Patra summits Ojos del Salado becoming second Indian woman to scale world's highest volcano
- Kurumba artist Kitna awarded posthumous Padma Shri for preserving tribal painting tradition
- KSRTC wins PSU National Award for Dhvani Spandana aiding visually impaired passengers
- Sagar Defence lays foundation for world first autonomous maritime shipbuilding centre in Andhra Pradesh integrating robotics artificial intelligence advanced manufacturing technologies
- Reserve Bank of India imposes Rs 2.7 lakh penalty on Manappuram Finance for violating key managerial personnel compensation regulatory guidelines
- Film One Battle After Another wins six Oscars at 98th Academy Awards emerging biggest winner across major categories Hollywood ceremony
- New plant species Osbeckia zubeengargiana discovered in Manas National Park Assam named after singer Zubeen Garg enhancing biodiversity research
- Mayank Chakraborty becomes India 94th Grandmaster first from Northeast achieving milestone at international chess tournament Sweden
- Former Pakistan captain Sarfaraz Ahmed announces retirement ending illustrious international cricket career spanning nearly two decades with significant achievements
- India emerges as global leader in coconut production with over 30 percent share, supporting millions of farmers and strengthening rural economy initiatives
- Supreme Court removes age limit on maternity leave for adoptive mothers, ensuring equal rights, child welfare, and promoting inclusive parenting policies
- Gujarat receives Uniform Civil Code draft report proposing common personal laws, ensuring gender equality, legal uniformity, and reforming marriage inheritance systems
- Punjab passes Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur University Bill 2026 to establish advanced institution focusing

- on defense, aerospace, cybersecurity, and innovation sectors
- Ministry of Tribal Affairs launches RISA brand promoting tribal artisans globally enhancing income preserving heritage through design innovation training infrastructure and eco friendly packaging
- Bhumika Shrestha becomes Nepal first transgender woman MP marking inclusivity milestone strengthening representation rights and political participation for marginalized communities
- India Indonesia collaborate to restore Prambanan Temple using traditional methods and AI ensuring heritage preservation cultural ties and structural authenticity
- United States waives Jones Act temporarily amid Iran conflict easing fuel transport allowing foreign ships reducing supply bottlenecks and stabilizing energy markets
- Kim Jong Un secures overwhelming victory in North Korea elections consolidating power with near total voter turnout and complete legislative control
- Finland tops World Happiness Report 2026 again highlighting strong social support trust institutions while India ranks lower despite growth
- William Dalrymple wins Mark Lynton History Prize 2026 for book highlighting ancient India global influence reshaping historical perspectives worldwide
- Government launches RELIEF scheme 2026 supporting exporters amid West Asia crisis offering risk coverage aid ensuring trade continuity and resilience
- Geological Survey of India declares Kalinjar Fort geo heritage site highlighting ancient rock formations revealing Earth history boosting tourism research development
- Tamil Nadu becomes top textile exporter surpassing Gujarat achieving strong growth driven by policy support infrastructure skilled workforce boosting India global trade position
- World Anti Doping Agency delays rule decision ensuring FIFA World Cup 2026 unaffected amid funding dispute concerns involving United States government participation
- Hurun Global Rich List 2026 records 150 self made women billionaires led by China United States highlighting growth in AI healthcare sectors
- Vikram Doraiswami appointed India ambassador to China bringing extensive diplomatic experience aiming to rebuild bilateral relations after tensions and enhance strategic engagement
- Telangana launches Indiramma Family Life Insurance Scheme offering ₹5 lakh coverage to 1.15 crore families ensuring social security welfare inclusivity
- Krishna Kumar Thakur assumes charge as Director Personnel at NMDC strengthening human resource reforms employee engagement and organizational productivity
- Actress Rituparna Sengupta honoured with Women Empowerment Award at UK Parliament recognizing contribution to arts culture global representation achievements
- Government notifies National Highways Fee Rules 2026 introducing digital enforcement e notices improving toll compliance and transparent collection systems
- India Bhutan sign postal cooperation agreement enhancing logistics connectivity digital remittance services technology sharing and institutional capacity building
- National Dental Commission constituted replacing Dental Council of India to reform dental education, improve standards and regulate profession under new 2023 Act
- Indian mountaineer Anmish Varma sets Guinness World Record for fastest ascent of Seven Volcanic Summits completing expedition within ninety two days
- Union Cabinet approved proposal to officially rename Kerala as Keralam during its first meeting held at newly inaugurated Seva Teerth office complex.
- Ministry of Home Affairs released India's new national counter-terrorism policy PRAHAAR outlining proactive framework to tackle evolving terror threats nationwide.
- India and France signed protocol to amend 1992 Double Taxation Avoidance Convention to modernise tax provisions and align them with global standards.
- India and Gulf Cooperation Council issued joint statement advancing negotiations toward comprehensive Free Trade Agreement to deepen economic integration.
- Indian Army and United States Army began 16th edition of Joint Special Forces Exercise Vajra Prahar at Bakloh Himachal Pradesh.
- Indian Army conducted Exercise Agni Varsha at Pokhran Field Firing Ranges Rajasthan to demonstrate operational readiness and battlefield combat capabilities.

- Legendary Indian cricketer Sachin Tendulkar designated United Nations Global Champion for Road Safety to promote global awareness on road safety.
- Professor B Ravindran of IIT Madras appointed to United Nations Independent International Scientific Panel on Artificial Intelligence representing India.
- Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh launched SUJVIKA AI driven biotech product data portal marking Department of Biotechnology 40th foundation day.
- Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas mandated petrol containing maximum twenty percent ethanol and minimum ninety-five Research Octane Number nationwide from April 2026.
- India and Japan began seventh edition of joint military exercise Dharma Guardian at Chaubattia Uttarakhand to enhance defence cooperation and interoperability.
- World Bank Group released report Women, Business and the Law 2026 highlighting only half of global laws ensuring women's economic equality are effectively enforced.
- Indian Railway Finance Corporation signed loan agreement with Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation and MUFG Bank raising four hundred million dollars external borrowing.
- NSE International Exchange launched platform NSE IX Global Access enabling Indian retail investors and NRIs to trade equities debt and ETFs globally.
- Mangaluru International Airport won Airports Service Quality Customer Experience Award for best airport arrivals category second consecutive year.
- Appointments Committee of Cabinet chaired by Narendra Modi gave additional charge of NITI Aayog CEO to IAS officer Nidhi Chhibber.
- Indian Army defended team championship title at Khelo India Winter Games 2026 winning nine gold medals across Gulmarg and Leh competitions.
- Jatinder Mehra Essar Group Vice Chairman and veteran steel industry leader passed away at eighty six in New Delhi.
- Soundala village in Maharashtra declares itself caste free through unanimous gram sabha resolution promoting social equality harmony inclusive rural governance
- Rajasthan government announces Mount Abu will officially be known as Aburaj reflecting cultural heritage identity decision in state assembly
- Indian Navy commissions INS Anjadip at Chennai strengthening maritime security coastal patrol capability under leadership of naval chief
- India successfully conducts three consecutive flight trials of indigenous VSHORADS missile strengthening very short range air defence capability
- Mumbai Cricket Association approves naming stand at Wankhede Stadium after former India captain and coach Ravi Shastri
- Jammu and Kashmir cricket team creates history winning Ranji Trophy in maiden final appearance defeating opponents impressively
- Eminent Indian sociologist T K Oommen passes away at age eighty eight remembered for contributions to sociology academia

"Don't be distracted by criticism. Remember--the only taste of success some people get is to take a bite out of you."

Recent Appointments

OpenAI Appoints Kiran Mani as APAC Head



OpenAI has appointed Kiran Mani as the Managing Director for the Asia-Pacific (APAC) region, marking a significant leadership move as the company expands its global footprint. Mani will assume the role in June 2026 and will be based in Singapore, leading regional strategy and operations.

Key Highlights

- Kiran Mani resigned as CEO of JioStar to join OpenAI.
- He will oversee business expansion, partnerships, and market strategy across the Asia-Pacific region, including India.
- Mani will report to Chief Strategy Officer Jason Kwon.

Objectives and Significance

- The appointment reflects OpenAI's strategy to strengthen its presence in high-growth markets, particularly India and Southeast Asia.
- Asia-Pacific is becoming a major hub for generative AI adoption, with increasing demand from businesses and governments.
- The move also highlights growing competition among global AI firms like Google and Anthropic in expanding international markets.

Puneet Gupta Appointed DNPA Chairperson; Anant Goenka Vice-Chairperson



The Digital News Publishers Association (DNPA) has appointed Puneet Gupta as its new Chairperson, while Anant Goenka has been named Vice-Chairperson. The decision was taken during a recent board meeting of the association. Mariam Mammen Mathew, CEO of Manorama Online, completed her two-year term and was succeeded by Gupta.

Key Highlights

- Puneet Gupta previously served as Vice-Chairperson of DNPA, ensuring a smooth leadership transition.
- Dhruba Mukherjee continues as the Treasurer of DNPA.
- The new leadership is expected to guide the association during a phase of rapid transformation in digital media, especially due to the rise of artificial intelligence (AI).

Role and Significance of DNPA

- DNPA represents the digital arms of major Indian media organizations.
- It acts as a collective voice for digital publishers on:
 - Policy advocacy
 - Industry collaboration
 - Technology and monetisation challenges

Krishna Kumar Thakur appointed as Director (Personnel) at NMDC Limited



Krishna Kumar Thakur has been appointed as Director (Personnel) at NMDC Limited. He assumed charge in March 2026 after relinquishing his position as Director (HR) at Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited.

Objective of the Appointment

The appointment aims to strengthen human resource management, employee engagement, and organizational efficiency at NMDC. His role will focus on aligning personnel policies with corporate goals and improving workforce productivity.

About NMDC Limited

- NMDC is India's largest iron ore producer and operates under the Ministry of Steel.
- It is a Navratna Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE).
- Headquarters: Hyderabad
- Chairman-Cum-Managing Director: Amitava Mukherjee
- Plays a key role in supplying raw materials to the steel industry.

Vikram Doraiswami Appointed as India's Next Ambassador to China

Senior diplomat Vikram Doraiswami has been appointed as India's next Ambassador to China. He is currently serving as India's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom. He will succeed Pradeep Kumar Rawat. He is expected to take up the assignment shortly.

About Vikram Doraiswami

- Joined Indian Foreign Service in 1992.

Previously served as:

- Ambassador to South Korea, Uzbekistan
- High Commissioner to Bangladesh
- Has experience in China-related diplomacy and speaks Chinese language.
- Worked in India's Permanent Mission to the UN (New York).

India-China Relations

- Border dispute along Line of Actual Control (LAC)
- China is India's largest trading partner (goods trade)

Important Terms

- Ambassador → Diplomatic representative to a country
- High Commissioner → Diplomat between Commonwealth countries

China:

- Capital: Beijing
- Currency: Renminbi
- President: Xi Jinping

Arun Mammen Re-elected Chairman of Automotive Tyre Manufacturers' Association (ATMA)

Arun Mammen, Vice Chairman and Managing Director of MRF Ltd, has been re-elected as Chairman of the Automotive Tyre Manufacturers' Association (ATMA), the apex industry body representing India's tyre sector.

Along with his re-election, leadership changes were announced in ATMA:

- Rajarshi Moitra appointed as Vice Chairman
- Sanjay Chatterjee elevated as Director General, replacing Rajiv Budhraja (retiring March 2026)
- The move ensures continuity in leadership for India's tyre industry during a phase of growth and transition.

About ATMA

- Established: 1975
- It is the national industry body of the automotive tyre sector in India
- Represents a \$12 billion+ industry
- Member companies account for over 80% of tyre production in India

Chile Witnesses Major Political Shift as José Antonio Kast Takes Office as President

José Antonio Kast was sworn in as the President of Chile, marking the country's biggest right-wing political shift in decades.

Key Highlights

- José Antonio Kast assumed office as President of Chile succeeding Gabriel Boric.

- His victory represents the strongest shift toward right-wing politics since Chile's return to democracy in 1990.
- Kast won the 2025 presidential runoff election with about 58% votes, defeating left-wing candidate Jeannette Jara.
- He has described his administration as an "emergency government" aimed at addressing crime, economic stagnation, and illegal immigration.
- Protests occurred in cities like Santiago and Valparaíso following his inauguration, reflecting political divisions.

Chile:

- Capital: Santiago
- Currency: Chilean peso

Dr. Partha Biswas assumed charge as Member of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC)

Dr. Partha Biswas has assumed charge as Member of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC).

Role at NCSC:

- Will contribute to protection of constitutional safeguards for Scheduled Castes.
- Expected to support welfare and socio-economic development of SCs across India.
- Brings academic expertise and policy experience to strengthen the Commission's mandate.

NCSC:

The current Chairman of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) is Shri Kishor Makwana, who took charge in March 2024 and actively leads the commission in safeguarding the interests and rights of the Scheduled Castes community in India.

Govt appoints KV Ramana Murty as whole-time member of Sebi for 3-year term

The Government of India has appointed Kompella Venkata Ramana Murty as a Whole-Time Member (WTM) of the Securities and Exchange Board of India. The appointment has been made for a three-year term.

About the Appointment

- The appointment was approved by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC).
- The official announcement was made by the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA).

Background of K. V. Ramana Murty:

- 1991-batch officer of the Indian Defence Accounts Service.
- Previously served as Additional Controller General of Defence Accounts.
- Earlier worked as a part-time member of the SEBI board representing the Ministry of Corporate Affairs.

Composition of the SEBI Board:

- Chairman: Tuhin Kanta Pandey
- Assumed office on 1 March 2025.
- Whole-Time Members (WTMs):
 1. K. V. Ramana Murty
 2. Kamlesh Chandra Varshney
 3. Sandip Pradhan
 4. Amarjeet Singh

(Murty's appointment fills vacancies and brings the total number of whole-time members to four.)

Part-Time Members of SEBI Board

1. Deepti Gaur Mukerjee
2. Anuradha Thakur
3. Shirish Chandra Murmu
4. N. Venkatram

Role of Whole-Time Members in SEBI

Whole-time members play a key role in the functioning of SEBI:

- Participate in policy-making and decision-making
- Supervise investigations and enforcement actions
- Implement regulations related to capital markets
- Help maintain fair and transparent financial markets

R. M. Nachammai Becomes First Woman Chief Superintendent of Operational Nuclear Power Plant in India



R. M. Nachammai has become the first woman Chief Superintendent of an operational nuclear power plant in India. She will oversee reactor operations at the Kaiga Nuclear Power Station under Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited.

Awards and Recognition:

- Received the Vikram Sarabhai Award for topping the second batch of NPCIL engineer trainees.
- Awarded NPCIL Special Contribution Award in 2010, 2014 and 2017 for outstanding work.

About Kaiga Nuclear Power Station:

- The Kaiga Nuclear Power Station currently operates four 220 MWe Pressurized Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs).
- Total installed capacity: 880 MW.
- Units 5 and 6 are under development, which will increase capacity to 2,280 MW.

RN Ravi takes oath as 22nd Governor of West Bengal, succeeds CV Ananda Bose



R. N. Ravi was sworn in as the 22nd Governor of West Bengal. He replaced C. V. Ananda Bose, who resigned on March 5, 2026.

Previous Positions Held:

Before becoming Governor of West Bengal, R. N. Ravi served as:

- Governor of Nagaland
- Governor of Meghalaya
- 26th Governor of Tamil Nadu

Role in Peace and Security:

- Played a major role in conflict resolution in insurgency-affected regions.
- Appointed Centre's Interlocutor for Naga Peace Talks in 2014.
- Contributed to bringing several rebel groups into the mainstream peace process.
- Served as Deputy National Security Advisor of India in 2018.

Iran Appoints Mojtaba Khamenei as New Supreme Leader



Iran has named Mojtaba Khamenei as the new Supreme Leader of Iran, succeeding his father Ali Khamenei, who was killed in U.S.–Israeli airstrikes on 28 February 2026 amid escalating conflict in West Asia. The decision was taken by Iran's Assembly of Experts, the constitutional body responsible for selecting the country's supreme leader. Mojtaba Khamenei assumed office on 8 March 2026, becoming the third Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The appointment came during an ongoing regional conflict involving Iran, Israel and the United States, following the killing of Ali Khamenei in strikes targeting his compound in Tehran.

Supreme Leader of Iran

The Supreme Leader is the highest political and religious authority in Iran.

Holds control over:

- Armed forces
- Judiciary
- State broadcasting
- Appointment of key officials.

Previous Supreme Leaders of Iran

- Ruhollah Khomeini (1979–1989)
- Ali Khamenei
- Mojtaba Khamenei

Jio Platforms Appoints Dan Bailey as President

Jio Platforms Limited has appointed Dan Bailey as President to lead its international business initiatives

and support the company's global expansion strategy. Dan Bailey will be based in London and will report to Akash Ambani. He will oversee the company's international business strategy, focusing on expanding Jio's digital and telecom services beyond India. He will also become a member of the Executive Committee of Jio Platforms, contributing to strategic decision-making across the organisation.



Key Facts:

- Parent Company: Reliance Industries Limited.
- Telecom arm: Reliance Jio Infocomm Limited.
- Chairman of Reliance Industries: Mukesh Ambani.
- Chairman of Reliance Jio Infocomm: Akash Ambani.

Senior IAS Officer Nidhi Chhibber Assumes Additional Charge as CEO of NITI Aayog



The Government of India has assigned additional charge of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of NITI Aayog to Nidhi Chhibber, a senior Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, following the completion of the extended tenure of B. V. R. Subrahmanyam. She will serve in this interim capacity until a regular CEO is appointed or until further orders. Nidhi Chhibber is a 1994-batch IAS officer of the Chhattisgarh cadre. She is currently the Director General of the Development Monitoring and

Evaluation Office (DMEO) within NITI Aayog, focusing on outcome-based monitoring and evaluation of flagship government programmes.

About NITI Aayog

- NITI Aayog (National Institution for Transforming India) was formed in January 2015, replacing the Planning Commission to serve as a policy think tank of the Government of India.
- The Prime Minister of India serves as its Chairperson. Other members include the Vice-Chairperson, CEO, and full-time/part-time members.
- Its core functions include strategic policy formulation, cooperative federalism, and evaluation of government programmes.
- Chairperson: Narendra Modi
- Vice Chairperson: Suman Bery

01 March

Zero Discrimination Day



INCEPTION: 2015
EDITION: 12th
1ST CELEBRATED: 2014 (By UN)
2026 THEME:
Save lives: Decriminalise

Importance

In 2014, the UN first celebrated this day to spread the idea of Zero Discrimination after UNAIDS launched its Zero Discrimination Campaign on World AIDS Day in December 2015. A day which is universal in nature and does not confine itself to HIV or health related themes and aims to highlight issues related to discrimination.

Motto

To promote equality before the law and in practice throughout all of the member countries of the UN.

Organisation Involved

UN & UNAIDS

Note

• Discrimination and gender inequality remain a huge barrier for women and girls with a serious impact on the AIDS response.

National News

Supreme Court Ruling on SC/ST Benefits After Religious Conversion

The Supreme Court of India has ruled that a person who converts to a religion other than Hinduism, Sikhism, or Buddhism cannot claim Scheduled Caste (SC) status or related benefits. The Court upheld an earlier High Court judgment and clarified that caste-based protections are legally linked to specific religions under existing constitutional provisions.

Key Observations of the Court

- Conversion to religions like Christianity or Islam leads to immediate loss of SC status, irrespective of birth.
- A person cannot simultaneously follow another religion and claim SC identity, as both are legally incompatible.
- SC benefits such as reservation and protection under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 are not available after such conversion.

Position of Scheduled Tribes (STs)

- Unlike SCs, Scheduled Tribe (ST) status is not strictly religion-based.
- ST recognition depends on:
 - Tribal customs and way of life
 - Social acceptance by the tribal community
 - If conversion leads to loss of tribal identity and community ties, ST benefits may also be affected.

