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MONTHLY MAGAZINE

MARCH 2026 | COMPLETE EDITION



GS I | GS II | GS III | GS IV | ESSAY | PRELIMS

All the month's major stories, with original analysis, maps, charts and practice

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Days and Themes of March 2026

Top stories this month

- **Gulf war:** a new Supreme Leader in Iran, an oil shock at home and Operation Urja Suraksha at sea.
- **Supreme Court:** India's first court-approved passive euthanasia; SC status and conversion; vaccine injury compensation.
- **Elections:** polls announced for 824 seats in four States and Puducherry.
- **Climate:** India's NDC 3.0 for 2035 and WMO's record energy imbalance.
- **T20 World Cup:** India become the first team to win three titles.

How to read this magazine

Did you know?
Map
Chart
Prelims pointer
Key points
Revision tick box

About this issue

- The March 2026 issue: every GS paper, Essay and Prelims, with maps, charts, fact boxes, an ethics case study and practice questions.
- Facts are as reported up to 31 March 2026. The Gulf war, US tariffs and the Assembly elections continued into April; check later updates.
- Maps are location diagrams (points by latitude and longitude, no boundaries). Use an official Survey of India map for India's boundaries.

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01 | HISTORY GS 1

Shaheed Diwas at 95: Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev

Syllabus Mapping: GS1: Modern Indian history; revolutionary nationalism; personalities of the freedom struggle

Context

On **23 March 2026** the nation marked Shaheed Diwas, 95 years since **Bhagat Singh, Shivaram Rajguru and Sukhdev Thapar** were hanged in Lahore Jail on 23 March 1931. The Prime Minister paid tribute, and both Houses of Parliament remembered the three revolutionaries.

Key Points

- **The trigger:** Lala Lajpat Rai died after a police lathi-charge during the Simon Commission protest in Lahore (1928). In December 1928 revolutionaries shot Assistant Superintendent of Police J.P. Saunders in retaliation.
- **The Assembly bomb:** on 8 April 1929 Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt threw harmless bombs in the Central Legislative Assembly to protest the Public Safety Bill and the Trade Disputes Bill, then courted arrest, raising 'Inquilab Zindabad'.
- **The trial:** the Lahore Conspiracy Case (1929-31) was heard by a special tribunal set up by ordinance and ended in death sentences.
- **The organisation:** the Hindustan Republican Association became the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA) in 1928 at Feroz Shah Kotla, Delhi, signalling a turn to socialism.

Revolutionary	Life	Remembered for
Bhagat Singh	1907-1931	HSRA's leading thinker; essay 'Why I am an Atheist'; jail writings on socialism
Shivaram Rajguru	1908-1931	Took part in the Saunders action; from Khed (now Rajgurunagar), Maharashtra
Sukhdev Thapar	1907-1931	HSRA's organiser in Punjab

Significance

- **Two streams of nationalism.** Revolutionary nationalism ran alongside the Gandhian mass movement; the executions came days before the Karachi Congress session (March 1931), which endorsed the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. Critics argued the Pact had not secured commutation of the sentences.
- **Ideas, not only acts.** The HSRA's writings on economic and social freedom make them relevant to GS I and Essay questions on the meaning of swaraj.
- **Memory.** Their bodies were secretly cremated near Hussainiwala (Firozpur, Punjab), where the National Martyrs Memorial now stands.

Did you know?

23 March is also the birth anniversary of socialist leader Ram Manohar Lohia (born 1910).

Prelims Pointers

- Central Legislative Assembly bombing: 8 April 1929, by Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt.
- HSRA was formed in 1928 at Feroz Shah Kotla, Delhi; Chandra Shekhar Azad was its commander-in-chief.
- The National Martyrs Memorial is at Hussainiwala, Firozpur, on the India-Pakistan border.