Constitutional & Legal Basis

- Governed by the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950
- SC status is restricted to Hindus (1950), Sikhs (1956), and Buddhists (1990 amendment)
- Linked to Article 341 of the Indian Constitution, which empowers the President to specify SC communities

Significance of the Judgment

- Reinforces the religion-linked nature of SC status in India
- Clarifies long-standing legal ambiguity regarding conversion and reservation benefits
- Has implications for reservation policies, affirmative action, and social justice debates

Additional Facts

- SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989: Provides legal protection against caste-based discrimination

- Reservation System in India: Based on historical social disadvantage, not only economic criteria
- Re-conversion Rule: A person may regain SC status only if:
 - Returns to original religion
 - Proves caste identity
 - Gains acceptance from the community

Gujarat Passes Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill, 2026

The Gujarat Legislative Assembly has passed the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill, 2026 after an extensive debate, marking a significant step toward creating a common legal framework for all citizens irrespective of religion. The bill standardizes laws related to marriage, divorce, succession, and live-in relationships, aiming to ensure equality and uniformity in personal laws across the state.

Key Provisions of the Bill

The UCC introduces uniform rules governing personal matters, including mandatory registration of marriages and live-in relationships. It also prohibits polygamy (bigamy) and establishes legal recognition and safeguards for live-in relationships, including rights for women and children. Additionally, the bill provides clear guidelines for inheritance and succession.

Exemptions and Scope

The provisions of the UCC do not apply to Scheduled Tribes (STs) and certain communities with protected customary rights. The law will apply across Gujarat and even to residents of the state living outside its territory.

Objectives and Significance

The primary aim of the bill is to promote equality, gender justice, and legal uniformity by removing differences in personal laws based on religion. It is also seen as a move toward fulfilling Article 44 of the Directive Principles of State Policy, which advocates for a Uniform Civil Code in India.

Gujarat:

- Capital: Gandhinagar
- Largest City: Ahmedabad
- Chief Minister: Bhupendra Patel
- Governor: Acharya Devvrat
- Formation: 1 May 1960 (separated from Bombay State)
- Official Language: Gujarati

- High Court: Gujarat High Court (Ahmedabad)
- Famous National Park: Gir National Park (only home of Asiatic lions)
- Major Rivers: Narmada, Tapi, Sabarmati
- Important Ports: Kandla Port, Mundra Port
- Important Places:
- Statue of Unity (World's tallest statue)
- Somnath Temple

Karnataka Assembly Clears Bills on Honour Killings & Manuscript Preservation

The Karnataka Legislative Assembly has passed key bills, including one to curb honour killings and another to preserve and digitise ancient manuscripts, aiming to strengthen social justice and cultural heritage protection.

Bill to Curb Honour Killings

- The Assembly cleared the Karnataka Freedom of Choice in Marriage and Prevention and Prohibition of Crimes in the Name of Honour and Tradition Bill, 2026 (also called Eva Nammava Bill).
- Seeks to prevent honour-based crimes linked to inter-caste/interfaith marriages
- Upholds the right of adults to choose their partners freely
- Provides strict punishment (minimum imprisonment for such crimes)
- Covers not just killings but also violence, intimidation, and social boycott

The Bill is based on constitutional rights such as:

- Article 14 (Equality)
- Article 19 (Freedom)
- Article 21 (Right to Life & Liberty)

Bill for Manuscript Preservation & Digitisation

- The Assembly also passed the Karnataka Jnana Bhandar Manuscripts and Digitisation Bill.
- Proposes setting up a dedicated authority for manuscripts
- Aims to digitise ~5 lakh pages annually
- Focus on preserving ancient knowledge, culture, and heritage

Significance of the Bills

- Strengthens protection of individual rights and social equality
- Addresses rising cases of honour-based violence
- Promotes digital preservation of India's cultural heritage
- Enhances good governance and record management

CAPF Bill 2026 & IPS Deputation

The Central Government is set to introduce the CAPF (General Administration) Bill, 2026, which seeks to formalise and retain the deputation of IPS officers in senior positions of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs).

- Background: Supreme Court Verdict (2025)
- In May 2025, the Supreme Court of India ruled that:
 - CAPF officers should be treated as Organised Group 'A' Services (OGAS)
 - IPS deputation in CAPFs should be progressively reduced (up to IG level) within 2 years
 - A cadre review should be conducted to improve promotion opportunities
 - The Court also dismissed the Centre's review petition in October 2025, making the ruling final.

Key Provisions of CAPF Bill 2026

- Provides statutory backing to IPS deputation in CAPFs
- Proposes reservation of senior posts for IPS officers:
 - 50% of IG posts
 - 67% of ADG posts
 - 100% of DG posts
- Empowers the Central Government to frame recruitment, promotion, and service rules

Key Issue / Controversy

- The Bill is seen as contradicting the Supreme Court judgment, which aimed to reduce IPS deputation
- Critics argue it may:
 - Limit promotion opportunities of CAPF cadre officers
 - Continue IPS dominance in leadership positions

Government's Justification

- Ensures better coordination between Centre and States
- Improves operational efficiency and leadership in security forces

Biopharma SHAKTI Initiative

The Government of India has proposed the Biopharma SHAKTI initiative in the Union Budget 2026-27 with an outlay of ₹10,000 crore over five years. The scheme aims to strengthen India's biopharmaceutical sector and position the country as a global biomanufacturing hub.

Objective of the Initiative

The initiative focuses on promoting domestic development and manufacturing of biologics and biosimilars, reducing import dependence, and enhancing India's competitiveness in the global supply chain. It also aims to support innovation in advanced therapies and improve healthcare outcomes.

Key Features of the Scheme

- Financial outlay of ₹10,000 crore (5 years)
- Focus on biologics, biosimilars, and advanced therapies
- Development of biomanufacturing ecosystem and R&D infrastructure
- Creation of clinical trial networks and strengthening regulatory systems
- Expansion and upgradation of NIPER institutions for skill development

Significance for India

The initiative marks a strategic shift from India being a generic medicine supplier to becoming a global innovation-driven biopharma hub. It will help India address rising cases of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cancer, diabetes, and autoimmune disorders through advanced biological medicines.

Chhattisgarh Freedom of Religion Bill, 2026

The Chhattisgarh Legislative Assembly has passed the Chhattisgarh Freedom of Religion Bill, 2026 to curb unlawful religious conversions carried out through force, fraud, inducement, or misrepresentation.

Key Highlights

- The Bill provides stringent punishment for illegal conversions, especially mass conversions, with imprisonment ranging from 10 years to life imprisonment and fines of ₹25 lakh or more.
- Conversion of vulnerable groups such as women, minors, and SC/ST communities attracts stricter penalties (minimum long-term imprisonment).

The law targets conversions carried out through:

- Force
- Allurement
- Fraud
- Undue influence

Prior declaration and verification mechanism:

- Individuals intending to convert must inform authorities
- Local administration may verify the conversion process

Offences under the Bill are:

- Cognisable and non-bailable
- Tried in special courts

Objective of the Law

- Prevent forced or fraudulent religious conversions
- Ensure transparency in religious conversion process
- Maintain public order and social harmony

Additional Key Facts

Constitutional Provision

- Article 25 of the Indian Constitution guarantees freedom of religion, subject to reasonable restrictions.

Anti-Conversion Laws in India

Several states have similar laws, including:

- Odisha (1967)
- Madhya Pradesh
- Uttar Pradesh
- Gujarat

Common Features of Such Laws

- Ban on conversion through coercion or inducement
- Requirement of prior notice to district authorities
- Enhanced punishment for mass conversions

Judicial Aspect

- Anti-conversion laws are currently under judicial scrutiny in the Supreme Court regarding their constitutional validity.

Government Launches ₹497 Crore 'RELIEF' Scheme to Support Exporters Amid Middle East Conflict

The Government of India launched the RELIEF (Resilience & Logistics Intervention for Export Facilitation) Scheme with an outlay of ₹497 crore. The scheme aims to support Indian exporters affected by the ongoing conflict in West Asia/Middle East.

It addresses challenges such as:

- Rising freight costs
- Increased insurance premiums
- Shipping delays and disruptions

Objective of the Scheme

- To ensure continuity of exports and prevent trade disruptions.
- To protect India's market share in Gulf and West Asian regions.
- To enhance resilience of exporters, especially MSMEs.

Key Features of RELIEF Scheme

The scheme has three major components:

1. Support for existing shipments (protection & obligation relief)
2. Enhanced insurance coverage for future exports
3. Special support for MSMEs facing cost pressures

- Implemented through the Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (ECGC).
- Provides higher risk coverage (up to ~95–100%) in certain cases.
- Includes daily monitoring mechanism for trade disruptions.

Coverage Area

- Focus on Gulf and West Asia trade corridors.
- Covers exports to around 17 countries, including major Gulf nations.

Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026 seeks to amend the 2019 Act. It proposes to remove the provision of “self-perceived gender identity” for legal recognition. Introduces a system of medical boards/screening committees for issuing transgender identity certificates. The role of the District Magistrate (DM) will depend on recommendations of such committees.

Background

- The original Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 allowed identity based on self-perception.
- The landmark NALSA v. Union of India (2014) judgment by the Supreme Court:
- Recognised transgender persons as the third gender
- Upheld the right to self-identify gender without medical tests

Key Changes Proposed in 2026 Bill

- Removal of self-identification principle
- Mandatory medical/official verification before granting identity
- Revised definition of “transgender person”
- Provision for stricter punishments for crimes against transgender persons

Concerns & Criticism

- Seen as a rollback of rights guaranteed under the NALSA judgment

Government's Rationale

- To prevent misuse of welfare schemes meant for transgender persons
- To ensure benefits reach genuine beneficiaries through verification
- Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment: Virendra Kumar Khatik

Supreme Court Ruling on Maternity Leave for Adoptive Mothers

The Supreme Court of India struck down the provision that limited maternity leave only if the adopted child was below 3 months of age. The Court held that adoptive mothers are entitled to 12 weeks of maternity leave, regardless of the child's age. The restriction under Section 60(4) of the Code on Social Security, 2020 was declared violative of Articles 14 and 21 (equality and right to life).

Key Observations by the Court

- Motherhood is not limited to biological childbirth; adoption is equally a form of parenthood.
- The objective of maternity benefits is to support care, bonding, and child development, not just childbirth.
- Denying leave based on the child's age is discriminatory and arbitrary.
- Adoption is part of reproductive autonomy under Article 21.

Paternity Leave Observation

- The Court urged the government to introduce a law on paternity leave as a social security benefit.
- It emphasized the importance of both parents' presence in a child's early development.

Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017:

- Provides 26 weeks leave for biological mothers
- Earlier allowed 12 weeks leave for adoptive mothers (child below 3 months)

Code on Social Security, 2020:

- Consolidates labour laws including maternity benefits

Important Case Link:

- Deepika Singh v. Central Administrative Tribunal – Expanded definition of “family” and maternity rights

Union Cabinet approved the Small Hydro Power Development Scheme

The Union Cabinet approved the Small Hydro Power (SHP) Development Scheme for the period FY 2026–27 to FY 2030–31.

- Total outlay: ₹2,500+ crore (approx. ₹2,584 crore).
- Target: Development of ~1500 MW capacity through small hydro projects.
- Focus areas: Remote, rural, hilly, and North-Eastern regions.

Features of the Scheme

- Covers Small Hydro Projects (SHP) with capacity between 1 MW to 25 MW.

Provides Central Financial Assistance (CFA):

- Up to ₹3.6 crore per MW or 30% of project cost (whichever is lower)
- Maximum limit: ₹30 crore per project (special support for NE and border areas)
- Encourages preparation of Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) for around 200 projects.
- Promotes run-of-the-river projects (minimal environmental impact, no large dams).

Additional Facts

- Small Hydro Power (SHP): Projects up to 25 MW capacity.
- India's estimated SHP potential: ~20 GW.
- First hydro project in India: Darjeeling (1897).
- Implementing Ministry: Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE)
- Part of India's broader push toward clean energy transition and Net Zero goals

Cabinet approves Rs 33K crore BHAVYA industrial cluster scheme

The Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojana (BHAVYA) is a major initiative approved by the Union Cabinet with a total outlay of ₹33,660 crore. The scheme aims to accelerate industrial growth in India by developing modern industrial infrastructure and strengthening the manufacturing sector. It is part of the broader vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat and Viksit Bharat, focusing on making India a global manufacturing hub.

Objective of the Scheme

The primary objective of the BHAVYA scheme is to promote manufacturing, attract both domestic and foreign investments, and generate large-scale employment opportunities. It also seeks to improve the Ease of Doing Business by providing ready-to-use industrial infrastructure, thereby reducing delays in setting up industries.

Key Features

- A major highlight of the scheme is the development of 100 plug-and-play industrial parks across the country over a period of approximately 6 years.
- These parks will offer pre-approved land along with essential facilities such as electricity, water, and clearances, enabling industries to begin operations quickly. The parks will typically range between 100 to 1000 acres in size.

- The scheme also provides financial assistance of up to ₹1 crore per acre and will be implemented through a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model involving central government, state governments, and private players.
- Additionally, there is a strong emphasis on creating green and sustainable infrastructure.

Economic and Employment Impact

- The BHAVYA scheme is expected to significantly boost India's industrial ecosystem by enhancing manufacturing capacity and improving supply chains.
- It is projected to generate around 15 lakh direct jobs, along with numerous indirect employment opportunities in sectors such as logistics and services.
- This will contribute to overall economic growth and regional development.

Additional Facts:

- The scheme was announced as part of the Union Budget 2026 and is aligned with the National Industrial Corridor Development Programme (NICDP). It complements other government initiatives like the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme, which also aims to strengthen domestic manufacturing. Industrial corridors such as the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC) further support the objectives of this scheme.

Parliament Passes Appropriation Bill, 2026

The Indian Parliament has passed the Appropriation Bill, 2026, completing a crucial stage of the Union Budget process. The Bill was passed by both Houses of Parliament (Lok Sabha & Rajya Sabha). It authorizes the withdrawal of funds from the Consolidated Fund of India for government expenditure in FY 2025–26.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman stated that:

- Government budgeting is transparent and realistic.
- India's economy is in a strong position.
- ₹57,000+ crore allocated towards Economic Stabilisation Fund.
- Capital expenditure has increased 4.2 times (2017–18 to 2026–27).

What is an Appropriation Bill?

It is introduced under Article 114 of the Constitution. It allows the government to withdraw money from the Consolidated Fund of India. It is a Money Bill → Rajya Sabha can only recommend changes (cannot reject).

Consolidated Fund of India

- Defined under Article 266(1).

Includes:

- All revenues received by the Government
 - Loans raised
 - Receipts from loans
 - No money can be withdrawn without parliamentary approval.
-

UPSC's New Rule: Supreme Court Approval Mandatory for Delay in Appointment of State DGPs

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), in line with directions of the Supreme Court of India, has introduced stricter rules for the appointment of State Director Generals of Police (DGPs) to ensure timely and transparent selection.

- SC approval mandatory for delay: State governments must obtain prior permission from the Supreme Court if there is any delay in sending the list of eligible officers to UPSC.
- Advance timeline rule: States must send proposals at least 3 months before the retirement of the incumbent DGP.
- No "Acting DGP" concept: Appointment of acting/temporary DGPs is not allowed.
- UPSC cannot ignore delays: UPSC has no authority to condone major delays without SC approval.

Key Provisions / Guidelines

- Panel System: UPSC prepares a panel of 3 senior IPS officers for selection.
- Exceptional Cases for Delay (Allowed):
 - Death of incumbent DGP
 - Resignation
 - Premature removal
 - (Only in such cases, delay may be considered)

Without SC nod: UPSC cannot proceed with empanelment if delay occurs.

Background

- Based on the landmark Prakash Singh vs Union of India (2006) judgment.
- DGP tenure: Minimum 2-year fixed tenure recommended by SC.

Why This Rule Was Introduced?**Many states were:**

- Delaying submission of proposals
 - Appointing acting DGPs to bypass rules
 - This led to non-compliance with Supreme Court guidelines.
-

Maharashtra Assembly Passes Freedom of Religion Bill, 2026

- The Maharashtra Legislative Assembly passed the Freedom of Religion Bill, 2026 on 16 March 2026 to regulate religious conversions in the state.

Key Points for Exams

- The bill aims to prevent unlawful religious conversions.
- It targets conversions done through force, fraud, inducement, or marriage.
- The bill will now be sent to the Legislative Council for approval.

Key Provisions**Punishment:**

- Imprisonment up to 7–10 years along with a fine.

Prior Notice:

- Individuals must give a 60-day prior notice to authorities before conversion.

Post-Declaration:

- Declaration must be submitted within 21 days after conversion.

Burden of Proof:

- Lies on the accused person to prove that conversion was not illegal.

Nature of Offence:

- Cognisable and non-bailable offence.
- Marriage-related Conversion:
- Conversion done for the purpose of marriage is also punishable.

Similar anti-conversion laws exist in several Indian states such as:

- Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh.
 - These laws are often debated in the context of Article 25 of the Indian Constitution, which guarantees freedom of religion.
 - Such laws have also faced judicial scrutiny in courts over concerns of misuse.
-

India Exports First GI-Tagged Joha Rice Consignment from Assam to UK and Italy

India exported the first consignment of 25 metric tonnes of GI-tagged Joha rice from Assam to the United Kingdom and Italy on 12 March 2026, facilitated by the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Key Highlights

- The export was facilitated by Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA).
- The 25-metric-tonne consignment was sent from Assam to the United Kingdom and Italy.
- The shipment was organised in collaboration with the Assam Department of Agriculture.
- The export aims to promote indigenous agricultural products from Northeast India in global markets.
- It is expected to increase income opportunities for farmers and boost India's agricultural exports.

About Joha Rice

- Joha Rice is a short-grain aromatic rice variety traditionally grown in Assam.
- It is known for its distinct fragrance, soft texture and rich taste.
- The rice received Geographical Indication (GI) status in 2017, recognising its unique origin and traditional cultivation.
- Major producing districts include Sivasagar, Jorhat, Golaghat, Nagaon and Majuli.
- The crop is cultivated across over 21,000 hectares in Assam, producing around 43,000 metric tonnes annually.

Role of APEDA

- Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority is a statutory body established under the APEDA Act, 1985.
- It functions under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- The authority promotes export of agricultural and processed food products and helps connect Indian producers with global markets.
- APEDA also promotes GI-tagged agricultural products internationally.

Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026 Introduced in Lok Sabha

Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Virendra Kumar introduced the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026 in the Lok Sabha to amend the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019.

Key Highlights of the Bill

- The Bill proposes changes in the legal definition of a transgender person to provide clearer identification for benefits and protections.
- It excludes individuals with different sexual orientations or self-perceived gender identity from

the legal definition of transgender persons under the Act.

- The Bill recognises socio-cultural identities such as kinner, hijra, aravani, jogta and eunuch, along with persons having intersex variations.
- It proposes stricter and graded punishments for crimes against transgender persons and for coercive acts like forced gender alteration.
- A medical board may assist in the process of certification, with the final certificate issued by the District Magistrate.
- The amendment aims to ensure that government welfare benefits reach the intended transgender community facing social exclusion.

Background: Transgender Rights Law in India

- The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 provides for protection of rights and welfare of transgender persons in India.
- The Act prohibits discrimination in education, employment, healthcare, and access to public services.
- It allows transgender persons to apply for a certificate of identity from the District Magistrate to update their official documents.

Institutional Mechanism

- The National Council for Transgender Persons was established in 2020 to advise the government on policies and welfare measures related to the transgender community.

CEC Removal Motion: Legal Provisions for Removing the Chief Election Commissioner**Why in News?**

The Opposition is planning to move an impeachment motion against Gyanesh Kumar, the Chief Election Commissioner of the Election Commission of India. The allegation is related to biased conduct during the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls, particularly in West Bengal.

Constitutional Provision

The removal of the CEC is governed by Article 324(5) of the Constitution of India.

Key provisions:

- The Chief Election Commissioner can be removed in the same manner as a Supreme Court judge.
- Other Election Commissioners can be removed only on the recommendation of the CEC.

Legal Framework

- Parliament enacted the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners

(Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023.

- Section 11 of the Act explains the procedure for resignation and removal of the CEC and Election Commissioners.

Grounds for Removal

- The grounds are the same as those for removing a Supreme Court judge under Article 124(4) of the Constitution of India:
- Proved Misbehaviour

Incapacity

- Procedure for Removal of the CEC
- Initiation of Motion

Removal motion must be signed by:

- 100 members of the Lok Sabha, or 50 members of the Rajya Sabha.

Admission of Motion

- The motion is submitted to:
- Speaker of Lok Sabha, or Chairman of Rajya Sabha.
- They decide whether to admit or reject the motion.

Investigation Committee

- If admitted, a three-member committee is formed:
- One Supreme Court Judge
- One Chief Justice of a High Court
- One Distinguished Jurist

Parliamentary Voting

- If the committee proves the charges, Parliament votes on the motion.
- The motion must be passed by:
- Majority of total membership of each House, and Two-thirds majority of members present and voting.

Final Removal

After approval by both Houses in the same session, the recommendation is sent to the President of India, who issues the final removal order.

Maharashtra Assembly Passes Stamp (Amendment) Bill, 2026

The Maharashtra Legislative Assembly passed the Maharashtra Stamp (Amendment) Bill, 2026 to ensure faster disposal of pending stamp duty cases and improve administrative efficiency in the revenue department. The Bill was passed unanimously during the Budget Session of the Maharashtra Legislature. The amendment modifies Section 52(A) of the Maharashtra Stamp Act, decentralising financial powers within the department so that lower-level officials can decide higher-value cases, reducing the burden on senior

authorities. Earlier, many cases remained pending with the Inspector General of Registration (IGR) due to limited decision-making powers at the local level. The amendment allows officials such as Collectors and Deputy Inspectors General to adjudicate stamp duty disputes, thereby reducing delays and the need for citizens to travel to Mumbai for case resolution.

Maharashtra Stamp Act

- The Maharashtra Stamp Act, 1958 governs levy and collection of stamp duty on property transactions and legal documents in the state.
- Stamp duty is charged on instruments such as:
- Sale deeds
- Lease agreements
- Mortgage deeds
- Gift deeds

Importance of Stamp Duty

Stamp duty is a major source of revenue for state governments, especially from real estate transactions. Maharashtra earns a significant share of revenue from property registration and stamp duty collections, particularly in cities like Mumbai, Pune, and Thane.

Administrative Structure

Inspector General of Registration (IGR) oversees property registration and stamp duty administration in the state. Decentralisation aims to reduce backlog, increase efficiency, and improve ease of property registration.

Uttar Pradesh Government Launches 'Project GANGA' to Expand Rural Broadband Connectivity

The Project GANGA has been launched by the Government of Uttar Pradesh to provide high-speed broadband internet to around 20 lakh households in rural and semi-urban areas across the state over the next 2–3 years. The initiative aims to strengthen digital connectivity, improve access to online services, and boost the rural digital economy.

MoU with Private Sector Partner

- To implement the project, the State Transformation Commission signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with One OTT Entertainment Limited, which is part of the Hinduja Group.
- The collaboration will help expand digital infrastructure and deliver broadband services in villages.

Role of Local Entrepreneurs

- Under the project, about 8,000–10,000 local entrepreneurs at the Nyaya Panchayat level will be trained as Digital Service Providers (DSPs).
- These DSPs will deliver high-speed broadband and other digital services to rural households.

Employment Generation

The initiative is expected to generate over 1 lakh direct and indirect employment opportunities, especially for rural youth engaged in service delivery, installation, and maintenance of digital infrastructure.

Importance of the Project

The project aims to:

- Expand digital connectivity in rural areas
- Improve access to e-governance services
- Support online education, telemedicine, and digital payments
- Promote rural entrepreneurship and employment

Government Invokes Essential Commodities Act to Ensure Uninterrupted LPG Supply

The Government of India has invoked the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 to ensure uninterrupted supply of Liquefied Petroleum Gas across the country. The decision was taken to prevent shortages and maintain stable availability of LPG for domestic consumers amid rising demand.

Measures to Increase LPG Production

Under this directive, oil refineries and petrochemical plants have been instructed to maximise LPG production. They have also been asked to divert certain hydrocarbon streams toward LPG output so that domestic consumption needs can be met without disruption.

Regulation of Natural Gas Supply

Along with invoking the Act, the government issued the Natural Gas (Supply Regulation) Order, 2026 to regulate the production and allocation of natural gas, including imported liquefied natural gas. The order aims to ensure a balanced distribution of gas among different sectors.

Priority Sectors for Gas Allocation

Priority in gas allocation will be given to critical sectors such as:

- Domestic PNG (Piped Natural Gas) supply
- CNG used in transportation
- LPG production
- Fertiliser plants
- Pipeline compressor fuel requirements

This prioritisation ensures that essential energy needs and key industries continue functioning smoothly.

Key Facts:

- The Essential Commodities Act, 1955 empowers the central government to regulate the production, supply, and distribution of essential commodities.
- Its objective is to prevent hoarding, black marketing, and price manipulation of essential goods.
- Commodities covered may include food items, petroleum products, fertilisers, and medicines.
- The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020 relaxed stock limits on agricultural commodities except in extraordinary situations like war, famine, natural calamities, or extraordinary price rise.
- LPG is one of the most widely used household cooking fuels in India and is distributed mainly through public sector oil marketing companies.

Lakhpati Bitiya Yojana Launched in Delhi

The Delhi government launched the Lakhpati Bitiya Yojana, a welfare scheme aimed at promoting financial security and education for the girl child in the national capital. The initiative was launched with titled “Sashakt Naari, Samridh Delhi.”

Objective of the Scheme

The scheme aims to ensure that girls do not drop out of education due to financial constraints and to strengthen the economic empowerment of women and girls in Delhi.

Key Features of the Scheme

- The government will deposit financial assistance in stages from birth until higher education.
- The deposited amount, along with interest, will accumulate to around ₹1 lakh or more by maturity.
- The amount is transferred directly into the Aadhaar-linked bank account of the girl child through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).
- The final maturity amount is available when the girl turns 21 years old or completes graduation/diploma studies.

Eligibility Criteria

- The girl child must be born in Delhi.
- The family should have been residing in Delhi for at least three years.
- The annual family income should not exceed ₹1.20 lakh.
- A maximum of two girl children per family can avail the benefits.

International Events

Trump's 15-Point Peace Plan for Iran

U.S. President Donald Trump has proposed a 15-point peace framework aimed at ending the ongoing conflict with Iran and stabilizing the West Asian region. The proposal focuses on ceasefire, nuclear restrictions, and reopening critical global energy routes.

Key Provisions of the Plan

- Complete halt to Iran's nuclear program, including uranium enrichment and dismantling of facilities
- Ban on ballistic missile development and reduction of support to militant groups
- Reopening and ensuring free navigation through the Strait of Hormuz, a vital global oil route
- Proposal of a temporary ceasefire (around one month) to enable negotiations
- In return, the U.S. may offer:
 - Sanctions relief
 - Support for civilian nuclear energy programme

Strategic Importance of Strait of Hormuz

- The Strait of Hormuz carries about 20% of global oil and energy supplies, making it one of the world's most critical chokepoints
- The plan proposes declaring it a "free maritime zone", ensuring uninterrupted global trade
- Iran's control over the strait gives it significant geopolitical leverage, which the plan seeks to limit

Iran's Response & Challenges

- Iran has shown skepticism and rejection of the proposal, calling it unrealistic
- Tehran demands:
 - Removal of U.S. military presence in the region
 - War reparations and security guarantees
- Ongoing conflict and mistrust make the plan difficult to implement

Significance of the Plan

- Aims to de-escalate West Asia conflict and stabilize global oil markets
- Could reduce energy price volatility, impacting countries like India
- Reflects the use of diplomacy combined with strategic pressure in global politics

Additional Facts:

- The conflict began in 2026 after U.S.-Israel strikes on Iran, leading to closure of the Strait of Hormuz
- Disruptions in the strait caused sharp rise in global oil prices

- The plan involves mediators like Pakistan, Turkey, and Egypt
- Similar past agreement: Iran Nuclear Deal (JCPOA, 2015) (later withdrawn by the U.S.)
- West Asia (Middle East) is crucial for global energy security and geopolitics

U.S. Army Launches Digital Marketplace for Drone Procurement

The United States Army has introduced a new digital marketplace for Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) aimed at accelerating the procurement of drones and expanding access to advanced unmanned technologies. This initiative is designed to modernize the traditional defence acquisition process, which is often slow and complex, by providing a faster and more efficient platform for purchasing drone systems.

Key Points

- The platform acts as a one-stop digital marketplace for purchasing vetted drone systems.
- It enables Army units, government agencies, and allied nations to compare, evaluate, and procure drones efficiently.
- Developed in collaboration with Amazon Web Services (AWS) and the Army Enterprise Cloud Management Agency.
- Includes features like:
 - Product comparison tools
 - Feedback mechanisms
 - Direct ordering system
- Aims to reduce procurement delays and deliver technology faster to soldiers.
- Marks a shift from traditional, slow defence procurement systems to a more agile and transparent model.
- Also intended to streamline foreign military sales (FMS) and strengthen defence partnerships.

Additional Facts:

- UAS (Unmanned Aircraft Systems): Includes drones along with their control systems and communication links.
- The marketplace is described as an "Amazon-like platform" for military drone procurement.
- This initiative aligns with the U.S. military's broader push toward rapid acquisition and

- deployment of emerging technologies, especially drones.
- The U.S. Army is increasingly focusing on mass deployment of low-cost drones, influenced by modern warfare trends (e.g., Ukraine conflict).
 - The move helps expand the defence industrial base by allowing participation from more private and innovative firms.

Slovenia Introduces Fuel Rationing

Slovenia has become the first country in the European Union to introduce fuel rationing amid ongoing global energy disruptions.

Why was Fuel Rationing Introduced?

- Energy crisis triggered by US–Israel–Iran conflict
- Disruptions in global oil supply routes (especially Gulf region)
- Sharp rise in fuel prices across Europe

Key Provisions of Fuel Rationing

- Private vehicles: Maximum 50 litres/day
- Businesses & farmers: Maximum 200 litres/day

What is “Fuel Tourism”?

- People from neighbouring countries (like Austria) crossing borders to buy cheaper fuel in Slovenia
- This increased demand worsened supply pressure

Ground Situation in Slovenia

- Government clarified that fuel stocks are sufficient
- Issue is mainly distribution and sudden surge in demand
- Army deployed to assist fuel supply operations

Global Context

- Many countries are taking emergency steps like:
- Fuel subsidies
- Export restrictions
- Release of oil reserves
- Energy crisis linked to instability in oil transit routes like the Strait of Hormuz

Slovenia:

- Capital: Ljubljana
- Currency: Euro (€)
- Member of: EU, NATO

European Nations & Japan Agree to Ensure Security of Strait of Hormuz

Six countries — United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, and Japan — agreed to join efforts to ensure safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz.

- The decision comes amid rising tensions in the Gulf region affecting global trade and energy supply.
- These countries condemned attacks on commercial vessels and energy infrastructure in the region.

Objective of the Initiative

- To ensure freedom of navigation in international waters.
- To stabilize global energy markets and prevent supply disruptions.
- To support safe maritime trade routes, especially oil shipments.

Key Features

Countries expressed readiness to:

- Contribute to joint security efforts
- Participate in international coordination mechanisms

Emphasis on:

- Diplomatic and cooperative approach
- Avoiding escalation while ensuring security

Support for:

- Increasing oil production
- Releasing strategic petroleum reserves to stabilize markets

Related Concepts

- Freedom of Navigation → Principle under international law (UNCLOS)
- Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR) → Emergency stockpiles of crude oil

China Passes New Ethnic Unity Law

Law Approved by Chinese Legislature

China has enacted a new law titled “Law on Promoting Ethnic Unity and Progress” to strengthen national integration among its diverse ethnic communities. The law was passed by the National People's Congress on 12 March 2026 and signed by Chinese President **Xi Jinping. It is scheduled to come into force on 1 July 2026. The legislation aims to foster a shared national identity and unity among China's ethnic groups, but it has also raised concerns among scholars and rights groups about its potential impact on minority cultures and languages.

Key Provisions of the Law

The law requires government bodies, schools, and social organisations to promote “a common consciousness of the Chinese nation.” It also emphasises the use of Mandarin Chinese in education and public life, even though it formally states that minority languages will be respected.

Other provisions include:

- Promoting interaction and integration among different ethnic groups.
- Strengthening national unity, sovereignty, and social stability.
- Encouraging patriotic education and loyalty to the state.
- Penalising activities that allegedly undermine ethnic unity or promote separatism.

Concerns and Criticism

- Critics argue that the law could increase assimilation pressure on minority communities, particularly in regions such as Xinjiang, Tibet, and Inner Mongolia, where minority languages and cultural practices have already faced restrictions.
- Human rights groups warn that the legislation could limit cultural and religious freedoms of minorities and further institutionalise existing assimilation policies in China.

Energy Security at Sea: Why the Strait of Hormuz and the Suez Canal Matter More Than Ever

Strategic maritime routes such as the Strait of Hormuz and the Suez Canal play a critical role in ensuring global energy security and stability of international oil markets. Disruptions in these chokepoints can lead to energy supply shocks and volatility in global oil prices.

Geography and Global Energy Transport:

- Global energy supply is influenced not only by production but also by geography and transport routes.
- A few narrow maritime corridors (chokepoints) carry a large portion of the world's oil and natural gas trade.
- These corridors are essential for linking major energy-producing regions with global markets.

Strait of Hormuz: Critical Oil Transit Route:

- The Strait of Hormuz connects the Persian Gulf with global shipping lanes.
- Located between Iran and Oman.

Major Facts:

- Around 20–21 million barrels of oil per day pass through this route.
- Accounts for nearly one-fifth of global petroleum consumption.
- Key oil exporters using this route include:
 - Saudi Arabia
 - Iraq
 - Kuwait
 - United Arab Emirates

Strategic Importance:

- A large share of global oil exports from the Middle East passes through this strait.

Suez Canal: Energy and Trade Corridor:

- The Suez Canal is a man-made canal connecting the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea.
- It acts as a vital bridge between Asian energy exporters and European markets.

Major Facts:

- Roughly 8–9 million barrels of oil and petroleum products daily move through the canal and the SUMED Pipeline.
- Ships using this route avoid traveling around the Cape of Good Hope.

Strategic Importance:

- If shipping through the canal is disrupted, vessels must travel around the Cape of Good Hope, increasing time and transportation costs.
- Disruptions can impact global supply chains and energy markets.

Impact of Disruptions on Energy Markets:

- Shipping delays or security risks can affect tanker traffic and energy logistics.
- Even the perception of disruption may lead to:
 - Increase in global oil prices
 - Market volatility
 - Higher transportation and energy costs

Energy Logistics in the Global Economy:

- Energy security depends not only on production and reserves but also on safe transportation routes.
- Oil and natural gas continue to play a major role in the global energy mix, despite the growth of renewable energy.
- Stability of maritime routes remains essential for maintaining global energy supply chains.

Nepal Election 2026: Rastriya Swatantra Party Secures Historic Majority

In the 2026 general elections of Nepal, the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) achieved a historic landslide victory, winning 122 out of 165 directly elected seats in the House of Representatives, marking the largest majority in Nepal's democratic history. The party is led by Balendra Shah (popularly known as Balen), a former Kathmandu mayor and rapper-turned-politician, who is expected to become Nepal's next Prime Minister following the victory. The election marked a major political shift, as the newly formed RSP defeated traditional political parties such as Nepali Congress and Communist Party of Nepal (UML). The elections were

held after the 2025 youth-led protests that forced the resignation of the previous government.

Nepal Political System

- Form of Government: Federal Democratic Republic.
- Current Constitution: Adopted in 2015.
- Parliament: Bicameral legislature consisting of:
 - House of Representatives (Pratinidhi Sabha) – 275 members.
 - National Assembly (Rastriya Sabha) – 59 members.

US launches \$20 billion Gulf shipping insurance plan

What is the New US Maritime Reinsurance Plan?

The United States has launched a \$20 billion maritime reinsurance programme to protect shipping and stabilise global trade in the Gulf region during tensions related to the Iran conflict.

Who Announced the Programme?

- US International Development Finance Corporation (DFC)
- United States Department of the Treasury
- The plan was approved by Donald Trump.

The programme aims to:

- Protect ships operating in the Gulf shipping corridor
- Maintain global trade and energy supply
- Restore confidence in maritime routes affected by regional tensions

What Type of Insurance Will Be Provided?

- The programme will provide maritime reinsurance coverage, including:
 - War risk insurance
 - Hull and Machinery insurance
 - Cargo insurance
- This protection will apply to eligible vessels operating in the Gulf region.

Coverage Amount:

- The facility will cover maritime losses of up to \$20 billion on a rolling basis.
- This means coverage will continue as ships enter and exit the region.

Key Institutions Involved:

- Implementation involves coordination with:
 - United States Central Command (CENTCOM)
 - Selected American insurance companies will also participate as preferred partners.

Why Yemen's Houthis are staying out of Israel-US fight with Iran – for now

What is the Current Situation?

- The Israel–US attacks on Iran have increased tensions across the Middle East.
- Cities affected by rising tensions include Abu Dhabi, Doha, Kuwait City, Manama, and Beirut.
- However, Yemen has remained relatively quiet so far, despite being part of Iran's regional alliance network.

Who Are the Houthis?

- The Houthi movement is an Iran-allied group that controls northwestern Yemen and the capital Sanaa.
- The group has previously carried out attacks on US and Israeli targets since the Gaza war began in October 2023.

Why Have the Houthis Not Entered the War Yet?

So far, the Houthis have limited their response to:

- Strong public statements supporting Iran
- Mass protests condemning US–Israeli strikes
- Analysts say the group is currently avoiding direct retaliation from the US or Israel.

Previous Israeli Strikes on the Houthis:

- In August 2025, Israeli air strikes in Sanaa killed several senior Houthi officials, including:
 - Prime Minister Ahmed al-Rahawi
 - Chief of Staff Mohammed al-Ghumari
- These losses made the Houthi leadership more cautious about provoking another major air campaign.

Possibility of Future Houthi Involvement:

- Experts believe the Houthis may still join the war later.

Possible triggers include:

- Direct attacks by the US or Israel on Houthi territory
- A request from Iran
- Military advances by anti-Houthi forces inside Yemen
- Houthi leader Abdel-Malik al-Houthi said that “hands are on the trigger”, suggesting the group is ready to escalate if needed.

Why Iran Might Delay Using the Houthis?

- Some analysts say Iran may be saving the Houthis as a strategic option.
- The Houthis could act as a “reserve card” in the conflict if the war expands.

Possible Targets of Houthi Attacks:

- If the group enters the war, potential targets could include:
 - Israel
 - US warships in the region
 - Military bases in the Middle East
 - Regional partners of Israel such as the UAE
 - The Houthis have long-range drones and missiles capable of reaching distant targets.

Importance of the Red Sea:

- From 2023 to 2025, the Houthis attacked shipping routes in the Red Sea corridor.
 - Effects of these attacks:
 - At least nine mariners killed
 - Four ships sunk
 - Disruption to trade routes carrying about \$1 trillion worth of goods annually

Impact of Iran's Weakening on the Houthis:

- The US–Israel strikes reportedly killed several Iranian political and military leaders.
 - If Iran weakens or collapses:
 - Weapons supply to the Houthis may decline
 - Iranian influence over regional groups could weaken
 - The Houthi movement may face military and political challenges

Weapons Smuggling Allegations:

- A United Nations investigation in 2022 found that many weapons seized in the Arabian Sea likely came from Iran.
 - According to a UN Security Council panel report, weapons from Russia, China, and Iran were smuggled into Yemen through sea and land routes.
 - Iran has denied these allegations.

Reaction Inside Yemen:

- Many Yemeni civilians fear that the conflict could spread to Yemen.
 - Residents in Sanaa have started stockpiling food, cooking gas, rice, and flour in anticipation of possible air strikes.
 - However, for now Yemenis are watching the war rather than participating in it.

Operation True Promise-4: Iran's Response to US–Israel Strikes

What is Operation True Promise-4?

Operation True Promise-4 is the name used by Iran for its military retaliation against United States and Israel. It came after the joint U. S. –Israel strikes on Iranian targets in 2026. The operation is part of a series of Iranian responses called “True Promise. ”

Why Did Iran Launch the Operation?

Iran launched the operation mainly for retaliation and deterrence.