02 | HISTORY GS 1

Dandi March at 96: Salt as a Symbol of Swaraj

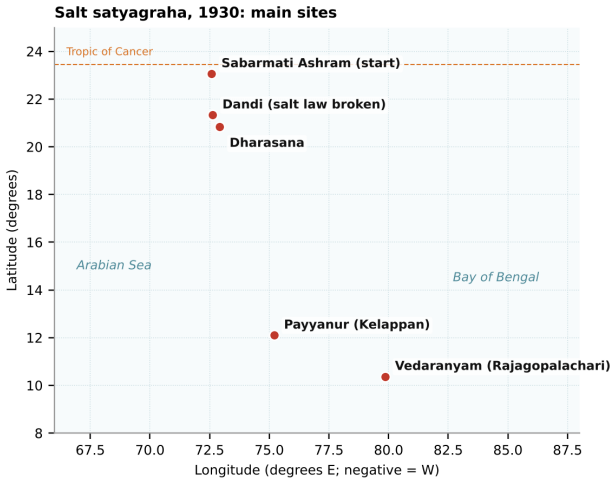
Syllabus Mapping: GS1: Modern Indian history; Civil Disobedience Movement; Gandhian methods

Context

12 March 2026 marked 96 years since Mahatma Gandhi set out from Sabarmati Ashram on the Dandi March. The Vice-President paid tribute, linking the march's spirit of self-reliance to today's development goals.

Key Points

- **Why salt:** the Salt Act of 1882 gave the British a monopoly on making and selling salt, a tax that touched every household.
- **Lead-up:** after the Purna Swaraj resolution at the Lahore session (December 1929), Gandhi's Eleven Demands to Lord Irwin went unanswered, and Civil Disobedience began.
- **The march:** 12 March to 6 April 1930, about 385 km (240 miles) from Sabarmati to Dandi (Navsari, Gujarat), with 78 companions; Gandhi broke the salt law on 6 April.
- **Repression:** Gandhi was arrested on 5 May 1930. At Dharasana Salt Works (21 May 1930), led by Sarojini Naidu, volunteers were beaten without resisting, as US journalist Webb Miller reported to the world.



Location diagram. Points plotted by latitude and longitude; boundaries not shown. Parallel salt marches were led by C. Rajagopalachari in Tamil Nadu and K. Kelappan in Malabar (approximate points).

Significance

- Women joined on a large scale for the first time in a national campaign.
- It took satyagraha to a world audience and influenced later civil rights movements, including Martin Luther King Jr.'s.
- It led to the Gandhi-Irwin Pact (March 1931) and Gandhi's attendance at the Second Round Table Conference.

Prelims Pointers

- Dandi lies in Navsari district, Gujarat.
- The Vedaranyam salt march was led by C. Rajagopalachari; the Malabar march by K. Kelappan.
- Webb Miller reported the Dharasana raid of May 1930.

03 | ART AND CULTURE GS 1

Digging Into the Past: Eight Excavations Approved in Tamil Nadu

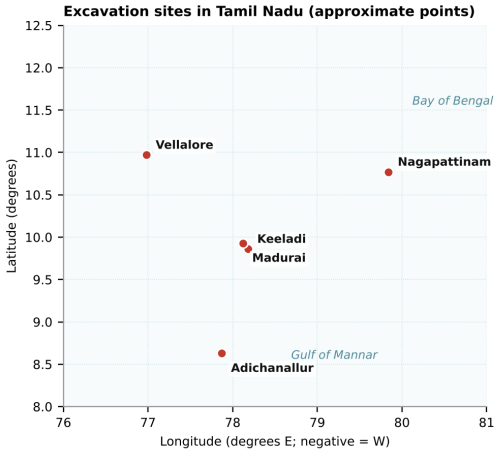
Syllabus Mapping: GS1: Ancient Indian history and archaeology; Indian culture; GS2: Centre-State relations

Context

As reported on 13 March 2026, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) approved licences for excavations at **eight sites** proposed by the Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology, including the 11th phase at **Keeladi (Keezhadi)**. (These details come from a single secondary report of The Hindu's coverage.)

Key Points

- **Keeladi (Sivaganga, near Madurai):** an urban settlement with brick buildings, drains and Tamil-Brahmi graffiti, which the State dates to about the 6th century BCE.
- **Adichanallur (Thoothukudi):** an Iron Age urn-burial site on the Tamirabarani river, now with a site museum.
- **Vellalore (Coimbatore):** known for hoards of Roman coins, showing Indo-Roman trade.
- **Nagapattinam:** a Chola-era port with Buddhist links.
- **Other sites:** Pattinamarudur, Manikkollai (glass beads linked to Southeast Asia), Thelungarpalayam (iron metallurgy) and Karivalamvanthanallur.



Location diagram. Points plotted by latitude and longitude; boundaries not shown. Keeladi lies on the Vaigai river, south-east of Madurai.