Key reasons:

- To respond to U. S. –Israel attacks on Iranian military and political targets.
- To show that Iran can strike back against powerful adversaries.
- To restore deterrence and warn against future attacks.

Targets of the Operation

Iran's retaliation targeted several areas:

- Israeli territory through missile attacks.
- U. S. military bases in the Middle East.
- Strategic sites in Gulf countries hosting American forces.
- Missiles and drones were reported near bases in Qatar, Kuwait, UAE, and Bahrain where U. S. forces are present.

Weapons Used in the Operation

Iran used multiple types of weapons:

- Ballistic missiles
- Cruise missiles
- Shahed drones
- These weapons were launched simultaneously to overwhelm air defence systems.

Regional Impact

- The operation caused widespread tension across the Middle East.
 - Effects included:
 - Air defence systems activated in several Gulf countries.
 - Airspace restrictions and emergency alerts in parts of the region.
 - Concerns about a wider regional war.

Meaning Behind the Name “True Promise”

- The name “True Promise” carries symbolic meaning in Iran's military messaging.
 - It represents:
 - A promise to retaliate against attacks on Iran.
 - A strategy of deterrence through direct strikes rather than only proxy groups.
 - A signal that Iran will respond immediately and forcefully to future threats.

Background: Earlier “True Promise” Operations

- Iran has used the same naming pattern before:
 - Operation True Promise (2024) – missile and drone strikes on Israel.
 - Operation True Promise II (2024) – another large missile attack on Israeli targets.

- Operation True Promise III (2025) – continued retaliation during the conflict.
- Operation True Promise IV (2026) – response to U. S. –Israel strikes.

Operation Epic Fury and International Law

What is Operation Epic Fury?

Operation Epic Fury refers to joint military strikes carried out by United States and Israel against Iran on 28 February 2026. The strikes targeted Iranian leadership and military infrastructure. The attack reportedly killed Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.

Main Legal Issue: Use of Force

International law strictly limits when countries can use military force.

Rule under International Law

Article 2(4) of the UN Charter prohibits the use of force against another country's sovereignty.

Only Two Exceptions

- Countries can legally use force only when:
 - UN Security Council authorises it
 - Self-defence against an armed attack (Article 51)

Why Critics Say the Strike Was Illegal

- The UN Security Council did not approve the attack.
- Iran was not attacking the U. S. or Israel at that time.
- Iran was engaged in nuclear negotiations when the strike happened.

Regime Change and International Law

- The operation was reportedly aimed at removing Iran's government.
- Why This Is Problematic
- International law prohibits forcible regime change.
- The principle protects the political independence of states.
- Changing another country's government through military force violates the norm of non-intervention.

Pattern of Military Actions

- The article argues that Operation Epic Fury is part of a larger pattern of unilateral military actions.

Examples mentioned include:

- Military actions in Venezuela in 2025–26.
- Cross-border strikes conducted without international approval.
- The concern is that powerful countries might begin to treat international law as optional.

Risks of Regime Change Operations

- History shows that removing governments through military intervention often creates instability.
- Examples cited in the article:
 - 2003 Iraq War
 - 2011 NATO intervention in Libya

Common consequences:

- State collapse
- Long-term conflict
- Rise of armed groups
- Regional instability.

Why International Law Matters

- International law exists to prevent uncontrolled wars.
- Key purpose:
 - Maintain global stability
 - Protect weaker states
 - Prevent unilateral military aggression.
- If powerful states ignore the rules, other countries may also start using force more freely.

Possible Responses by the International Community Inside the United States

- Congress could restrict military funding for the operation.
- The War Powers Resolution (1973) requires congressional approval for long wars.

International Level

- UN General Assembly action under the Uniting for Peace procedure.
- Legal cases at the International Court of Justice.

Why Did Donald Trump Choose War on Iran?

The United States launched military strikes against Iran under the leadership of Donald Trump, marking a major escalation in long-standing tensions between the United States and Iran. The decision followed years of geopolitical rivalry, disputes over Iran's nuclear programme, and attacks on U. S. interests in the Middle East.

Reasons Behind the Decision

Preventing Iran's Nuclear Weapon Development

The U. S. administration argued that Iran was advancing its nuclear programme and could potentially develop nuclear weapons, posing a threat to regional and global security.

Countering Iran's Missile and Military Capabilities

American officials stated that Iran's growing ballistic missile arsenal and drone capabilities threatened U. S. forces and allies in the region.

Pre-emptive Action Against Possible Attacks

The U. S. claimed that the strikes were a pre-emptive move to prevent potential Iranian attacks on American forces and allies.

Long-standing Hostility Between the U. S. and Iran
Relations between the two countries have been strained since the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the subsequent Iran hostage crisis, which created decades of mistrust and confrontation.

Pressure to Limit Iran's Regional Influence

The U. S. has long accused Iran of supporting militant groups in the Middle East and destabilising the region, which was cited as another reason for military action.

Military Build-Up Before the Strikes

Before launching the operation, the U. S. deployed aircraft carriers, destroyers, and advanced aircraft around Iran, representing one of the largest U. S. military buildups in the Middle East in decades.

Key Facts:

- The United States and Iran have had hostile relations since the 1979 Iranian Revolution.
- In 2018, the U. S. withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action under the Trump administration.
- After withdrawing from the nuclear deal, the U. S. launched the Maximum Pressure Campaign to restrict Iran's oil exports and economy.
- In 2026, U. S. and Israeli strikes targeted Iranian leadership, including the killing of Ali Khamenei during the conflict.
- The conflict also triggered retaliatory attacks by Iran on U. S. facilities in Bahrain.

Strait of Hormuz in Focus Amid Iran-Israel Tensions

The Strait of Hormuz has gained global attention due to rising tensions linked to the Iran-Israel conflict, as any instability in the region could disrupt one of the world's most critical energy trade routes.

Location and Geographical Importance

- The Strait of Hormuz is a narrow maritime passage that connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea.
- It lies between Iran to the north and Oman to the south, making it a strategic maritime gateway for global oil shipments.

Importance in Global Energy Trade

- The Strait of Hormuz is considered the world's most important oil chokepoint, through which nearly one-fifth of global petroleum consumption passes every day.

- Major oil-exporting countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, and Iran transport crude oil through this route.

Importance for Asian Countries

- Around 80% of oil shipments passing through the strait are destined for Asian countries, including India, China, Japan, and South Korea.
- Therefore, any disruption in this route could significantly affect energy prices and supply security for these economies.

Strategic and Security Concerns


- Due to its narrow width and heavy tanker traffic, the Strait of Hormuz is highly vulnerable to geopolitical tensions. During the Tanker War in the 1980s, several oil tankers were targeted in this region, highlighting its vulnerability during conflicts.

Key Facts:

- The Strait of Hormuz is considered the most critical oil transit chokepoint globally.
- At its narrowest point, it is about 33 km wide, with shipping lanes roughly 3 km wide in each direction.
- It connects the Persian Gulf to the Arabian Sea via the Gulf of Oman.
- It is the second-busiest oil chokepoint after the Strait of Malacca.
- Major LNG exports from Qatar also pass through this strait.

01 March

World Civil Defence Day



Importance
To commemorate the establishment of ICDO Constitution which came into force as an intergovernmental organization in 1972.

Motto
To bring attention of the world public to the vital importance of Civil Protection and pay tribute to the efforts and sacrifices of the national services responsible for the fight against disasters.

ICDO
FORMERLY: ASSOCIATION OF GENEVA ZONES

- ICDO was created in 1951 in Paris by French Surgeon-General George Saint-Paul.
- The organization was recognized by the French Parliament in June 1955 and in 1972 it achieved status of intergovernmental organization.
- Today 50 countries are the members of ICDO.

Banking & Economy

India–China Trade via Lipulekh Pass

India and China are set to resume border trade through the Lipulekh Pass in June 2026 after a six-year suspension. The trade route was closed in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and border tensions. Its reopening marks the revival of a historically significant Himalayan trade corridor.

About Lipulekh Pass

Lipulekh Pass is a strategic mountain pass located in Uttarakhand near the India–China–Nepal tri-junction. It connects India with the Tibet region of China and has traditionally been used for trade and pilgrimage (Kailash Mansarovar Yatra).

Significance of Trade Resumption

- Revival of cross-border trade and economic activity in border areas, especially Uttarakhand
- Boost to local livelihoods and traditional trade communities
- Indicates a possible easing of India–China relations after prolonged tensions
- Part of broader efforts to enhance bilateral economic engagement

Geopolitical Concerns

- Nepal has raised objections, as the Lipulekh area is part of the disputed Kalapani region
- The issue stems from boundary disagreements under the 1816 Treaty of Sugauli
- The move may trigger diplomatic sensitivities in India–Nepal relations

Background & Timeline

- Lipulekh Pass was reopened for trade in 1992 after the 1962 war
- Trade occurs seasonally (June–September) due to harsh weather
- Suspension in 2020 (COVID-19 + border tensions)
- Restart planned in June 2026

Other India–China trade passes:

- Nathu La (Sikkim)
- Shipki La (Himachal Pradesh)
- Elevation of Lipulekh Pass: ~5,334 meters
- Key exports from India: spices, pulses, jaggery, textiles
- Key imports from China (Tibet): wool, borax, livestock products

Income Tax Rules, 2026

The Finance Ministry has notified the Income Tax Rules, 2026 on 20 March 2026. These rules will be effective from 1 April 2026. They operationalise the Income-tax Act, 2025, replacing the Income-tax Act, 1961.

Key Highlights

- Structural Simplification
- Tax rules reduced from 399 → 190.
- Tax forms reduced from 511 → 333.
- Aim: simplified and user-friendly tax system.

No Change in Tax Slabs

- Existing income tax slabs remain unchanged for FY 2026–27.

ITR Deadlines

- ITR-1 & ITR-2: 31 July
- ITR-3 & ITR-4 (non-audit): 31 August
- Tax audit: 31 October

Meal & Gift Benefits

- Meal cards up to ₹200 per meal tax-free (earlier ₹50) under old regime.
- Gift vouchers up to ₹15,000/year tax-free.

Employer-Provided Benefits (Perquisites)

Company car taxable:

- ₹8,000/month ($\leq 1.6L$ engine)
- ₹10,000/month ($> 1.6L$ engine)
- Concessional loans taxed based on SBI lending rate difference.
- Exception: loans \leq ₹2 lakh or for medical emergency are tax-free.

HRA (House Rent Allowance)

- More cities added for 50% exemption category:
- Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Pune
- Increased transparency & verification in HRA claims.

Education & Allowances

Children education allowance:

- Increased from ₹100 → ₹3,000/month per child

Hostel allowance:

- Increased from ₹300 → ₹9,000/month per child
- Transport sector allowance increased to ₹25,000/month (max limit).

Capital Market & Corporate Changes

- STT increased on derivatives:
- Futures: 0.02% → 0.05%
- Options: 0.1% → 0.15%
- Share buyback now taxed as capital gains.

Important Institution

- CBDT (Central Board of Direct Taxes)
 - Constituting instrument: Central Board of Revenue Act, 1963
 - Headquarters: New Delhi, India
 - Chairperson: Ravi Agarwal
-

RBI Cancels CoR of 36 NBFCs; 9 NBFCs Voluntarily Surrender Licences

Why in News?

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) cancelled the Certificate of Registration (CoR) of 36 Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs).
- Additionally, 9 NBFCs voluntarily surrendered their licences and exited the NBFC business.

Objective of RBI Action:

- Strengthen regulatory discipline in the NBFC sector.
- Remove inactive or non-compliant financial entities.
- Ensure a transparent and well-regulated financial system.

Some NBFCs Whose Licences Were Cancelled:

- Excellence Broking & Finance Pvt. Ltd.
- Gibraltar Traders Ltd.
- Nilima Enterprises Pvt. Ltd.
- Welplan Distributors Pvt. Ltd.
- Westport Export Pvt. Ltd.
- Adarsh Commercial Pvt. Ltd.
- Bahubali Leasing Ltd.
- Harrison Trexim Pvt. Ltd.
- Pacific Management Pvt. Ltd.
- Wintech Telecom Pvt. Ltd.

NBFCs that Voluntarily Surrendered Licences:

- Manglam Vanijya Pvt. Ltd.
- KKR India Asset Finance Pvt. Ltd.
- Mechno Sales Agencies Pvt. Ltd.
- Premier Ferro Alloys & Securities Ltd. (became an unregistered Core Investment Company – CIC).

Reasons for Licence Cancellation / Surrender:

- Non-compliance with RBI regulatory norms.
 - Companies exiting the NBFC business voluntarily.
 - Corporate restructuring or mergers.
 - Companies becoming unregistered Core Investment Companies (CICs).
 - Amalgamation or voluntary strike-off of entities.
-

India Amends Tax Rules to Include Crypto Assets and CBDC in Financial Reporting

The Government of India has amended the Income Tax Rules to expand the financial reporting framework. The amendment brings crypto assets, Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC), and certain electronic money products within the reporting system.

Expansion of Financial Asset Definition

- The revised rules introduce the concept of “relevant crypto-assets.”
- The definition of financial assets now includes interests linked to crypto assets.

Transactions Covered

- The framework will now include reporting of:
 - Exchange between crypto assets and fiat currencies
 - Exchange between different crypto assets.

Inclusion of CBDC and Electronic Money

- Entities holding Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) or certain electronic money products for customers may be treated as depository institutions.
- This brings them under the reporting financial institution framework.

Compliance Relaxation for Small Accounts

- Some electronic money accounts may receive simplified treatment if the rolling 90-day average balance does not exceed \$10,000.

Additional Reporting Requirements

- Financial institutions must now maintain extra information such as:
 - Whether the account holder submitted valid self-certification
 - Whether the account is joint
 - Number of joint account holders.

Reporting Framework Alignment

- The rules strengthen India’s reporting obligations under:
 - Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA)
 - Common Reporting Standard (CRS).
 - These frameworks require financial institutions to identify and report accounts held by foreign tax residents.

Global Crypto Reporting Standard

- The amendments also align with the Crypto-Asset Reporting Framework (CARF), designed to improve tax transparency in digital assets globally.

Objective

- Ensure tax transparency and regulatory oversight of digital assets.
 - Adapt the tax reporting system to the rapidly evolving digital financial ecosystem.
-

MOU's Signed

Vietnam–Russia Nuclear Power Plant Agreement

Vietnam and Russia have signed an intergovernmental agreement to build a nuclear power plant in Vietnam, marking a major step in reviving Vietnam's nuclear energy programme. The project, known as Ninh Thuan 1 Nuclear Power Plant, will be constructed with Russian assistance and is expected to strengthen bilateral cooperation in the energy sector.

Key Features of the Deal

The agreement outlines the construction of two Russian-designed nuclear reactors with a combined capacity of about 2,400 MW. The project will be implemented with the involvement of Rosatom, which is one of the world's leading nuclear power plant developers.

Objectives and Significance

The primary aim of this project is to boost Vietnam's electricity generation capacity amid rising energy demand caused by rapid industrial growth and urbanization. It will also help reduce dependence on fossil fuels and support clean energy transition and emission reduction goals.

Background and Revival of Nuclear Programme

Vietnam had earlier suspended its nuclear power plans in 2016 due to high costs and safety concerns. However, the programme was revived in recent years to address increasing power shortages and energy security challenges.

Additional Facts:

- The project highlights strengthening strategic ties between Vietnam and Russia, especially in energy and infrastructure sectors.
- Vietnam aims to become a high-income economy ("tiger economy") by 2050, and stable energy supply is crucial for this goal.
- Nuclear energy is considered a reliable base-load power source, unlike intermittent renewable sources like solar and wind.
- Russia is a major global exporter of nuclear technology and has built plants in countries like Bangladesh, China, and Belarus.

Vietnam–Russia: Key Facts

- Diplomatic Relations: Established in 1950 (during Soviet Union era).
- Strategic Partnership: Upgraded to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2012.

- Key Sector of Cooperation: Energy (especially oil, gas, and nuclear energy).
- Major Russian Company Involved: Rosatom
- Important Project: Ninh Thuan 1 Nuclear Power Plant (planned with Russian support).
- Defence Cooperation: Russia is a major arms supplier to Vietnam.
- Energy Projects: Joint oil exploration in South China Sea via Vietsovetpetro.
- Trade: Includes energy, machinery, fertilizers, and defence equipment.
- Education & Culture: Many Vietnamese students study in Russia under scholarship programs.
- Global Grouping: Both countries are part of Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) cooperation framework.

Vietnam

- Capital: Hanoi
- Currency: Vietnamese Dong (VND)
- General Secretary: Tô Lâm
- Prime Minister: Phạm Minh Chính

Russia

- Capital: Moscow
- Currency: Russian Ruble (RUB)
- President: Vladimir Putin

US–Japan Nuclear Energy Deal (SMRs)

The United States and Japan have unveiled a major nuclear energy deal following a meeting between Donald Trump and Sanae Takaichi. The agreement focuses on investing in next-generation nuclear energy, particularly Small Modular Reactors (SMRs), as part of a broader strategic and economic partnership.

Key Highlights

- Japan will invest up to \$40 billion in building Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) in the United States.
- Reactors will be constructed in Tennessee and Alabama by companies such as GE Vernova and Hitachi.
- The deal is part of a larger US–Japan investment framework (~\$73 billion) covering energy and infrastructure.
- Additional investments include up to \$33 billion in natural gas projects in states like Texas and Pennsylvania.

About Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)

- SMRs are advanced nuclear reactors with smaller capacity than traditional plants.
- Example: BWRX-300

Features:

- Faster construction time
- Lower cost
- Enhanced safety (passive safety systems)

India–Bhutan MoU on Postal Cooperation

India and Bhutan signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Postal Cooperation in March 2026.

Signed between:

- Ministry of Communications (India)
- Ministry of Infrastructure & Transport (Bhutan)

Major Initiative**UPU–UPI Cross-Border Remittance****Integration of:**

- UPU (Universal Postal Union) PosTransfer system
- UPI (Unified Payments Interface)
- Aim:
- Fast, affordable cross-border remittances
- Financial inclusion via postal networks

India–Bhutan Relations

- Governed by India–Bhutan Friendship Treaty (2007)
- Bhutan is a key partner under India's Neighbourhood First Policy

Geographical Fact

- India–Bhutan border length: 699 km
- Subregional Grouping
- Both countries are part of BBIN Initiative (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal) for regional connectivity
- Digital Financial Cooperation
- Bhutan already uses India's RuPay card system
- Expansion toward UPI-based cross-border payments

AIIMS and ISRO Sign MoU to Advance Space Medicine Research in India

The Indian Space Research Organisation signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the All India Institute of Medical Sciences to collaborate in space medicine and research.

Key Objective

- To promote joint research in space medicine aligned with ISRO's human spaceflight priorities.

- To advance human health, performance, and safety during long-duration space missions.

Significance

- Development of medical procedures, devices, and protocols for astronauts.
- Strengthening India's human spaceflight programme.
- Advancing healthcare innovations on Earth through space medicine research.

AIIMS:

- Director: M Srinivas
- Founded: 1956, New Delhi
- President: Mansukh L. Mandaviya

ISRO:

- Formed: 15 August 1969
- Headquarters: Bengaluru, Karnataka, India
- Chairman: V. Narayanan

ISRO and ESA sign new agreement for joint Earth observation missions, expand long-standing space cooperation

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and European Space Agency (ESA) signed a new cooperation agreement for Earth observation missions. ISRO also successfully launched Europe's Proba-3 mission, strengthening India–Europe space collaboration.

New ISRO–ESA Agreement:

The agreement titled ESA–ISRO Arrangement concerning Joint Calibration and Validation Activities and Scientific Studies for Earth Observation Missions.

Focus Areas:

- Joint calibration and validation campaigns.
- Scientific studies for Earth observation missions.
- Improving accuracy and reliability of satellite data.

Background of ISRO–ESA Partnership:

- Cooperation between ISRO and ESA began in 1978.
- The partnership was renewed in 2002.

Areas of Cooperation:

- Earth observation programmes
- Satellite navigation
- Ground station support
- Human spaceflight collaboration
- Deep-space communication support
- ESA has supported Indian missions such as:
- Chandrayaan programme
- Aditya-L1

Upcoming Mission Linked to the Agreement:

- The collaboration is important for ESA's Fluorescence Explorer (FLEX).

About FLEX:

- Designed to study vegetation fluorescence.
- Helps understand plant photosynthesis and ecosystem health.
- Improves global monitoring of climate and vegetation dynamics.

Proba-3 Mission Launch:

- Proba-3 mission is a European satellite mission launched by ISRO.
- Satellites were placed in the designated orbit about 20 minutes after launch.
- Demonstrates India's growing role in international space missions.

Key Features of Proba-3:

The mission consists of two satellites:

- Coronagraph – about 310 kg
- Occulter – about 240 kg

Mission Objective:

- Study the Sun's outer atmosphere (Corona).
- Understand space weather and solar activity.

Significance:

- Strengthens India–Europe cooperation in space science.
- Enhances Earth observation research and satellite data accuracy.
- Demonstrates ISRO's capability in launching and supporting international space missions.

BEL and Bellatrix Aerospace Sign MoU to Advance VLEO Satellite Technologies

What is the New Collaboration?

India's state-owned defence electronics company Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Bellatrix Aerospace, a Bengaluru-based space startup, to collaborate on the design, development, and manufacturing of satellite systems and payloads.

Objective of the Partnership

The partnership aims to strengthen India's capability in building satellite platforms for Very Low Earth Orbit (VLEO) missions.

What is Very Low Earth Orbit (VLEO)?

VLEO refers to the orbital region located between 100 km and 450 km above Earth's surface.

Satellites operating in this orbit can provide:

- Higher-resolution Earth observation images
- Faster communication signals
- Improved atmospheric and climate research data.

Why is VLEO Becoming Important?

- Most satellites today operate in Low Earth Orbit (LEO) (below ~1000 km), which is becoming crowded due to the growing number of satellites.
- As a result, space agencies and companies are exploring VLEO as a new operational frontier for satellite missions.

Role of Bellatrix Aerospace:

- Founded in 2015, Bellatrix Aerospace specializes in:
 - Satellite propulsion technologies
 - Advanced satellite subsystems
 - Space mobility solutions.

Why the Canada uranium deal is crucial for India's nuclear expansion plans

During the visit of Mark Carney to India, a long-term uranium supply agreement was signed. The deal was signed between India's Department of Atomic Energy and Canadian company Cameco.

Key Features of the Deal:

- 22 million pounds (about 10,000 tonnes) of uranium will be supplied.
- Supply period: 2027–2035.
- Contract value: 2.6 billion Canadian dollars (about \$1.9 billion).
- Uranium will be used to fuel India's nuclear reactors.

Another Uranium Deal:

- India recently signed another uranium supply agreement with Kazatomprom, the state-owned uranium company of Kazakhstan.

Why Uranium Imports Are Important

- Fuel Security for Nuclear Reactors:
- India has limited domestic uranium reserves.
- Importing uranium from Canada ensures stable fuel supply for nuclear power plants.

Expansion of Nuclear Energy:

- India plans to significantly increase its nuclear power capacity as part of its clean energy transition.
- Reliable uranium imports support new reactor projects and continuous operation of existing plants.

Clean Energy and Climate Goals:

- Nuclear energy produces low-carbon electricity.
- The uranium deal supports India's climate commitments and energy transition strategy.

Strategic Energy Partnership:

- The agreement strengthens India–Canada cooperation in civil nuclear energy following the India–Canada Civil Nuclear Agreement.
- Note: India has uranium deposits but low-grade ore (0.02–0.45%) compared to the global average 1–2%.
- As a result, over 70% of India’s uranium needs are met through imports.
- India currently consumes about 1,500–2,000 tonnes of uranium annually.

India’s Nuclear Expansion Plan:

- The government plans to increase nuclear power capacity from 9 GW to 100 GW by 2047.
- Domestic uranium production may meet only about 30% of future demand.
- Hence, long-term import contracts are essential.

Diversification of Uranium Supply

- India now imports uranium from several countries including:
 - Canada
 - Kazakhstan
 - Uzbekistan
 - Russia (for reactors at Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant).
- Future agreements may also involve Australia and the United States.

India’s Three-Stage Nuclear Programme:

- India aims to eventually rely on thorium-based nuclear energy.
- A Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor is being developed at Kalpakkam.
- This programme was originally envisioned by Homi J. Bhabha in the 1950s.

India and Finland Sign Multiple Agreements to Strengthen Bilateral Cooperation

What is the India–Finland Strategic Partnership?

- Narendra Modi and Alexander Stubb elevated India–Finland relations to a “Strategic Partnership in Digitalisation and Sustainability.”
- The partnership focuses on strengthening cooperation in technology, sustainability, innovation, and global governance.
- The move also aligns with the recently concluded India–European Union Free Trade Agreement 2026.

Agreements Signed Between India and Finland:

- Three major agreements (MoUs) were signed in the following areas:

Migration and Mobility Agreement:

- Facilitates movement of skilled professionals, talent, and students between the two countries.

Environmental Cooperation:

- Focus on sustainable development and environmental protection.
- Statistical Collaboration:
 - Enhances data sharing and statistical cooperation for policymaking.
- These agreements aim to promote economic exchanges, knowledge sharing, and sustainable growth.

Areas of Strategic Cooperation:

Digital and Emerging Technologies:

- Both countries will collaborate in advanced technology sectors such as:
 - Artificial Intelligence (AI)
 - 6G telecommunications
 - Quantum computing
 - Digital infrastructure
- The partnership aims to promote secure, trustworthy, and resilient digital ecosystems.

Sustainability and Circular Economy:

- India and Finland will co-host the World Circular Economy Forum in India.

Cooperation will expand in:

- Clean energy
- Environmental protection
- Sustainable technologies
- Finland’s expertise in circular economy models aligns with India’s sustainability and climate goals.

Defence, Space and Critical Technologies:

- Both nations agreed to strengthen cooperation in:
 - Defence and security technologies
 - Space cooperation
 - Semiconductor manufacturing
 - Critical minerals supply chains
- This cooperation aims to improve technological self-reliance and supply chain resilience.

Examples of India–Finland Cooperation:

Technology and Infrastructure

- Nokia has played a key role in developing telecommunication networks in India.
- Finnish architects contributed to the construction of the Chenab Rail Bridge, the world’s highest railway bridge.
- Collaboration helped establish the largest bamboo-to-bioethanol refinery in Numaligarh.

Education and Talent Mobility:

- Finland is becoming a popular destination for Indian students and professionals.

The Migration and Mobility Agreement supports:

- Legal migration pathways
- Talent exchange
- Teacher training programmes
- Research partnerships in education
- Finland's globally renowned education system offers valuable insights for India's education reforms.

Arctic and Polar Cooperation:

- Finland is an important partner for India in the Nordic and Arctic regions.

Key areas of cooperation include:

- Arctic and polar scientific research
- Climate change monitoring
- Sustainable resource management
- This collaboration aligns with India's Arctic Policy 2022.

India–Finland Relations: Background

- Finland established diplomatic relations with India in 1949.
- Bilateral trade currently ranges between €1. 5–2 billion annually.
- Finland maintains a slight trade surplus in goods trade.

India and EU to Grant Each Other MFN Status for Five Years Under Trade Deal

Republic of India and the European Union (EU) have agreed to grant each other Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status for five years as part of the India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) that was finalised on 27 January 2026 after nearly two decades of negotiations.

Key provision:

- Under the MFN clause in the proposed trade deal, neither side can offer more favourable tariff concessions or trade terms to other trade partners without extending the same benefits to the other party during the five-year period once the FTA comes into force, reinforcing non-discriminatory trade practices.

Trade deal context:

- The FTA is expected to reduce or eliminate tariffs on the majority of goods exchanged between India and the EU, enhancing market access for both sides.
- The agreement also includes commitments to abide by World Trade Organization (WTO) principles, cooperation in digital trade, customs facilitation, and aligning food safety and certification processes with international standards.

What is Most Favoured Nation (MFN) Status?

MFN status is a principle in international trade under WTO rules that requires a country to grant the same trade advantages (like low tariffs) it gives to any one trading partner to all WTO members — ensuring non-discrimination in tariff treatment.

Purpose of MFN in FTAs:

While MFN is a standard WTO obligation, in the context of an FTA, a mutual MFN clause means neither party can give better tariff treatment to a third country without offering equal terms to the FTA partner for a set period (here five years). This prevents preferential treatment leakage and strengthens the deal's stability.

India and Israel Elevate Ties; Sign 16 MoUs, Announce Special Strategic Partnership

During the ongoing state visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Israel, both countries signed 16 Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) and formally announced the elevation of bilateral relations to a "Special Strategic Partnership." The agreements were signed in Jerusalem in the presence of Prime Minister Modi and his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu.

Key Areas of Cooperation Covered by the MoUs

The 16 MoUs and agreements span multiple strategic and emerging sectors, such as:

- Artificial Intelligence (AI) and emerging technologies
- Agriculture and innovation centres
- Cybersecurity and digital payments (UPI linkage)
- Education and research collaboration
- Commerce, services, and manufacturing protocols
- Cultural and people-to-people exchanges
- These agreements are expected to enhance high-tech engagement, trade flows, research cooperation, and bilateral economic integration.

India–Israel Diplomatic Relations

- India and Israel established full diplomatic relations in 1992 after decades of limited engagement.
- Strategic cooperation has grown significantly over the past three decades, covering defence, agriculture, water management, and technology.

India-Israel Defence Cooperation

Israel is one of India's major defence partners, with cooperation in joint development, production, and technological transfers. The relationship has expanded from traditional defence equipment to focus on high-tech and co-development projects.

Awards & Recognitions

Kaveh Madani Wins Stockholm Water Prize 2026

Iranian environmental scientist Kaveh Madani has been awarded the Stockholm Water Prize in 2026 for his outstanding contribution to global water management. The award is often referred to as the “Nobel Prize of Water” and recognises exceptional work in sustainable water resource management.

Key Highlights

- Madani was honoured for combining scientific research, policy-making, and diplomacy in addressing water crises.
- He is known for developing the concept of “water bankruptcy”, which highlights chronic overuse and mismanagement of water resources rather than temporary shortages.
- His work emphasises that many global water problems arise from poor governance and overconsumption, not just climate change.

Background of the Scientist

- Kaveh Madani currently serves as Director of the United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health (UNU-INWEH).
- He previously held a senior environmental role in Iran but later went into exile after facing political pressure and accusations for his views on environmental mismanagement.
- His work integrates game theory and decision science into water resource management.

About the Stockholm Water Prize

- Established in 1991 by the Stockholm Water Foundation.
- Awarded annually for contributions to the sustainable use and protection of water resources.
- Presented by the King of Sweden during World Water Week in Stockholm.

Rituparna Sengupta Honoured at UK Parliament

Renowned Indian actress Rituparna Sengupta was conferred the Women Empowerment Award for Art and Culture at the House of Commons in March 2026. The recognition highlights her contribution to cinema and her role in promoting women empowerment globally.

She was honoured for:

- Contribution to art and culture
- Advocacy of women empowerment through cinema and social initiatives
- The event was organised around the occasion of International Women’s Day celebrations.

William Dalrymple Honoured with Mark Lynton History Prize 2026 for ‘The Golden Road’

- Renowned historian William Dalrymple has been awarded the Mark Lynton History Prize 2026.
- He received the award for his book *The Golden Road: How Ancient India Transformed the World*.
- The prize recognises outstanding historical writing combining research and literary excellence.
- The award carries a cash prize of \$10,000.

About the Book

- Highlights India’s central role in ancient global exchanges.
- Introduces the concept of the “Golden Road” as an alternative to the Silk Route narrative.

Explains how India spread:

- Religion (Buddhism, Hinduism)
- Mathematics (including zero)
- Culture and trade networks across Asia and beyond

About Mark Lynton History Prize

- Annual international award for best history book.
- Administered by:
- Nieman Foundation for Journalism
- Columbia University School of Journalism
- Named after Mark Lynton, an author and advocate of historical writing.

About William Dalrymple

- Scottish historian born in 1965.
- Known for books like:
- *The Last Mughal*
- *The Anarchy*
- *White Mughals*
- Co-founder of the Jaipur Literature Festival

Sahitya Akademi Awards 2025 Announced: Navtej Sarna, Mamta Kalia Among Winners

The Sahitya Akademi announced the Sahitya Akademi Awards 2025, honouring 24 writers across 24 Indian languages for their outstanding literary works.

Key Points

- Awards given annually in 24 recognised Indian languages.
- Navtej Sarna (English) awarded for novel *Crimson Spring*.
- Mamta Kalia (Hindi) awarded for memoir *Jeete Jee Allahabad*.
- Total 24 authors selected across categories and languages.

Categories Covered

- 8 Poetry collections
- 4 Novels
- 6 Short story collections
- 2 Essay works
- 1 Literary criticism
- 1 Autobiography
- 2 Memoirs

Award Details

- Engraved copper plaque
- Shawl
- ₹1 lakh cash prize

Other Notable Winners

- N. Prabhakaran (Malayalam) – *Maayaamanushyar* (Novel)
- Works from languages like Bengali, Gujarati, Bodo, Punjabi, Sindhi, etc., also awarded

Sahitya Akademi:

- Established in 1954
- India's National Academy of Letters
- First Awards (1955):
- Hindi: Makhanlal Chaturvedi
- English: R. K. Narayan
- Considered second highest literary honour in India after the Jnanpith Award
- Selection Process: Jury recommendation + approval by Akademi authorities

BCCI Naman Awards 2026: Shubman Gill and Smriti Mandhana Honoured

The Board of Control for Cricket in India presented its annual Naman Awards 2026 in New Delhi, recognising outstanding performances by Indian cricketers during the 2024–25 season. The ceremony honoured achievements in international and domestic cricket as well as contributions to the sport.

Top Individual Honours

- Indian batter Shubman Gill received the prestigious Polly Umrigar Award for Best International Cricketer (Men). This was his second time winning

the honour, reflecting his consistent performances for India across formats.

- Meanwhile, star opener Smriti Mandhana won the Best International Cricketer (Women) award for the fifth time, the highest number of wins in the category.

Recognition of Other Performers

- The awards also recognised several domestic and international performers. Among them:
- Ira Jadhav received the Jagmohan Dalmiya Trophy for Best Woman Cricketer (Domestic).
- Shafali Verma won the Jagmohan Dalmiya Trophy for Best Senior Women's Domestic One-Day Cricketer.
- Ayush Mhatre and Harsh Dubey were honoured with the Lala Amarnath Award for Best All-Rounder in domestic competitions.

Special Recognition

- During the ceremony, the BCCI also felicitated Indian teams that recently won ICC titles, highlighting India's strong performance in international cricket.

About the BCCI Naman Awards

- Instituted by the Board of Control for Cricket in India to honour outstanding Indian cricket performers annually.
- The awards were first given in 2006–07.
- The C. K. Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Award was first presented in 1994. It is the highest honour bestowed by BCCI on a former player.
- Most awards: Virat Kohli (M) (5), Smriti Mandhana (W) (5)

Polly Umrigar Award

- Named after former Indian cricketer Polly Umrigar.
- Instituted in 2007.
- First recipient: Sachin Tendulkar.
- Includes a trophy, citation, and cash prize awarded to the Best International Cricketer (Men).

Tamil Poet Vairamuthu Named 2025 Jnanpith Award Winner

Renowned Tamil poet and lyricist Vairamuthu has been selected for the 2025 Jnanpith Award, the highest literary honour in India. The award recognises his outstanding contribution to Tamil literature and poetry over several decades.

Significance of the Recognition

With this honour, Vairamuthu becomes one of the few writers from the Tamil language to receive the Jnanpith

Award. The recognition highlights his significant influence on modern Tamil literature and film lyrics, where he has written thousands of songs and literary works.

Literary Career and Contributions

Vairamuthu began his literary journey at a young age and later gained prominence as a lyricist in the Tamil film industry. Over his career spanning more than four decades, he has written over 7,500–8,000 songs and numerous literary works including poetry collections, novels, essays, and travelogues.

He has also received several prestigious honours, including:

- 2003: Padma Shri: For Distinguished Services in Literature and Education
- 2014: Padma Bhushan: For Distinguished Services in Literature and Education
- 1999: S. P. Adithanar Literary Award for Best Tamil Novel for Thanneer Thesam
- 2003: Sahitya Akademi Award for Best Literary Work for Kallikkaattu Ithihaasam

About the Jnanpith Award

- The Jnanpith Award is India's highest literary award.
- It was instituted in 1961 by the organization Bharatiya Jnanpith.
- The first award (1965) was given to G. Sankara Kurup for Malayalam literature.
- It is awarded for outstanding contribution to literature in languages listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution and English.

98th Academy Awards Held in Los Angeles

The 98th edition of the Academy Awards (Oscars) was held on 15 March 2026 at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. The awards celebrate outstanding achievements in films released in 2025 and are presented by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Host and Broadcast

The ceremony was hosted by comedian and television personality Conan O'Brien for the second consecutive year. The event was broadcast on the ABC television network and streamed online via Hulu, reaching global audiences.

Major Winners and Highlights

The film *One Battle After Another* emerged as the biggest winner of the night, securing six Academy

Awards, including Best Picture and Best Director for Paul Thomas Anderson.

Other major awards included:

- Best Actor: Michael B. Jordan for the film *Sinners*.
- Best Actress: Jessie Buckley for *Hamnet*.
- Best Supporting Actor: Sean Penn for *One Battle After Another*.
- Best Supporting Actress: Amy Madigan for the film *Weapons*.

Other Notable Awards

- Best Animated Feature: *KPop Demon Hunters*.
- Best International Feature Film: *Sentimental Value*.
- Best Documentary Feature: *Mr. Nobody Against Putin*.
- Best Visual Effects: *Avatar: Fire and Ash*.

Special Achievement and Historic Moments

- A new Best Casting category was introduced at the Oscars, with Cassandra Kulukundis becoming the first-ever recipient for her work in *One Battle After Another*.
- Another historic moment occurred when cinematographer Autumn Durald Arkapaw became the first woman to win the Oscar for Best Cinematography for the film *Sinners*.

Additional Key Facts:

- The Academy Awards (Oscars) are considered the most prestigious awards in the global film industry.
- They were first held in 1929 in Los Angeles.
- The award trophy is officially called the "Academy Award of Merit", popularly known as the Oscar statuette.
- The awards are given in 24 categories covering acting, directing, writing, technical fields, and documentary films.

Indian economist wins University of Chicago's alumni honour

The University of Chicago honoured Indian economist Krishnamurthy V. Subramanian with the Alumni Award for Professional Achievement. He became the first Indian economist to receive this honour in the award's 85-year history. The award recognises alumni who have made exceptional professional contributions and global impact in their fields.

Career Background of Krishnamurthy V. Subramanian:

- Krishnamurthy V. Subramanian served as Chief Economic Adviser (CEA) to the Government of India from 2018 to 2021.

- During his tenure, he authored several influential Economic Surveys of India.
- After his government role, he represented India at the International Monetary Fund as Executive Director.
- He currently serves as Professor of Finance at the Indian School of Business.

Prime Minister Conferred with Israel’s Highest Parliamentary Honour

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was conferred the Speaker of the Knesset Medal, the highest honour of the Israeli Parliament, during his official visit to Israel.

About the Award

- The award is presented by the Speaker of the Knesset, Israel’s unicameral legislature.

- It recognises distinguished global leaders for strengthening democratic values and bilateral relations with Israel.
- PM Modi became one of the prominent world leaders to receive this top parliamentary honour.

About the Knesset

- The Knesset is Israel’s unicameral legislature with 120 members.
- It performs legislative, executive oversight, and electoral functions.
- It elects the President of Israel and can remove the Prime Minister through a vote of no confidence.

Medal of the Knesset:

This medal is gold-plated bronze with symbolic inscriptions and is intended to recognise contributions to Israel’s international relations and democratic values.

03 March

World Wildlife Day

INCEPTION: 2015
EDITION: 15th
2026 THEME:
Medicinal and Aromatic Plants:
Conserving Health, Heritage and Livelihoods



Importance
To mark the day of signature of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in 1975.

Motto
To celebrate and raise awareness of the world’s wild fauna and flora and recognized the important role of CITES in ensuring that international trade does not threaten the survival of species.