Why it matters

- **Early urbanisation in the south:** supports a picture of several centres of early city life in India, not only in the Ganga plains.
- **Iron and trade:** evidence of early iron technology and sea links with Rome and Southeast Asia.
- **Federal questions:** any excavation, even by a State, needs ASI permission under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act, 1958, and the dating of Keeladi has been debated between State and central bodies.

Prelims Pointers

- AMASR Act, 1958 governs protected monuments and excavations; the ASI was founded in 1861 under Alexander Cunningham.
- Tamil-Brahmi is an early script used to write Tamil.
- Arikamedu (Puducherry) is another well-known Indo-Roman trading site.

04 | ART AND CULTURE GS 1

Literary Honours: Saraswati Samman and the Delayed Sahitya Akademi Awards

Syllabus Mapping: GS1: Indian culture, literature and languages; GS2: Autonomous bodies

Context

In March 2026 the **Saraswati Samman 2025** went to Bengali writer **Ramkumar Mukhopadhyay** for his novel *Hara Parbati Katha*. The **Sahitya Akademi** also announced its 2025 awards in **24 languages** (reported on 16 March), after a delay linked to a Ministry of Culture direction of July 2025 asking several academies to review their awards.

Key Points

- **Saraswati Samman:** given by the K.K. Birla Foundation since 1991; Rs 15 lakh; for a work in any Eighth Schedule language published in the previous ten years.
- **Sahitya Akademi Awards 2025:** 24 languages (the 22 Eighth Schedule languages plus English and Rajasthani); each award carries Rs 1 lakh.
- **Winners include:** Navtej Sarna (English, *Crimson Spring*), Mamta Kalia (Hindi, memoir *Jeete Jee Allahabad*) and Sa. Tamilselvan (Tamil, literary criticism).

Why it matters

- **Many languages, one literature:** the awards celebrate writing across India's languages, in the spirit of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat.
- **Autonomy:** the delay raised the question of how independent cultural academies are from the government that funds them. The Ministry's view is that reviewing award processes improves them; writers' groups worry about interference.

Prelims Pointers

- The Sahitya Akademi was set up in 1954; it is an autonomous body under the Ministry of Culture.
- The Jnanpith Award (from 1965) is India's highest literary award; the first went to G. Sankara Kurup (Malayalam).
- English and Rajasthani are recognised by the Sahitya Akademi but are not Eighth Schedule languages.

05 | GEOGRAPHY GS 1

A Planet Out of Balance: WMO's State of the Global Climate 2025

Syllabus Mapping: GS1: Climatology, oceanography, important geophysical phenomena; GS3: Climate change

Context

On **23 March 2026** (World Meteorological Day) the World Meteorological Organization released its **State of the Global Climate 2025**. The same week, the US National Snow and Ice Data Center reported that Arctic sea ice reached a winter maximum of **14.29 million sq km on 15 March**, statistically tied with 2025 (14.31 million sq km) for the lowest in the 48-year satellite record. Copernicus reported March 2026 as the fourth-warmest March, at about 1.48 C above pre-industrial.

Key Points

- **Temperature:** 2025 was about 1.43 C (plus or minus 0.13) above the 1850-1900 average, the second- or third-warmest year; 2015-2025 are the eleven warmest years on record.
- **Energy imbalance:** Earth's energy imbalance, the extra heat trapped each year, reached a record; about 91% of the excess heat goes into the ocean.
- **Oceans:** ocean heat content hit a record; sea level is about 11 cm above 1993; surface ocean acidity is the highest (pH lowest) in at least 26,000 years.
- **Gases and ice:** carbon dioxide is at its highest in about 2 million years; glacier loss in 2024-25 was among the five worst years on record.

Indicator	Latest value	Source
Global temperature, 2025	+1.43 C above 1850-1900	WMO
Global temperature, March 2026	+1.48 C above pre-industrial (4th-warmest March)	Copernicus C3S
Sea surface temperature (60S-60N), March 2026	20.97 C, 2nd-highest for March	Copernicus C3S
Arctic winter maximum, 2026	14.29 million sq km (tied record low)	NSIDC
Sea level	About 11 cm above 1993	WMO

Why it matters for India

- **Cyclones:** warmer seas favour rapid intensification of cyclones in the Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea.
- **Coasts:** rising seas threaten India's long coastline, deltas and island territories.
- **Monsoon and the Himalaya:** glacier loss affects river flows; links between Arctic change and the monsoon are studied but still debated.