Note
The year 2020, known as a “biodiversity super year”, will host several major global events that place biodiversity at the forefront of the global sustainable development agenda.

04 March

National Safety Day

INCEPTION: 1972
EDITION: 54th
BY: National safety Council 1966
2026 THEME:
Nurture young minds - Develop safety culture



Importance
To mark the establishment of National safety Council in 1966.

Motto
It is observed to highlight the importance of Safety in all spheres of life so as to prevent mishaps and accidents resulting out of neglect or lack of awareness.

What is SHE culture?
To take Safety, Health and Environment (SHE) movement to different parts of the country.

Sports

Kipa Mero Wins Gold at National Para Athletics Championships 2026

Para-athlete Kipa Mero from Arunachal Pradesh won the gold medal in Women's Javelin Throw (F12 category) at the 24th National Para Athletics Championships 2026 held in Bhubaneswar. Kipa Mero delivered an outstanding performance by breaking her own national record, demonstrating excellence and consistency in para athletics.

Other Key Achievements

Another athlete from Arunachal Pradesh, Techi Meta, secured the silver medal in the Women's 400m (T13 category), highlighting the state's growing presence in para sports.

Significance of the Event

The National Para Athletics Championships serve as a crucial platform for identifying and promoting talent for international competitions such as the Paralympic Games and World Para Athletics Championships.

Indian Open Squash 2026

The JSW Indian Open Squash 2026 witnessed a dominant performance by Indian players, with Anahat Singh winning the Women's Singles title and Abhay Singh clinching the Men's Singles title. The tournament was held at the Cricket Club of India in Mumbai and is part of the Professional Squash Association (PSA) circuit.

Women's Singles Final

Anahat Singh successfully defended her title by defeating Egypt's Hana Moataz in the final. Her consistent performance throughout the tournament highlights her growing dominance in international squash at a young age.

Men's Singles Final

In the Men's category, Abhay Singh secured the title by defeating Veer Chotrani in an all-Indian final. This reflects the depth of talent in Indian men's squash.

- Governing Body: Professional Squash Association (PSA)
- Founded: 1975
- President: Saurav Ghosal(India), Sarah-Jane Perry(England)
- Chairman: Ziad Al-Turki(Saudi Arabia)

- CEO: Alex Gough (Wales)

India Wins Five Medals at World Boxing Futures Cup 2026

India delivered a strong performance at the World Boxing Futures Cup 2026 held in Bangkok (Thailand), securing a total of five medals in youth boxing categories.

- India finished with 5 medals: 1 Gold, 3 Silver, 1 Bronze
- Chandrika Pujari won the only gold medal for India.
- Three Indian boxers finished with silver medals after reaching the finals in their respective categories.
- Gunjan (48kg) went down to her opponent from England by a 5-0 decision, while Joysree Devi (54kg) fought hard but lost 4-1 to a boxer from the United States.
- In the men's 50kg category, L. Ambekar Meetei also settled for silver after losing his final bout to Ukraine.
- Earlier in the tournament, Radhamani Longjam (57kg) had secured a bronze medal.

World Boxing Futures Cup:

- Organized for junior/youth boxers to prepare for elite competitions
- Boxing Governance: In India, managed by the Boxing Federation of India (BFI)

BCCI Imposes Lifetime Ban on Video Analyst in Ranji Trophy Spot-Fixing Case

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has imposed a lifetime ban on video analyst Raja Reddy for involvement in a spot-fixing attempt during the 2024 Ranji Trophy.

Key Highlights

- The BCCI's Ombudsman banned video analyst Raja Reddy from all cricket-related activities for life after an investigation into corruption charges.
- The incident occurred during the quarter-final match between Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh in the Ranji Trophy held in Indore.

- Reddy allegedly offered ₹5 lakh to Andhra all-rounder Girinath Reddy in exchange for team information and deliberate underperformance in the match.
- The player rejected the offer and reported the approach to team management, which then informed the BCCI's anti-corruption unit.
- The investigation was conducted by the BCCI Anti-Corruption and Security Unit (ACSU).
- Reddy was found guilty of violating Articles 2. 1. 3 and 2. 1. 4 of the BCCI Anti-Corruption Code, which deal with corrupt approaches and attempts to influence a match.

Mayank Chakraborty Becomes India's 94th Grandmaster

Sixteen-year-old Mayank Chakraborty from Assam has become India's 94th Chess Grandmaster and the first ever Grandmaster from the North-East region of India after securing his final GM norm in a tournament in Sweden.

About the Grandmaster Title

- The Grandmaster (GM) title is the highest title awarded to chess players by the International Chess Federation (FIDE).
- To become a Grandmaster, a player must:
- Achieve three GM norms in international tournaments.
- Cross a FIDE rating of 2500 at some point in their career.

FIDE:

- Formation: July 20, 1924
- Founder: Pierre Vincent
- Headquarters: Lausanne, Switzerland
- President: Arkady Dvorkovich
- Deputy President: Viswanathan Anand

Lakshya Sen finishes runner-up; Lin Chun-Yi wins men's singles title

India's Lakshya Sen finished runner-up in the All England Open Badminton Championships 2026 after losing to Lin Chun-Yi in the men's singles final held in Birmingham. Lin Chun-Yi defeated Lakshya Sen 21-15, 22-20 in straight games to win his first All England title. Lakshya Sen fought strongly but eventually settled for second place, marking his second runner-up finish in this tournament after 2022.

2026 Champions:

- Men's singles: Lin Chun-yi (Chinese Taipei)
- Women's singles: Wang Zhiyi (China)
- Men's doubles: Kim Won-ho (South Korea), Seo Seung-jae (South Korea)
- Women's doubles: Liu Shengshu (China), Tan Ning (China)
- Mixed doubles: Ye Hong-wei (Chinese Taipei), Nicole Gonzales Chan (Chinese Taipei)

Key Points:

- All England Open is the world's oldest badminton tournament, first held in 1899.
- It is part of the Badminton World Federation (BWF) World Tour.
- First Indian winner: Prakash Padukone (1980).
- Second Indian winner: Pullela Gopichand (2001).
- Lakshya Sen hails from Almora.
- Lin Chun-Yi became the first men's singles player from Chinese Taipei to win the All England title.

India won 2026 ICC Men's T20 World Cup

India won the 2026 ICC Men's T20 World Cup after defeating New Zealand by 96 runs in the final held at Narendra Modi Stadium. India scored 255/5 in 20 overs, while New Zealand was bowled out for 159 runs in 19 overs. Sanju Samson scored 89 runs, while Jasprit Bumrah took 4 wickets for 15 runs and was named Player of the Match. Samson was also named Player of the Tournament.

With this victory, India became:

- The first team to win the Men's T20 World Cup three times.
- The first team to successfully defend the T20 World Cup title.
- The first host nation to win the T20 World Cup at home.

Key Facts:

- Player of the Match: Jasprit Bumrah
- Player of the Tournament: Sanju Samson
- India Captain: Suryakumar Yadav
- Organised by: International Cricket Council (ICC).
- Edition: 10th edition of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup.
- First T20 World Cup: 2007 (won by India).
- Previous champion: India (2024).
- Next T20 World Cup: Scheduled for 2028 and will be co-hosted by Australia and New Zealand.

Science & Technology

SATHEE App: Government's Free Platform for Competitive Exam Preparation

The Ministry of Education has launched a free digital learning platform named SATHEE (Self-Assessment, Test and Help for Entrance Exams) to assist students in preparing for major competitive exams like JEE, NEET, and CUET. The platform has been developed in collaboration with Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur and provides free access to high-quality study material, mock tests, and video lectures prepared by experts. It aims to support economically weaker students by reducing dependence on expensive coaching institutes and ensuring equal access to quality education.

Key Features

- Free video lectures & notes by IIT and top institution faculty
- Mock tests & previous year question papers for self-evaluation
- Multilingual content for wider accessibility
- Doubt-solving support & interactive learning tools
- Accessible anytime, anywhere (app + web platform)

Additional Important Facts

- SATHEE was launched in November 2023 as part of digital education initiatives.
- It supports multiple exams including: JEE, NEET, CUET, SSC, IBPS, RRB, CLAT, ICAR
- Content is curated by experts from IITs and AIIMS, ensuring high academic quality.
- The platform includes 80,000+ practice questions and daily practice problems (DPPs).
- It has been integrated with AI-based features such as personalized learning and doubt-solving tools (announced at India AI Impact Summit 2026).
- SATHEE complements other government initiatives like:
 - DIKSHA platform (school education)
 - SWAYAM & SWAYAM Prabha DTH channels

Dholera Makes History: Gujarat's First Sounding Rocket Successfully Launched

India achieved a significant milestone in the private space sector as Gujarat's first sounding rocket was

successfully launched from Dholera (near Ahmedabad) by an Indian startup. The single-stage sub-orbital rocket reached an altitude of about 3 km within seconds and safely returned using a dual-parachute recovery system, marking a successful test of critical technologies. This is the first-ever rocket launch from Gujarat's soil, highlighting the growing role of private players in India's space ecosystem.

Key Highlights

- Developed by Ahmedabad-based startup OmSpace Rocket & Exploration (OSRE).
- Rocket used indigenous technologies such as:
 - 3D-printed igniter
 - Sugar-based solid fuel

Carbon-fibre airframe

- Launch conducted with approvals from agencies like IN-SPACE, DGCA, and AAI.
- Validated systems: propulsion, avionics, and recovery mechanism.

What is a Sounding Rocket?

- A sounding rocket is a sub-orbital rocket used for scientific research.
- It collects data on:
 - Temperature
 - Pressure
 - Upper atmospheric conditions
- These rockets are cost-effective and used for testing technologies before larger missions.

Additional Important Facts

- India's space journey began with sounding rockets in the 1960s (Thumba, Kerala).
- India's first privately built rocket: Vikram-S (launched in 2022).
- The private space sector is regulated by Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre.
- Dholera is part of the Dholera Special Investment Region (SIR), a major industrial smart city project in Gujarat.
- The startup plans to develop a reusable orbital launch vehicle ("Infinity One") in future.

Atomic Clock Failure in NavIC Satellite Raises Concerns for India's Indigenous GPS

Recent Technical Issue

India's indigenous satellite navigation system NavIC has faced a technical setback after the atomic clock onboard the satellite IRNSS-1F malfunctioned. The atomic clock is a critical component that provides extremely precise timing signals required for satellite navigation and positioning services. The malfunction could affect the accuracy and reliability of navigation services provided by the system.

Importance of Atomic Clocks in Navigation Satellites

Each navigation satellite carries three rubidium atomic clocks that generate precise time signals. Navigation receivers calculate a user's location by comparing signals from multiple satellites; therefore, accurate timekeeping is essential. If atomic clocks fail, the satellite may not be able to provide reliable positioning data.

Impact on NavIC Constellation

Navigation systems typically require at least four operational satellites to provide accurate positioning services. With clock failures in some satellites, the number of fully functional satellites in the NavIC constellation has reduced, raising concerns about the system's redundancy and long-term reliability.

Earlier Instances of Atomic Clock Failures

Technical issues with atomic clocks have occurred previously in NavIC satellites. For example, all three atomic clocks onboard the satellite IRNSS-1A failed, rendering the satellite ineffective for navigation services and necessitating replacement launches.

About NavIC (India's GPS)

- Full name: Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC).
- Developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation.
- Earlier known as Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS).
- Provides positioning, navigation, and timing (PNT) services over India and up to about 1,500 km beyond its borders.

Satellite Constellation

- The original system consists of 7 satellites (3 in geostationary orbit and 4 in geosynchronous orbit).
- Replacement and next-generation satellites are being launched under the NVS series.

Uses of NavIC

- Navigation for transport, aviation, and maritime sectors
- Disaster management and search-and-rescue operations
- Military and strategic applications

- Vehicle tracking and mobile navigation services.

ISRO Successfully Tests CE20 Cryogenic Engine at 22-Tonne Thrust

The Indian Space Research Organisation successfully conducted a sea-level hot test of its CE20 cryogenic engine at 22-tonne thrust at the ISRO Propulsion Complex in Mahendragiri, Tamil Nadu. The test ran for about 165 seconds, validating the engine's performance at a higher thrust level.

Purpose of the Test

The CE20 cryogenic engine powers the upper stage of the LVM3 launch vehicle, India's heaviest rocket. The successful test will help increase the payload capacity of LVM3 and strengthen its capability for future space missions.

Significance for Future Missions

The upgraded engine is expected to support major upcoming missions, including India's human spaceflight programme, Gaganyaan, and other heavy satellite launches. Higher thrust levels will enable the rocket to carry heavier payloads into orbit and support more complex missions.

About the CE20 Cryogenic Engine

- CE20 is India's most powerful indigenous cryogenic rocket engine.
- Developed by the Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC) of ISRO.
- It uses liquid hydrogen (LH₂) as fuel and liquid oxygen (LOX) as oxidiser.
- Designed to power the C25 cryogenic upper stage of the LVM3 rocket.

NASA's DART Mission Successfully Alters Asteroid Orbit

New observations show that Double Asteroid Redirection Test (DART), conducted by NASA in 2022, slightly changed the orbit of the asteroid system Didymos–Dimorphos. The collision reduced the time taken by the asteroid pair to complete one solar orbit by less than one second.

About the DART Mission

- DART (Double Asteroid Redirection Test) was the first planetary defense experiment designed to test whether a spacecraft could change the trajectory of an asteroid.

- In September 2022, the spacecraft intentionally crashed into the asteroid Dimorphos, which orbits the larger asteroid Didymos.

Key Findings

- The impact released about 35.3 million pounds of debris, nearly 30,000 times the mass of the spacecraft.
- The debris cloud created additional momentum, enhancing the impact effect.
- The collision shortened the asteroid system's orbital period around the Sun by about 0.15 seconds.
- Even a tiny change in orbital motion can prevent a potential asteroid collision with Earth in the future.

DRDO, Indian Navy Successfully Test Indigenous Air Droppable Container from P-8I Aircraft

Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the Indian Navy successfully conducted in-flight release trials of the indigenous Air Droppable Container (ADC-150). The trials were carried out from a Boeing P-8I Poseidon aircraft off the coast of Goa between February 21 and March 1, 2026.

About Air Droppable Container (ADC-150):

- Indigenously designed and developed aerial delivery system.
- Capable of carrying up to 150 kg payload.
- Designed to deliver:
 - Critical equipment
 - Essential stores
 - Medical supplies

Purpose:

- Provide rapid logistical support to naval ships deployed in deep seas.

Operational Role:

- Enhances the Indian Navy's blue-water operational logistics capability.
- Allows emergency delivery of supplies to naval vessels operating far from the coastline.
- Supports quick response during distress situations at sea.

Future Induction:

- After the successful completion of all developmental flight trials, the ADC-150 system is expected to be inducted into the Indian Navy soon.
- It will strengthen India's maritime logistics and operational readiness.

Japan Approves World's First iPS Stem-Cell Therapies for Parkinson's and Heart Failure

What is the Announcement?

Japan has approved ground-breaking stem-cell therapies for treating Parkinson's disease and severe heart failure, making them the world's first commercially approved medical treatments using iPS cells.

Parkinson's Treatment – Amchepry:

- Pharmaceutical company Sumitomo Pharma received approval to manufacture and sell Amchepry, a therapy that:
 - Transplants stem cells into a patient's brain
 - Helps replace dopamine-producing neurons lost in Parkinson's disease.
- The treatment uses induced pluripotent stem (iPS) cells derived from healthy donors.

Heart Failure Treatment – ReHeart:

- Japan's health ministry also approved ReHeart, developed by medical startup Cuorips.
 - ReHeart works by:
 - Using heart muscle cell sheets
 - Helping form new blood vessels
 - Improving heart function in severe heart failure patients.

What are iPS Cells?

- Induced Pluripotent Stem (iPS) cells are created by reprogramming mature adult cells back into a stem-cell state.
 - These cells can:
 - Develop into any type of cell in the human body
 - Be used for regenerative medicine and disease treatment.
 - The technology avoids the use of embryos.

Nobel Prize Connection:

Japanese scientist Shinya Yamanaka won the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 2012 for discovering iPS cells.

Clinical Trial Findings

- A study conducted by Kyoto University showed:
 - 7 Parkinson's patients participated in the trial
 - Each received 5–10 million stem cells implanted in the brain
 - Patients were monitored for two years
 - No major side effects were observed
 - 4 patients showed improvement in symptoms.

Conditional Approval System:

- Japan granted "conditional and time-limited approval", meaning:

- The treatment can reach patients faster
- Data from smaller clinical trials can be used initially
- Further monitoring will continue after approval.

DRDO Successfully Conducts VSHORADS Flight Trials

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully conducted three consecutive flight trials of the Very Short-Range Air Defence System (VSHORADS) from the Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur off the coast of Odisha.

What is VSHORADS?

- VSHORADS stands for Very Short-Range Air Defence System.
- It is a man-portable air defence missile system (MANPAD) designed to engage low-altitude aerial targets such as aircraft, helicopters, and UAVs at short ranges.
- The system is indigenously developed by DRDO's Research Centre Imarat (RCI) with other DRDO labs and industry partners.

Operational Role:

- VSHORADS is meant to augment India's short-range air defence capability, especially in challenging terrains like mountain fronts.
- It can be deployed rapidly by infantry and forces needing mobile air defence solutions.

Technical Features:

- It uses dual-waveband infrared guidance and modern avionics for improved tracking.
- The propulsion is provided by a dual-thrust solid rocket motor.
- Operational range is typically around 6 km with high maneuverability against fast moving threats.

India Launches Nationwide HPV Vaccination Drive to Prevent Cervical Cancer

The Government of India has announced a free, nationwide human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination programme aimed at reducing the high burden of cervical cancer among women. The drive will initially target 14-year-old girls with a single-dose voluntary vaccine administered through government health facilities across all States and Union Territories during February–March 2026.

Key Features of the HPV Vaccination Drive

Target Group & Schedule:

- The campaign focuses on girls aged 14 years, covering nearly 1.15 crore beneficiaries annually.
- Vaccination will be provided free of cost at designated government health centres including Ayushman Arogya Mandirs, Primary Health Centres, etc.

Vaccine Type:

A single-dose Gardasil-4 vaccine (quadrivalent) will be used, protecting against HPV types 6, 11, 16 and 18 — with types 16 and 18 responsible for most cervical cancers.

Voluntary & Safety Measures:

The programme is voluntary and free, with vaccination sessions supervised by trained Medical Officers, and linked to 24×7 medical facilities for post-vaccination observation.

Implementation Mechanism:

- Vaccine supplies have been secured through partnerships with Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance and approved by India's drug regulator.

Public Health Strategy:

After the initial catch-up phase, HPV vaccination is expected to be integrated into India's Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP).

Human Papillomavirus (HPV):

- HPV is a group of viruses; some high-risk types (e.g., 16 and 18) cause cervical and other cancers.
- HPV vaccination also prevents genital warts and can indirectly protect against anal, penile, and throat cancers.

Vaccine Types:

- Gardasil-4: Quadrivalent vaccine used in the national programme.
- Cervavac: India's first indigenously developed HPV vaccine (quadrivalent), approved in 2022.

Screening & Preventive Care:

- Vaccination should complement cervical screening programmes (e.g., Pap smear) for older women, especially as screening coverage in India remains low.

Global Adoption:

- More than 160 countries have introduced HPV vaccination into their national immunisation schedules, reflecting a global commitment to cervical cancer elimination.

Obituary

American martial artist and actor Chuck Norris passes away



Legendary American martial artist and actor Chuck Norris passed away at the age of 86 in Hawaii. Norris was widely known for his role in the TV series Walker, Texas Ranger. He was a martial arts champion and a global action film icon.

Career & Contributions

- Born as Carlos Ray Norris (1940) in Oklahoma, USA.
- Served in the US Air Force, where he began martial arts training.
- Became a six-time undefeated world karate champion.
- Starred in popular action films such as:
 - The Delta Force
 - Missing in Action
- Achieved global fame through the TV show Walker, Texas Ranger (1993–2001).

Former AIFF General Secretary Kushal Das Passes Away



Former General Secretary of the All India Football Federation (AIFF), Kushal Das, passed away in New Delhi at the age of 66. Kushal Das served as General Secretary of the All India Football Federation from 2010 to 2022, making him one of the longest-serving administrators in Indian football. He played a major role in organising the 2017 FIFA U-17 World Cup,

which was hosted by India for the first time. During his tenure, India also hosted major tournaments like the 2022 AFC Women's Asian Cup and the 2022 FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup. He stepped down from the AIFF post in 2022 due to health reasons after serving for about 12 years.

All India Football Federation:

- Founded: 23 June 1937
- Headquarters: Dwarka, Delhi
- President: Kalyan Chaubey
- Vice-President: N. A. Haris
- General Secretary: Anilkumar Prabhakaran

Senior editor and former ambassador H. K. Dua passed away at the age of 88



Veteran Indian journalist H. K. Dua passed away on March 2026 at the age of 88 in a private hospital in New Delhi.

About H. K. Dua:

- Born on 1 July 1937.
- One of India's most respected journalists with a career spanning more than four decades.
- Known for strong editorial independence, political insight, and commitment to democratic values.

Major Editorial Positions:

- Editor – The Hindustan Times (1987–1994)
- Editor-in-Chief – The Indian Express (1994–1996)
- Editorial Advisor – The Times of India (1997–1998)
- Editor-in-Chief – The Tribune (2003–2009)

Roles in Government & Public Life:

Served as Media Advisor to Prime Ministers:

- Atal Bihari Vajpayee
- H. D. Deve Gowda
- India's Ambassador to Denmark (2001–2003).
- Nominated Member of Rajya Sabha (2009–2015).

- Member of Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Consultative Committee of the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- Also served on the National Security Advisory Board.

Role in Media Organizations:

- Former President of the Editors Guild of India (1992–93).
- General Secretary of Editors Guild (1987–89).

Awards & Honours:

- Padma Bhushan for contributions to journalism.
- Durga Ratan Award.
- Bal Gangadhar Tilak Award for excellence in journalism.
- Honorary doctorates from Panjab University and Kurukshetra University.

Steel Industry Veteran Jatinder Mehra Passes Away



Renowned steel industry veteran Jatinder Mehra passed away at the age of 86, marking the end of a distinguished career spanning over six decades in India's metals and mining sector. Mehra was serving as Vice Chairman of the Metals & Mining Division at Essar Group, where he provided strategic leadership and played a central role in guiding the group's steel and metals operations.

Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL):

- SAIL is a Maharatna Public Sector Enterprise, contributing significantly to India's industrial output.
- It operates major plants including Bokaro, Bhilai, Rourkela, and Durgapur.
- Chairman and Managing Director: Amarendu Prakash
- Founded : 1954

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's Supreme Leader dead at 86 as Israel-Iran conflict spirals



Why in News?

Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed in a major attack by Israel and the United States.

Details of the Air Strike:

- The attack was carried out jointly by the United States and Israel.
- Khamenei was attending an important meeting at that time.
- Around 10 top military and administrative officials were killed in the strike.

Rising Tensions in the Middle East:

- After the strike, Iran retaliated with attacks.
- Targets included:
 - US and Israeli bases in:
 - UAE
 - Bahrain
 - Kuwait
 - Saudi Arabia
 - Qatar
 - Iraq
 - Oman
 - Jordan

Why did the United States target Ayatollah Ali Khamenei?

Nuclear Threat:

- To stop Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

Regional Power Balance:

- To reduce Iran's influence in the Middle East.

Terror/Proxy Groups:

- To weaken Iran's support to groups like Hezbollah and Hamas.

Failed Diplomacy:

- Military action followed the failure of nuclear talks.

Military Objective:

- To destroy key military infrastructure and weaken Iran quickly.

Miscellaneous Events

Pakistan Ranked World's Most Polluted Country in 2025

According to a report by IQAir, Pakistan was ranked the most polluted country in the world in 2025, based on air quality data.

Key Findings of the Report

The report highlighted that Pakistan recorded extremely high levels of PM2.5 (fine particulate matter), which are harmful pollutants that can penetrate deep into the lungs. The PM2.5 levels in Pakistan were found to be up to 13 times higher than the safe limit prescribed by the World Health Organization.

Health and Environmental Concerns

- High PM2.5 levels are associated with serious health risks such as:
- Respiratory diseases
- Cardiovascular problems
- Premature deaths
- Major cities like Lahore and Karachi frequently experience “unhealthy” to “hazardous” air quality levels, indicating a severe pollution crisis.

Global Scenario

- The report also noted a slight global improvement, as 13 countries met WHO air quality standards in 2025, compared to only 7 in 2024. However, pollution levels remain critically high in many developing countries.

Based on the 2025 reporting, here are the top 10 most polluted countries:

- Pakistan: Ranked 1st globally, facing severe pollution.
- Bangladesh: Consistently ranked among the most polluted.
- Tajikistan: Ranked 3rd in 2025.
- Chad: Dropped from 1st in 2024 to 4th in 2025, potentially due to data gaps.
- India: Dropped out of the top 5 for the first time.
- Bahrain: Ranked 4th based on certain analysis of average AQI
- Mongolia: Reported significant pollution, despite some improvement.
- Laos: Reported PM2.5 high levels.
- Cambodia: High levels of pollution recorded.
- Indonesia: High levels of pollution recorded.

Global Terrorism Index 2026

According to the latest Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2026, Pakistan has been ranked as the most affected country by terrorism, recording a 6% rise in terrorism-related deaths. This highlights worsening internal security conditions despite a broader global decline in terrorism fatalities.

Key Findings of the Report

- Pakistan witnessed an increase in terror-related deaths by around 6%, indicating rising instability.
- Despite this, global terrorism deaths declined significantly, showing contrasting regional trends.
- Terror activities remain concentrated in specific regions, especially conflict-prone areas.

Global Trends in Terrorism

- Global terrorism deaths fell by about 28% to nearly 5,500 deaths in 2025, the lowest in recent years.
- However, terrorism is becoming more localized and concentrated, especially in regions like the Sahel (Africa).
- Western countries have seen a rise in lone-wolf and youth-driven attacks.

Concerns Highlighted

- The report warns that global instability, conflicts, and economic disruptions may reverse the declining trend in terrorism.
- Terror groups are becoming more adaptive and technologically advanced, increasing future risks.

Additional Exam-Relevant Key Facts

- Global Terrorism Index (GTI): Published annually by the Institute for Economics and Peace.
- Coverage: Ranks 163 countries based on terrorism impact.

Indicators Used:

- Number of terrorist incidents
- Number of deaths
- Injuries
- Hostages
- Deadliest Terror Group (recent trends): Islamic State remains among the most lethal globally.
- Regional Hotspot: The Sahel region (Africa) accounts for a major share of global terrorism deaths.

Top 10 Most Impacted Countries:

- Pakistan - Experienced a significant rise in terror incidents, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.
- Burkina Faso

- Niger
- Nigeria
- Mali
- Syria
- Somalia
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Cambodia
- Israel
- India- Rank 13

State of the World's Migratory Species Report

About the Report:

- The State of the World's Migratory Species Report is a global assessment of migratory wildlife and their conservation status.
- Prepared under the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS).
- CMS is a legally binding treaty established in 1979 under the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
- The first global report was released in 2024.

Coverage of the Report

- Analysed 1,189 migratory species listed under CMS.
- Also assessed trends of more than 3,000 additional migratory species worldwide.
- Uses data from the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List and global population monitoring studies.

Importance of Migratory Species

- Migratory species play a vital role in ecosystems:
- Migratory birds support pollination and pest control.
- Marine animals help maintain ocean food chains.
- Migratory herds distribute nutrients and shape ecosystems.
- They also support tourism, cultural traditions, and food systems.

Major Findings of the Latest Report

- Declining Populations:
- Around 49% of migratory species populations protected under CMS are declining.
- About 24% face the risk of extinction.
- Out of 1,189 CMS-listed species, about 582 species show declining population trends.

Rising Extinction Risks:

- 26 migratory species have moved into higher extinction-risk categories on the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List.

- 18 of them are migratory shorebirds, indicating threats to coastal and wetland ecosystems.

Major Threats:

- Two biggest threats to migratory species:
- Habitat loss due to urbanisation, agriculture, and infrastructure development.
- Overexploitation through hunting and overfishing.
- Infrastructure such as roads, railways, pipelines, and fences disrupt migration routes of large animals.

Emerging Threat – Avian Influenza:

- Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (H5N1) is causing mass mortality events among migratory birds.

Affected species include:

- African Penguins
- Humboldt Penguins
- Peruvian Pelicans
- Red-crowned Cranes
- Also affected marine mammals such as South American Sea Lion and South American Fur Seal.

Conservation Success Stories

- Seven CMS-listed species have shown improvement:
- Saiga Antelope
- Scimitar-horned Oryx
- Mediterranean Monk Seal

Key Biodiversity Areas:

- The report identified 9,372 Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) important for migratory species.
- 47% of these areas are not protected, making them vulnerable to human pressures.

IndiGo CEO Pieter Elbers Resigns & Rahul Bhatia Steps In as Interim Chief

Pieter Elbers has stepped down as Chief Executive Officer of IndiGo with effect from March 10, 2026. He had been serving as CEO of IndiGo since September 2022.

Interim Leadership

Following Elbers' resignation, Rahul Bhatia, Managing Director of IndiGo, will oversee the airline's operations on an interim basis.

Role of Rahul Bhatia

- Rahul Bhatia is the co-founder of IndiGo and has been associated with the airline for more than two decades.
- He will focus on:
- Strengthening company culture
- Enhancing operational excellence

- Improving customer service and reliability

About IndiGo

IndiGo is India's largest airline by market share. It operates under its parent company InterGlobe Aviation. The airline is known for its low-cost carrier model and extensive domestic network. Chairman and Non-Executive Independent Director of InterGlobe Aviation Limited (IndiGo) is Vikram Singh Mehta.

Indian Educator Alakh Pandey Enters Forbes World's Billionaires List 2026

Indian educator Alakh Pandey has entered the Forbes World's Billionaires List 2026, marking a significant achievement for India's EdTech sector. He is a self-made billionaire and co-founder of Physics Wallah, a platform providing affordable education for competitive exams. His company gained major traction after its IPO in 2025, which significantly boosted his wealth. He started his journey as a YouTube educator, making free educational content accessible to students.

About Forbes Billionaires List

- Published annually by Forbes magazine.
- Lists individuals with net worth ≥ \$1 billion.

Categorizes billionaires as:

- Self-made
- Inherited wealth

About Physics Wallah

- Founded in 2020 by Alakh Pandey and Prateek Boob.

Provides coaching for:

- JEE, NEET
- School education
- Skill-based courses (AI, Data Analytics, etc.)
- Known for low-cost education model, increasing accessibility.

HDFC Bank Chairman Atanu Chakraborty Resigns Citing Ethical Differences

Atanu Chakraborty resigned as part-time Chairman of HDFC Bank citing differences over values and ethics. He stated that certain practices within the bank were not aligned with his personal ethics. The resignation was sudden and immediate, raising concerns about corporate governance. Following the exit, Keki Mistry was appointed as interim chairman for three months.

Possible Reasons (As per Reports)

- Indications of a rift between chairman and management.

- Concerns related to internal practices and governance standards.
- However, no specific issues were publicly disclosed.

About HDFC Bank

- Established in 1994
- Headquarters: Mumbai
- CEO: Sashidhar Jagdishan
- India's largest private sector bank by market capitalization
- Recently merged with HDFC Ltd. (2023), creating a major financial entity

Fiscal Health Index 2026: Odisha Tops, States Ranked on Financial Strength

The Fiscal Health Index (FHI) 2026, released by the NITI Aayog, evaluates the financial performance of Indian states for FY 2023–24. The index ranks states based on their fiscal discipline, revenue generation, expenditure quality, and debt sustainability. According to the latest index, Odisha retained the top position, followed by Goa and Jharkhand, showcasing strong fiscal management. Other states in the top 10 include Gujarat, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, and Madhya Pradesh. At the lower end, states like Punjab, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, and Kerala performed poorly, indicating concerns related to high debt and weak fiscal discipline.

What is Fiscal Health Index (FHI)?

The Fiscal Health Index is a composite index developed by NITI Aayog to assess the fiscal strength of states. It helps in benchmarking states and promoting better financial governance and cooperative federalism.

22-Year-Old Surya Midha Surpasses Mark Zuckerberg's Record in Forbes List

A 22-year-old entrepreneur, Surya Midha, has become one of the youngest self-made billionaires in the world, surpassing the record earlier held by Mark Zuckerberg. Surya Midha became a self-made billionaire at age 22. He co-founded Mercor, an AI-based hiring platform. Along with co-founders Adarsh Hiremath and Brendan Foody, he became the youngest self-made billionaires globally. They broke the earlier record of Mark Zuckerberg, who became a billionaire at 23 years.

Key Facts About the Achievement

- Net worth: Approx. \$2.2 billion (Surya Midha)
- Company valuation: Around \$10 billion

- Year of milestone: 2025 (entered Forbes Billionaires list)
- Sector: Artificial Intelligence (AI) & recruitment technology

About Mercor

- Founded in 2023 by three young entrepreneurs
- Provides AI-driven recruitment and talent matching services
- Works with AI labs and companies to train models
- Headquartered in San Francisco, USA

Adobe CEO Shantanu Narayen to step down amid investor concerns over AI

Shantanu Narayen has announced that he will step down as the Chief Executive Officer of Adobe. He has been leading the company since December 2007.

Why Shantanu Narayen is Leaving:

Narayen will continue as CEO until a successor is selected. After stepping down as CEO, he will remain the chairman of Adobe’s board. Adobe is facing questions about its long-term strategy in the age of artificial intelligence. New AI tools are making it easier for people to create and edit images without using traditional software.

Top 10 Most Valuable Banks in the World – 2026

According to the Brand Finance Banking 500 Report 2026, Chinese and American banks dominate the list of the world’s most valuable banking brands. The total brand value of the world’s top 500 banking brands reached about \$1. 8 trillion in 2026, reflecting strong growth in the global banking sector.

Top 10 Most Valuable Banks in 2026

1. Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (China) – \$90. 9 billion
2. China Construction Bank (China) – \$77. 2 billion
3. Bank of China (China) – \$70. 8 billion
4. Agricultural Bank of China (China) – \$62. 8 billion
5. Bank of America (USA) – \$47. 6 billion
6. JPMorgan Chase (USA) – \$44. 8 billion
7. Wells Fargo (USA) – \$39. 8 billion
8. JP Morgan (USA) – \$36. 3 billion
9. Citigroup (USA) – \$35. 7 billion
10. HSBC (United Kingdom) – \$33. 7 billion

Key Highlights

- ICBC retained the position of world’s most valuable banking brand for the 10th consecutive year.

- Chinese banks dominate the ranking with four banks in the top five.
- Five American banks also feature in the top ten, highlighting strong US banking presence globally.
- The UK-based HSBC re-entered the top 10 for the first time since 2019.

World Economic Forum CEO Børge Brende Resigns Amid Epstein Links Scrutiny

Børge Brende, President and Chief Executive Officer of the World Economic Forum (WEF), has stepped down from his position amid scrutiny over his past interactions with Jeffrey Epstein, the late convicted sex offender. Brende’s resignation comes after disclosures from the US Department of Justice showed he had attended multiple business dinners and exchanged communications with Epstein, prompting an internal review by the WEF.

About the World Economic Forum (WEF)

Established in 1971, the WEF is an international NGO committed to public-private cooperation on global issues including economic development, climate change, health, and technology. It is best known for its Annual Meeting at Davos, which gathers leaders from governments, businesses, and civil society to discuss major global challenges.

- Chairman: Larry Fink
- Founder: Klaus Schwab

08 March

International Women's Day

INCEPTION: 1910
EDITION: 51st
1ST CELEBRATED: 1911
2026 THEME:
Give To Gain

Importance
A proposal by German revolutionary Clara Zetkin at the 1910 International Socialist Woman's Conference to honor the day annually in memory of working women.

Motto
To highlight the achievements recognised by women without regard to divisions.

Note

- The UN began celebrating International Women's Day in the International Women's Year, 1975.
- This day aimed to help nations worldwide eliminate discrimination against women. It also focused on helping women gain full and equal participation in global development.

Defence Exercise of the Month

Lamitiye 2026

INS Trikand, a frontline stealth frigate of the Indian Navy, concluded its port visit to Seychelles (Port Victoria) in March 2026. The visit was part of India's ongoing efforts to strengthen maritime cooperation and defence ties in the Indian Ocean Region.

Participation in Exercise Lamitiye 2026

- INS Trikand participated in the first tri-services edition of Exercise Lamitiye 2026, along with the Indian Army, Indian Air Force, and Seychelles Defence Forces (SDF). This marked the maiden participation of the Indian Navy in the exercise.
- Harbour phase included Visit, Board, Search and Seizure (VBSS) training and joint boarding drills
- Sea phase involved joint maritime operations and coordinated exercises
- Conduct of joint landing operations on Praslin Island

Objective and Significance

- The exercise aimed to enhance interoperability and joint operational capabilities between India and Seychelles
- Strengthened maritime security cooperation and defence engagement
- Reinforced India's role as a preferred security partner in the Indian Ocean Region

Strategic Importance

- The visit aligns with India's MAHASAGAR vision (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Region)
- Demonstrates India's commitment as a "First Responder" in the Indian Ocean Region
- The exercise name "Lamitiye" means "friendship", symbolizing strong bilateral ties

Additional Key Facts

- INS Trikand: Commissioned in 2013; part of the Indian Navy's Western Fleet
- Exercise Lamitiye: Joint India-Seychelles military exercise conducted in Seychelles
- Tri-services Exercise: Involves Army, Navy, and Air Force together
- VBSS Operations: Important for maritime security, anti-piracy, and law enforcement
- Seychelles Location: Strategic island nation in the Western Indian Ocean, important for sea lanes

Amogh Jwala

- The Indian Army conducted Exercise 'Amogh Jwala' at Babina Field Firing Ranges (Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh).
- The exercise was carried out under the Southern Command.
- It was a technology-driven, multi-domain military exercise aimed at testing operational preparedness.

Key Features of Exercise

Deployment of:

- Attack helicopters
- Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS)/drones
- Counter-drone systems

Use of:

- Real-time communication networks
- Advanced surveillance and precision firepower
- Focus on network-centric warfare and command-control systems.

About Babina Field Firing Range

- Located near Jhansi (Uttar Pradesh)
- One of India's major armoured and artillery training grounds

About Southern Command

- Headquarters: Pune, Maharashtra
- One of the oldest commands of Indian Army (since 1895)
- Current GOC-in-C: Lt Gen Dhiraj Seth

Multi-Domain Warfare

Involves integration of:

- Land forces
- Air power
- Cyber and space capabilities

Other Important Military Exercises

- Vayu Shakti – Indian Air Force exercise
- Dharma Guardian – India-Japan joint military exercise
- Agni Varsha – Indian Army firepower exercise

Sea Dragon

The Indian Navy has joined the US-led multinational Exercise Sea Dragon 2026, a high-end anti-submarine warfare (ASW) drill conducted in the Indo-Pacific region (Guam). The exercise is a two-week multinational naval drill focusing on submarine

detection and tracking. India is represented by its P-8I long-range maritime reconnaissance aircraft.

Participating countries include:

- United States (host)
- India
- Japan
- Australia
- South Korea
- Conducted at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam in the Indo-Pacific region.
- The exercise involves advanced ASW training, including tracking simulated and real submarines.
- It includes over 200 hours of in-flight operational training.

About Exercise Sea Dragon

- It is an annual multinational Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) exercise.
- Hosted by the US Navy's 7th Fleet.
- Started as a bilateral exercise (US–Australia) and later expanded to include Indo-Pacific partners.

Focuses on:

- Detection and tracking of submarines
- Maritime surveillance
- Tactical coordination among partner navies

About P-8I Aircraft:

- Long-range maritime reconnaissance aircraft used by the Indian Navy
- Based on Boeing P-8 Poseidon platform

Key roles:

- Anti-submarine warfare (ASW)
- Anti-surface warfare
- Surveillance and reconnaissance

Related Naval Exercises:

- MALABAR Exercise → India, US, Japan, Australia (Quad)
- MILAN Exercise → Multilateral naval exercise hosted by India
- RIMPAC Exercise → World's largest naval exercise (US-led)

Freedom Shield

The United States and South Korea have launched a large-scale joint military exercise called Freedom Shield 2026, involving thousands of troops to strengthen their combined defence readiness on the Korean Peninsula.