Key term	Meaning
Earth's energy imbalance	The difference between energy arriving from the Sun and energy leaving Earth; a positive imbalance means continued warming
Ice-albedo feedback	Melting ice exposes darker water or land, which absorbs more heat and causes more melting
Ocean acidification	Falling ocean pH as seawater absorbs carbon dioxide, harming corals and shell-forming life

Prelims Pointers

- WMO: headquartered in Geneva; UN specialised agency since 1951; World Meteorological Day (23 March) marks the WMO Convention of 1950.
- The Arctic sea ice reaches its maximum in March and its minimum in September.
- India's Arctic station Himadri is at Ny-Alesund, Svalbard; India has been an Arctic Council observer since 2013.

06 | GEOGRAPHY GS 1

Cyclone Narelle: Three Landfalls Across Northern Australia

Syllabus Mapping: GS1: Important geophysical phenomena (cyclones); GS3: Disaster management

Context

Severe Tropical Cyclone **Narelle** formed on 17 March 2026 and lasted until 29 March. According to Australia's Bureau of Meteorology (BoM), it reached Category 5 strength on 19 March and made three landfalls: **North Queensland** (20 March, Category 4), the **Northern Territory** (22 March, Category 3) and **north-west Western Australia** (28 March, severe Category 4).

Key Points

- Only the second system since the 1980-81 season to make severe landfall in all three of these States and territories, after Cyclone Ingrid (2005).
- It travelled about 6,500 km, and BoM issued 103 cyclone advices.
- It kept affecting places for more than eight days, showing how a cyclone can survive over land and re-intensify over warm water.

Geography of tropical cyclones

- **Conditions:** warm sea surface (above about 26.5 C), moist air, low vertical wind shear and enough Coriolis force (so they rarely form within about 5 degrees of the Equator).
- **Names by region:** hurricanes (Atlantic and north-east Pacific), typhoons (north-west Pacific), cyclones (Indian Ocean, south-west Pacific and Australia).
- **Rotation:** anticlockwise in the Northern Hemisphere, clockwise in the Southern Hemisphere.

Lessons for India

India's east coast often sees cyclones that weaken over land and bring floods far inland. Narelle shows the value of impact-based forecasting, coordination across State borders, and shelters along vulnerable coasts, as under India's National Cyclone Risk Mitigation Project.

Did you know?

IMD New Delhi is the Regional Specialised Meteorological Centre for the North Indian Ocean and names cyclones from a list drawn up by 13 member countries of the WMO/ESCAP Panel.

Prelims Pointers

- Australia's national weather service is the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM).
- The Saffir-Simpson scale (Atlantic) and Australia's scale both rate cyclones from Category 1 to 5.
- The Coriolis force is zero at the Equator and strongest at the poles.

07 | INDIAN SOCIETY GS 1

Children and Social Media: Karnataka's Under-16 Plan

Syllabus Mapping: GS1: Effects of globalisation and technology on Indian society, youth; GS2: Child rights, federalism

Context

In his budget speech on **6 March 2026**, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced a ban on social media use by children under 16, citing platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube and X. Karnataka is the first Indian State to announce such a measure; it cited Australia's under-16 law as a model. The Union IT Minister said that 'age-based regulation has to be there'.

Key Points

- **Concerns behind it:** the Economic Survey 2025-26 flagged the link between heavy smartphone use and children's mental health; cyberbullying and addictive design are other worries.
- **Existing law:** the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 (Section 9) already requires verifiable parental consent before processing data of anyone under 18.
- **Global trend:** Australia's Social Media Minimum Age law (2024) sets 16 as the minimum age.

The debate

- **For:** protects children's mental health and attention; puts responsibility on platforms rather than parents alone.
- **Against:** experts question whether a State has the power to regulate the internet (communications are largely a Union subject under Entry 31, List I); shared family phones make age bans easy to get around; age checks require collecting identity data, which creates privacy risks; and children also use social media to learn and connect.

Way forward

- A national framework under the IT and DPDP Acts with 'safety by design' duties on platforms.
- Digital literacy and well-being in school curricula; support for parents.
- Graded access by age rather than a blanket ban.

Prelims Pointers

- The DPDP Act, 2023 defines a 'child' as a person under 18.
- Entry 31 of the Union List covers posts, telegraphs, telephones, wireless and broadcasting.
- Karnataka is one of six States with a Legislative Council.

08 | INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS GS 2

War in the Gulf: A New Supreme Leader in Iran and India's Balancing

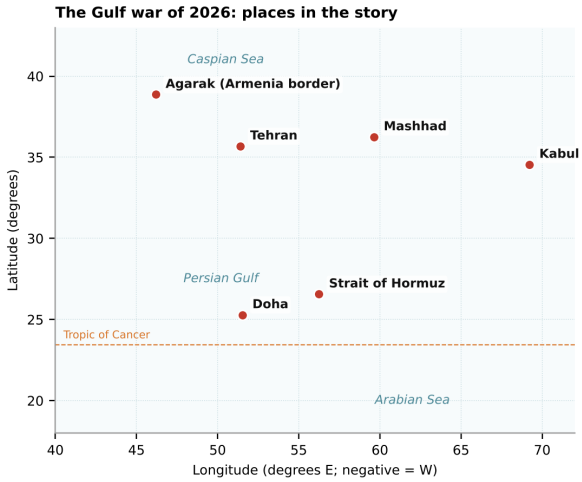
Syllabus Mapping: GS2: India and its neighbourhood (West Asia); effect of policies of other countries on India's interests; diaspora

Context

The US-Israeli strikes on Iran that began on 28 February 2026 continued through March. Iran's Supreme Leader **Ali Khamenei** was killed in the opening strikes. On 8-9 March Iran's 88-member **Assembly of Experts** chose his son **Mojtaba Khamenei** (born 1969, Mashhad) as the third Supreme Leader. Iran struck targets in several Gulf states, and shipping through the Strait of Hormuz was largely halted. There was no ceasefire in March (a two-week truce began only on 8 April).

India's response

- **Diplomacy:** External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar spoke to Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on 13 and 21 March, while keeping close ties with the US, Israel and the Gulf states.
- **People:** the MEA said over 52,000 Indians returned from the Gulf between 1 and 7 March (32,107 on Indian airlines); missions ran 24-hour helplines, and a control room was set up in New Delhi.
- **Overland exit:** over 550 Indians were reported evacuated from Iran by land into Armenia.
- **Energy and shipping:** the Navy began escorting Indian-flagged tankers (see Operation Urja Suraksha in the Security section).



Location diagram. Points plotted by latitude and longitude; boundaries not shown. Indians left Iran overland through Armenia, as in the 2025 evacuation.

Why it matters for India

- **Diaspora and remittances:** about 9 million Indians live in the Gulf; Kerala's economy is especially exposed.
- **Energy:** the oil shock hit the rupee, reserves and fuel prices (see the Economy section).
- **Connectivity:** Chabahar port, the INSTC and the planned IMEC corridor all pass through the conflict zone.
- **Strategic autonomy:** India must keep channels open with Iran while deepening ties with the US and Israel.

Debate

- **Government's approach:** quiet diplomacy, calls for de-escalation, and putting the safety of nationals and shipping first.
- **Critics' view:** some commentators argue India's restraint looks like silence on the use of force against a sovereign state, which weakens its voice for a rules-based order.

Prelims Pointers

- Iran's Assembly of Experts (88 members, elected for eight years) chooses and can remove the Supreme Leader.
- India's earlier evacuations: Operation Ganga (Ukraine, 2022), Kaveri (Sudan, 2023), Ajay (Israel, 2023), Sindhu (Iran and Israel, 2025).
- The Indian Community Welfare Fund (2009) helps Indians in distress abroad.

09 | INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS GS 2

Nepal Votes for Change: Balendra Shah Becomes Prime Minister

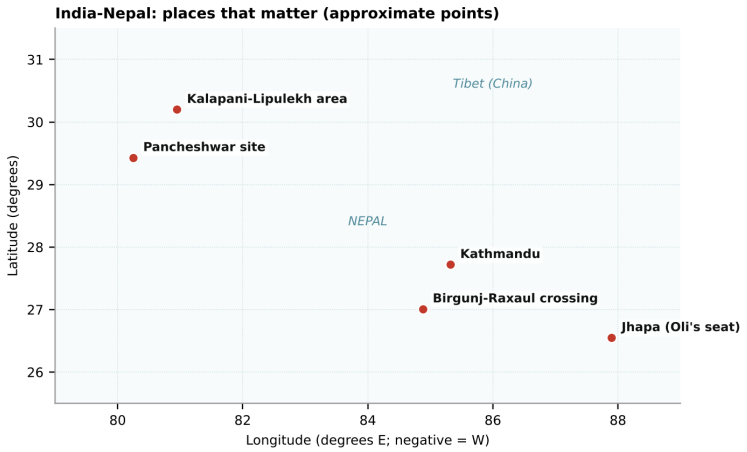
Syllabus Mapping: GS2: India and its neighbourhood; bilateral relations

Context

Nepal held a general election on **5 March 2026**, after the Gen Z anti-corruption protests of September 2025 that forced Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli to resign. The **Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP)**, led by former Kathmandu mayor **Balendra (Balen) Shah**, won a large majority, and Shah was sworn in as Prime Minister on **27 March**. Oli lost his own seat in Jhapa-5.