About the Freedom Shield Exercise

- Freedom Shield is an annual joint military exercise conducted by the armed forces of the United States and South Korea.

- The drills integrate operations across land, air, sea, space, and cyber domains to test modern warfare scenarios.
- The exercise is designed to improve interoperability between allied forces and prepare for potential crises on the Korean Peninsula.
- It is part of the broader U. S. –South Korea security alliance established after the Korean War (1950–53).

Strategic Context

- The Korean Peninsula remains a major geopolitical hotspot due to tensions with North Korea, which continues to develop nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles.
- Military exercises like Freedom Shield are intended to deter aggression and ensure regional stability.
- Such drills often trigger strong reactions from North Korea, which sees them as hostile actions.

MILAN 2026

The Indian Navy successfully concluded its flagship multilateral naval exercise MILAN 2026 with a closing ceremony onboard India's indigenous aircraft carrier INS Vikrant off the coast of Visakhapatnam.

About MILAN 2026

MILAN 2026 was conducted under the theme "Camaraderie, Cooperation, Collaboration." The exercise comprising two main phases — the Harbour Phase and the Sea Phase. It was hosted by the Indian Navy at Visakhapatnam, under the Eastern Naval Command.

About Exercise MILAN

- Started in: 1995
- Nature: Multilateral naval exercise hosted biennially by the Indian Navy.
- Purpose: Promote cooperation, interoperability, and professional exchange among friendly navies.

INS Vikrant

INS Vikrant is India's first indigenously built aircraft carrier, symbolising India's naval capability and self-reliance in defence manufacturing. Commissioned in 2022, it plays a key role in power projection and maritime diplomacy.

Eastern Naval Command

- Headquarters: Visakhapatnam
- One of the three main operational commands of the Indian Navy, tasked with safeguarding India's eastern maritime front.

Important Days of the Month

Day	Observed/Celebrated As	Motto/Importance
01- Apr	Utkal Diwas/Odisha day	To embark the formation of the state(Odisha) as a separate state out of Bihar and Odisha province on 1 April 1936
02- Apr	World Autism Awareness Day	To put a spotlight on the hurdles that people with autism face every day.
04- Apr	International Day for Mine Awareness	To spread awareness about the threat caused by landmines to the safety, health and lives of civilian populations
05- Apr	National Maritime day	Propelling Indian Maritime to Net Zero
07- Apr	World Health day	Together for health. Stand with science
10- Apr	World Homeopathy day	Harmony Through Homeopathy – Healing Beyond Borders
11- Apr	National Safe Motherhood Day	Diagnosis: First step to care
17- Apr	World Haemophilia Day	Access for all: Women and girls bleed too
18- Apr	International Day for Monuments and Sites	Emergency Response for Living Heritage in contexts of Conflicts and Disasters.
19- Apr	World Liver Day	To spread awareness about liver related disease
21- Apr	Civil Service Day	To commemorate the day when 1st Home Minister of Independent India addressed the Administrative Services Officers in 1947.
22- Apr	Earth Day	Our Power, Our Planet
23- Apr	World Book & Copyright Day	To pay a worldwide tribute to books and authors and to encourage people to discover the pleasure of reading.
24- Apr	National Panchayati Day	On this day the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act, 1992 came into force
25- Apr	World Malaria Day	United Against Malaria
26- Apr	World Intellectual Property Day	IP and Sports: Ready, Set, Innovate
28- Apr	World Day for Safety and Health at work	To honour the memory of victims of occupational accidents and diseases
29- Apr	International Dance Day	To mark the birth anniversary of Jean-Georges Noverre (1727–1810), the creator of modern ballet.
30- Apr	Ayushman Bharat Diwas	To mark the rollout of India's most affordable medical Scheme, i.e. Ayushman Bharat Programme.

Challenge to Shariat Act on Muslim Inheritance Reaches the Supreme Court of India

Background of the Case

A petition has challenged provisions of the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937 in the Supreme Court. The challenge relates mainly to rules governing inheritance among Muslims. Petitioners argue that the current system discriminates against Muslim women in property rights and violates constitutional equality.



What the Shariat Act, 1937 Provides

The Act applies Islamic personal law (Shariat) to Muslims in matters such as:

- marriage
- divorce
- maintenance
- succession and inheritance.

It was introduced to replace local customs with uniform Muslim personal law across British India.

How Muslim Inheritance Works Under the Law

Muslim inheritance rules are derived from Quranic principles and Islamic jurisprudence.

In many cases:

Female heirs receive smaller shares than male heirs.

For example, a daughter may receive half the share of a son.

A Muslim person cannot freely will more than one-third of their property, while the remaining property must go to legal heirs according to Shariat rules.

Main Arguments in the Petition

The petition raises several constitutional concerns:

- Violation of equality: It argues that unequal inheritance shares for women violate Articles 14 and 15 of the Constitution.
- Different rights across states: After the Uniform Civil Code law in Uttarakhand, Muslim women

there may have different inheritance rights compared to women in other states.

- This means two Muslim women with identical backgrounds may receive different property rights depending on where they live.

Observations of the Supreme Court

The Court noted that the issue raises important constitutional and social questions. Judges observed that striking down the Shariat inheritance framework could create a legal vacuum, since no alternative statutory law exists for Muslim inheritance. The Court suggested that Parliament may be better suited to undertake comprehensive reforms.

Link with Uniform Civil Code (UCC)

During the hearing, judges referred to Article 44 of the Constitution, which encourages the State to implement a Uniform Civil Code.

The Court indicated that a common civil law could address inequalities in personal laws across communities.

Why the Case is Important

The case highlights the conflict between personal religious laws and constitutional principles of equality.

It could influence debates on:

gender equality in inheritance rights

reform of personal laws

implementation of a Uniform Civil Code in India.

Way Forward

Comprehensive legal review: Parliament may examine reforms in Muslim inheritance law to ensure gender justice while respecting religious practices.

Balance between faith and equality: Any reform should align personal laws with constitutional principles such as equality and non-discrimination.

Clarity through legislation: Instead of judicial intervention alone, clear statutory reforms may prevent legal uncertainty.

Broader debate on Uniform Civil Code: The issue may revive discussions on implementing Uniform Civil Code to bring uniformity in personal laws.

Ladakh's Demand for Sixth Schedule Protection: Explained

Background of the Issue

Environmental activist Sonam Wangchuk was detained in September 2025 under the National Security Act (NSA) following protests in Ladakh. The protests were linked to demands for statehood and inclusion of Ladakh under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. The Central Government later revoked his detention, bringing renewed attention to the political demands of Ladakh.

Political Changes After 2019

In 2019, the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019 reorganised the former state of Jammu & Kashmir. Ladakh became a Union Territory without a legislative assembly, governed directly by the Centre. Many local groups argue that this reduced their political representation and decision-making power.

What is the Sixth Schedule?

The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India provides autonomous governance to tribal areas. It currently applies to tribal regions in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.

It allows the creation of Autonomous District Councils with powers over:

- land and forest management
- local taxation
- culture and customs
- local governance and development.

Why Ladakh is Seeking Sixth Schedule Status

Local groups argue that constitutional safeguards are needed for several reasons:

1. Protection of Tribal Identity

About 97% of Ladakh's population belongs to Scheduled Tribes.

Sixth Schedule status could help preserve culture, language, and traditional institutions.

2. Protection of Land and Resources

Residents fear outsiders buying land and resources after the region became a Union Territory.

The Sixth Schedule could help protect land rights of local communities.

3. Environmental Concerns

Ladakh has a fragile Himalayan ecosystem.

Local leaders want stronger control over tourism, mining, and infrastructure projects to ensure sustainable development.

4. Greater Political Autonomy

Autonomous councils could give Ladakh more control over governance and development decisions.

Key Groups Leading the Movement

The demand for Sixth Schedule protection is mainly led by:

1. Leh Apex Body (LAB)
2. Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA)

These groups represent political, social, and religious organisations from both Leh and Kargil districts and have been negotiating with the Centre.

Government's Response

The Central Government has formed a High-Powered Committee to discuss issues related to:

- land protection
- job reservation for locals
- political representation
- cultural safeguards.

However, no final decision on Sixth Schedule inclusion has been taken so far.

Why the Issue Matters

The debate reflects tensions between development, environmental protection, and local autonomy.

It also raises broader constitutional questions about how tribal regions outside Northeast India can receive similar protections.

Way Forward

- **Constructive Dialogue:** The Central Government should continue structured talks with local groups such as the Leh Apex Body and Kargil Democratic Alliance to find a consensus-based solution.
- **Legal Safeguards for Land and Jobs:** Introduce special protections for local land ownership and employment to address fears of demographic and economic changes.
- **Strengthening Local Governance:** Enhance the powers of existing Hill Development Councils to give Ladakh greater participation in governance and development planning.
- **Environmental Protection Measures:** Adopt strict environmental regulations and sustainable tourism policies to protect Ladakh's fragile Himalayan ecosystem.
- **Balanced Constitutional Solution:** The government may consider Sixth Schedule-like protections or other constitutional mechanisms to safeguard Ladakh's tribal identity, culture, and resources while ensuring effective administration.

Reliance-Backed Texas Refinery Project Announced by Donald Trump: Explained

Trump Announces New Texas Oil Refinery!



A Significant Move in America's Energy Expansion

Background of the Announcement

The US President Donald Trump announced a major oil refinery project in Brownsville, Texas. The project involves investment support from Reliance Industries, India's largest private-sector company. It is expected to be the first new oil refinery built in the United States in nearly 50 years.

Key Details of the Project

The refinery will be developed by America First Refining. It will be located at the Port of Brownsville on the US Gulf Coast. Construction is expected to begin in 2026. The refinery is designed to process around 60 million barrels of crude oil per year (about 160,000–168,000 barrels per day).

Why the Deal is Called a “\$300-Billion Project”

The \$300-billion figure refers to the total value of crude processed and fuel produced over about 20 years, not the construction cost.

The refinery is expected to:

- process about 1.2 billion barrels of US shale oil (worth around \$125 billion)
- produce about 50 billion gallons of refined fuel (worth around \$175 billion).

Together, this creates an estimated \$300-billion economic value over the long term.

Role of Reliance Industries

Reliance has provided major investment support for the refinery project. It has also signed a 20-year

offtake agreement to purchase and distribute products produced by the refinery. Reliance operates the world's largest refining complex at Jamnagar, Gujarat, giving it strong expertise in refining operations.

Why the US Wants a New Refinery

Several strategic reasons explain the project:

1. Increase Domestic Refining Capacity: The US produces large amounts of shale oil, but many existing refineries are designed for heavier imported crude.
2. Energy Security: Refining domestic shale oil reduces dependence on foreign refining and imported crude.
3. Rising Fuel Prices: The announcement comes amid higher global oil prices and geopolitical tensions in West Asia, affecting fuel markets.
4. Export Opportunities: The location at Brownsville port suggests the refinery may export refined fuels to global markets.

Why the Project is Significant

It marks the first new refinery project in the US in decades, reflecting a shift toward expanding domestic energy infrastructure. It highlights growing energy cooperation between the United States and India through companies like Reliance. The refinery is designed specifically for American light shale oil, which could reshape US refining patterns.

SC Directs Centre to Frame Policy for Covid Vaccine Side-Effect Victims

Background of the Case

The Supreme Court of India directed the Central Government to create a “no-fault compensation policy” for people who suffered serious adverse effects after Covid-19 vaccination. The order was issued by a bench of Justice Vikram Nath and Justice Sandeep Mehta. The decision came while hearing petitions filed by parents who alleged that their daughters died after receiving the Covishield vaccine in 2021. Petitioners argued that their daughters experienced severe Adverse Events Following Immunisation (AEFI) and sought compensation and investigation.

What the Supreme Court Directed

The Court gave several key directions to the Union Government:

- Frame a “No-Fault Compensation Policy” for serious vaccine-related adverse events.
- Compensation should be provided without requiring victims to prove negligence or fault by the government or vaccine manufacturers.
- The existing monitoring system for adverse events following immunisation (AEFI) must continue to operate.
- Data on vaccine side effects should be periodically placed in the public domain to ensure transparency.

The government should facilitate easy reporting of suspected adverse events by individuals and private doctors through an accessible online platform.

What is a “No-Fault Compensation Policy”?

A no-fault compensation scheme provides financial support to individuals who suffer harm from vaccination without requiring proof of negligence or liability. The aim is to quickly compensate victims of rare adverse events while maintaining public confidence in vaccination programs. Such systems exist in several countries as part of public health protection mechanisms.

Court’s Key Clarifications

The Supreme Court clarified several important points:

- The compensation framework does not mean the government accepts fault or liability.

- The judgment does not prevent affected persons from pursuing other legal remedies through courts or other legal forums.
- The Court rejected the demand to create a separate court-appointed expert committee, stating that a scientific monitoring mechanism already exists for AEFI.

Existing Monitoring Mechanism: AEFI

India already has a system to monitor vaccine safety: AEFI (Adverse Events Following Immunisation) surveillance system investigates vaccine-related adverse events. Experts analyze reported cases to determine whether the vaccine actually caused the health event. The Supreme Court directed that this existing system should continue alongside the new compensation policy.

Data on Vaccine Side Effects in India

Government data presented earlier in court showed: More than 220 crore Covid-19 vaccine doses administered in India. Around 92,697 AEFI cases reported, which is about 0.0042% of total doses. 1,171 deaths reported, around 0.00005% of vaccinations. These numbers indicate that serious side effects are extremely rare compared with the total vaccinations administered.

Way Forward

- Quick implementation of the Supreme Court-directed No-Fault Compensation Policy for serious Covid-19 vaccine side effects.
- Clear guidelines on eligibility, types of adverse events, and compensation process.
- Strengthening the AEFI surveillance system for faster investigation of reported cases.
- Easy reporting system through online portals for individuals and doctors.
- Regular public disclosure of vaccine safety data to ensure transparency and public trust.
- Awareness among citizens and healthcare workers about reporting adverse events and compensation mechanisms.

US Launches Section 301 Investigation into India and 15 Other Countries: Explained

Background of the Issue

The United States has launched a Section 301 investigation into India and 15 other economies. The probe was initiated by the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR). It comes after the US Supreme Court struck down tariffs imposed under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), limiting the US President's power to impose broad tariffs. As a result, the US is now using other legal tools like Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974 to examine trade practices of partner countries.

What is Section 301 of the US Trade Act?

Section 301 allows the US government to investigate unfair trade practices by foreign countries that harm US commerce. If such practices are found, the US can impose retaliatory measures such as tariffs or trade restrictions. The investigation is conducted by the USTR and typically involves consultations, hearings, and stakeholder comments before action is taken.

Countries Under Investigation

The probe targets several major US trading partners, including:

India, China, European Union, Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, Taiwan, Mexico, Bangladesh, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Cambodia, Norway, Singapore & Switzerland

These economies are being examined for "structural excess manufacturing capacity" and overproduction in certain industries.

Why the US Launched the Investigation

The US has cited several concerns:

1. Excess Industrial Capacity: Some countries are believed to maintain production capacity far beyond domestic demand, leading to overproduction.
2. Trade Surpluses: Countries with large trade surpluses with the US are seen as contributing to global market imbalances.

3. Impact on US Manufacturing: Overproduction abroad can flood global markets with cheaper goods, harming American industries and jobs.

4. Reshoring Supply Chains: The US aims to strengthen domestic manufacturing and supply chains by addressing perceived unfair competition.

Why India is Being Targeted

The US highlighted several sectors where India has large production capacity and export potential, including:

solar modules, petrochemicals, steel, textiles, construction materials, healthcare products & automotive goods

India had a goods trade surplus of about \$58 billion with the US in 2025, which is also cited as a concern.

Investigation Process

The probe was formally launched on March 11. Written comments from stakeholders will be invited starting March 17. Public hearings by the Section 301 Committee are scheduled for May 5. Based on findings, the US could impose tariffs or other trade measures on the targeted countries.

Impact on India-US Trade Relations

The investigation comes when India and the US are negotiating a bilateral trade agreement. Experts believe the probe may be used as leverage in trade negotiations. If tariffs are imposed, it could affect key Indian export sectors and ongoing trade talks.

Why the Issue is Important

The probe signals a shift in US trade strategy after legal limits on tariff powers. It could reshape global trade relations and supply chains. For India, the outcome may affect exports, manufacturing sectors, and trade negotiations with the US.

Withdrawing Life-Supporting Care in India: Procedure and Key Issues



Introduction

The debate over withdrawing life-supporting medical care has gained attention after the Supreme Court of India allowed passive euthanasia in an individual case for the first time. The decision involved a patient who had been in a persistent vegetative state for more than a decade, with no realistic chance of recovery. This ruling highlights the legal framework governing passive euthanasia and end-of-life decisions in India, along with the challenges families and doctors face when trying to withdraw life-sustaining treatment.

What is Withdrawing Life-Supporting Care?

Withdrawing life-supporting care refers to the removal or withholding of medical treatment that artificially keeps a person alive, allowing the patient to die naturally. This practice is commonly referred to as passive euthanasia.

Life-sustaining treatments that may be withdrawn include:

ventilator support, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), dialysis, chemotherapy or radiotherapy & artificial nutrition or hydration.

Passive euthanasia differs from active euthanasia, where a medical professional intentionally administers a drug or injection to cause death. Active euthanasia remains illegal in India.

Legal Basis in India

India does not have a dedicated law on euthanasia, but the legal framework has evolved through Supreme Court judgments.

Key milestones include:

1. Aruna Shanbaug case (2011): The Court allowed passive euthanasia under strict conditions.
2. Common Cause case (2018): The Court recognised the right to die with dignity as part of Article 21 (Right to Life) and allowed people to make a “living will” refusing life-prolonging treatment.
3. Modification in 2023: The Supreme Court simplified procedures to make the implementation of passive euthanasia easier.

These rulings together form the current framework for end-of-life decisions in India.

Procedure for Withdrawing Life Support

- The process generally involves several safeguards to ensure that the decision is ethical and medically justified.
- Living Will or Advance Directive: A person can record their wishes in a living will stating that life-support treatment should be withdrawn if they become terminally ill or incapable of making decisions.
- Consent of Family or Surrogate: If there is no living will, family members or legal guardians can request withdrawal of treatment.
- Medical Board Review: A hospital must constitute a primary medical board of experts to examine the patient and determine whether recovery is possible.
- Second Medical Opinion: A secondary medical board reviews the decision to ensure there is no error or misuse.
- Implementation with Palliative Care: If both boards agree, life support may be withdrawn while ensuring the patient receives palliative and comfort care.



Major Challenges and Hurdles

Despite legal guidelines, withdrawing life-supporting care remains difficult in practice.

1. Lack of a Clear Law: India still relies mainly on court guidelines rather than a comprehensive statute, creating legal uncertainty.
2. Complex Procedures: Multiple approvals and medical boards can delay decisions, prolonging suffering for patients and families.
3. Low Awareness: Many people are unaware of the concept of living wills or advance directives, limiting their practical use.

4. Ethical and Cultural Concerns: Religious and cultural beliefs often view euthanasia as morally wrong, making families hesitant to consider withdrawing treatment.
5. Fear of Legal Liability: Doctors may worry about legal consequences if life support is withdrawn, which can discourage them from following the procedure.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's evolving jurisprudence has recognised the right to die with dignity as part of the right to life. While passive euthanasia and withdrawal of life-support are legally permitted under strict safeguards, the process remains complex due to procedural, ethical, and legal challenges. Experts increasingly argue that a clear legislation on end-of-life care is necessary to make the system more humane, transparent, and accessible for patients and families facing difficult medical decisions.



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Contact Us

- +91 9306206317
- iLeadCareerPREP
- www.ileadedu.in
- ileadcarrerprep
- ileadcprep@gmail.com
- Plot no:- 11-12 Second Floor Dainik Bhaskar Building Sector 25 Chandigarh

Mr. Alok Dubey
Chief Mentor, i-Lead Career Prep