Key Points

- **Results (as reported):** RSP about 182 of 275 seats; Nepali Congress 38; CPN-UML 25 (single-source figures).
- **A first:** a new anti-establishment party with an outright majority, sidelining the parties that dominated after 2008.
- **The new PM:** a young engineer and former rapper; as mayor he once displayed a 'Greater Nepal' map, which drew attention in India.



Location diagram. Points plotted by latitude and longitude; boundaries not shown. Nepal borders five Indian States: Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and Sikkim.

What it means for India

- **Opportunity:** a stable majority could finally move long-pending projects such as power trade, the Pancheshwar multipurpose project and cross-border rail.
- **Risks:** nationalist positions could revive disputes over Kalapani-Lipulekh-Limpiyadhura and the review of the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship.
- **Competition:** China's Belt and Road projects in Nepal.

Prelims Pointers

- Nepal's House of Representatives has 275 seats: 165 by first-past-the-post and 110 by proportional representation.
- Nepal's current constitution was adopted in 2015.
- The India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship dates from 1950.

10 | INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS GS 2

Raisina Dialogue 2026 and a Strategic Partnership With Finland

Syllabus Mapping: GS2: Bilateral relations; India and Europe; the Arctic

Context

The 11th **Raisina Dialogue**, India's flagship geopolitics conference organised by the Observer Research Foundation with the MEA, was held in New Delhi on **5-7 March 2026** on the theme **'Samskara: Assertion, Accommodation, Advancement'**. Finnish President **Alexander Stubb** was chief guest and paid a state visit (4-7 March), during which India and Finland raised ties to a **Strategic Partnership in Digitalisation and Sustainability**.

Key Outcomes (India-Finland)

- A Migration and Mobility Partnership MoU and an MoU on official statistics; renewed MoUs on renewable energy and environment.
- Joint working groups on digitalisation and sustainability; a goal to double bilateral trade by 2030.
- Cooperation on Arctic research, building on an Arctic dialogue held in Rovaniemi in January 2026.

Europe as a hedge

- Jaishankar met EU foreign ministers in Brussels (16 March) and France's Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot (26 March), following up the India-EU free trade agreement concluded in January.
- With US tariffs uncertain after the US Supreme Court's IEEPA ruling, India said it would sign the interim US deal only after clarity on the full tariff structure (reported 17 March).
- Finland, a NATO member since 2023 and a leader in 5G/6G and clean tech, fits India's search for technology partners.

Limits

Trade with Finland is small, and Finland's firm stance on Russia differs from India's position on the Ukraine war. The EU's carbon border tax (CBAM) remains a sticking point in India-EU trade.

Prelims Pointers

- The Raisina Dialogue began in 2016; it is organised by ORF with the MEA.
- India-Nordic summits: Stockholm (2018) and Copenhagen (2022).
- India-EU Strategic Partnership dates from 2004; the India-EU Trade and Technology Council from 2022.

11 | INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS GS 2

Pakistan-Afghanistan Conflict: India Speaks Up for Kabul

Syllabus Mapping: GS2: India and its neighbourhood; regional security

Context

Pakistan carried out air strikes inside Afghanistan through March 2026. On **17 March** the MEA condemned a strike on the Omid addiction treatment hospital in Kabul in strong terms, calling it a blatant assault on Afghanistan's sovereignty that came during Ramzan.

Key Points

- India has moved closer to the Taliban-led administration since the Afghan foreign minister's visit to Delhi in October 2025.
- Pakistan accuses Afghanistan of sheltering the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP); Kabul rejects the charge.
- The Durand Line (1893, about 2,640 km) has never been accepted by any Afghan government.

Debate

- **Supporters** say India is standing up for civilian lives and sovereignty, which also serves its interest in a stable Afghanistan and access to Central Asia via Chabahar.
- **Critics** point out that closer ties with the Taliban sit uneasily with India's concern for women's rights in Afghanistan.

Prelims Pointers

- Main Afghanistan-Pakistan crossings: Torkham (Khyber Pass) and Chaman.
- The TTP was formed in 2007.
- Afghanistan is a member of SAARC (since 2007).

12 | POLITY GS 2

Assembly Elections 2026: Schedule, Roll Revision and the Courts

Syllabus Mapping: GS2: Elections, Election Commission, Representation of People Acts; judiciary

Context

On **15 March 2026** Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar announced elections to **824 Assembly seats** in Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry, with about 17.4 crore electors. Counting was fixed for **4 May**. The Model Code of Conduct came into force at once. In parallel, the Supreme Court supervised disputes over the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of West Bengal's rolls.

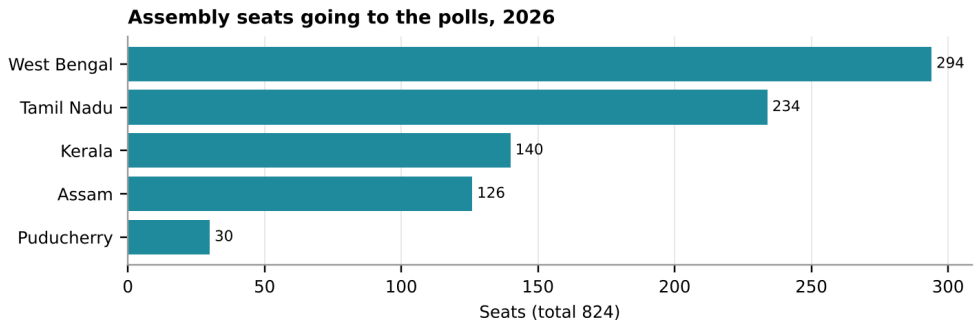


Chart. Assam, Kerala and Puducherry voted on 9 April; Tamil Nadu on 23 April; West Bengal on 23 and 29 April. Source: Election Commission announcement, 15 March 2026 (via All India Radio).

Key Points

- **Arrangements:** over 2 lakh polling stations, a cap of 1,200 electors per station, and webcasting at all stations.
- **SIR in court:** on 10 March the Supreme Court directed an appeal mechanism for voters deleted in West Bengal; by 31 March, about 47.4 lakh of 65 lakh objections had been decided; on 1 April it set up 19 appellate tribunals headed by former Chief Justices.

The debate

- **For intensive revision:** clean rolls protect the integrity of the vote, and the law allows it.
- **Against:** mass checks just before a poll put the burden of proof on voters and risk excluding poor people and migrants (Article 326).
- **The Court's path:** supervise and add appeals rather than stop the process.

Prelims Pointers

- Article 324: Election Commission; Article 326: adult suffrage; Article 172: five-year term of State Assemblies.
- Puducherry's legislature exists under Article 239A and the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963.
- The Model Code of Conduct is not a law; it is enforced through the Election Commission's Article 324 powers.

13 | POLITY GS 2

Harish Rana Case: India's First Court-Approved Passive Euthanasia

Syllabus Mapping: GS2: Fundamental rights (Article 21), judiciary; GS4: Ethics of end-of-life care

Context

On **11 March 2026** a Supreme Court Bench of Justices **J.B. Pardiwala and K.V. Viswanathan** allowed life-sustaining treatment to be withdrawn for **Harish Rana**, 32, who had been in a permanent vegetative state for 13 years. The Court held that **clinically administered nutrition is medical treatment**, which can be withdrawn when medical boards agree it is in the patient's best interest. It directed AIIMS to provide palliative care. Rana died at AIIMS, New Delhi on 24 March.

Key Points

- **Legal basis:** *Common Cause v. Union of India* (2018, five judges) recognised the right to die with dignity under Article 21 and allowed 'living wills'; the procedure was simplified in January 2023.
- **First use:** this is the first time the Common Cause procedure has been fully applied to a patient.
- **Directions:** High Courts to designate magistrates to receive hospital intimations; district panels of doctors for secondary boards; Parliament urged to pass a law on end-of-life care.

The debate

- **For:** respects dignity and the family's judgment, and ends prolonged suffering.
- **Concerns:** disability-rights and faith groups fear a slippery slope; weak palliative care could push poor families towards withdrawal for financial reasons; judge-made rules are no substitute for a law.

Prelims Pointers

- *Aruna Shanbaug* (2011) first allowed passive euthanasia in principle; active euthanasia remains illegal.
- The Law Commission's 241st Report (2012) supported passive euthanasia with safeguards.
- A 'living will' is now called an advance medical directive.

14 | POLITY GS 2

Parliament in March: Finance Bill, a Speaker Motion and Fewer Crimes

Syllabus Mapping: GS2: Parliament, functioning and business; Money Bills; GS3: Ease of doing business

Context

The second part of the Budget Session (9 March - 2 April 2026) completed the Budget and passed several laws. Parliament passed the **Appropriation Bill on 17 March**; the Lok Sabha passed the **Finance Bill, 2026 on 25 March** with 32 government amendments. On 11 March the Lok Sabha rejected by voice vote an Opposition resolution to remove Speaker **Om Birla**. The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026 and the CAPF (General Administration) Bill, 2026 were introduced in late March and passed in early April.

Key Points

- **Guillotine:** most ministries' demands for grants were put to vote together without discussion on the last allotted day.
- **Speaker motion:** under Article 94(c), removal needs a majority of all the then members after 14 days' notice; earlier motions (1951, 1966, 1987) also failed.
- **Jan Vishwas 2.0:** amends 80 central Acts, replaces many jail terms with civil penalties, and raises fines automatically by 10% every three years.
- **CAPF Bill:** reserves 50% of Inspector General posts, at least 67% of Additional DG posts and all DG posts in five central armed police forces for IPS officers on deputation; cadre officers' associations objected.

Why it matters

- Limited debate on spending weakens Parliament's 'power of the purse'.
- Decriminalising minor offences eases business and reduces court backlogs, but critics warn that civil penalties may not deter violations that harm health or safety.
- Questions about the Speaker's neutrality connect to anti-defection rulings and Money Bill certification; the Deputy Speaker's post has stayed vacant.

Prelims Pointers

- Article 110: Money Bill (Speaker's decision final); Article 109: Rajya Sabha must return a Money Bill within 14 days; Article 114: Appropriation Bill.
- Article 96: the Speaker does not preside while a removal resolution is considered but may vote in the first instance.
- Jan Vishwas Act, 2023 amended 42 Acts and decriminalised 183 provisions.

15 | SOCIAL JUSTICE GS 2

Transgender Persons Amendment, 2026: The End of Self-Identification?

Syllabus Mapping: GS2: Vulnerable sections, rights; Parliament; Fundamental rights (Articles 14, 15, 21)

Context

The **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026** was introduced on 13 March and passed by the Lok Sabha on 24 March and the Rajya Sabha on 25 March. It changes how transgender identity is defined and certified under the 2019 Act.

Key Provisions (as reported)

- **Definition:** no longer based on self-perceived gender identity; limited to socio-cultural identities (such as kinner, hijra, aravani, jogta), documented intersex variations, and persons coerced into a transgender identity.
- **Certification:** a Medical Board headed by the Chief Medical Officer, followed by review by the District Magistrate, replaces a self-declared affidavit.
- **Reporting:** gender-affirming surgeries must be reported to the authorities.
- **New offences:** at least 10 years' jail for forcing an adult into a transgender identity; life imprisonment for doing so to a child.

The debate

- **Government:** the changes protect people from coercion and trafficking, and stop misuse of welfare benefits.
- **Critics (activists, opposition members):** the community was not consulted; it reverses the Supreme Court's *NALSA* (2014) recognition of self-identification; mandatory medical checks and reporting intrude on privacy (*Puttaswamy*, 2017).

Way forward

Consultation through the National Council for Transgender Persons, non-invasive rules, and quick judicial review of the likely constitutional challenge.

Prelims Pointers

- *NALSA v. Union of India* (2014) recognised transgender persons as a 'third gender'.
- The National Council for Transgender Persons is set up under Section 16 of the 2019 Act.
- SMILE scheme: support for transgender persons, including 'Garima Greh' shelter homes.

16 | SOCIAL JUSTICE GS 2

Conversion and Scheduled Caste Status: The Supreme Court's Ruling

Syllabus Mapping: GS2: Welfare of vulnerable sections, reservations; Fundamental rights (Articles 14, 15, 25)

Context

On **24 March 2026** a Bench of Justices **Prashant Kumar Mishra and Manmohan** upheld an Andhra Pradesh High Court ruling that a person who converts to a religion other than Hinduism, Sikhism or Buddhism loses Scheduled Caste status. A person who converts and actively practises Christianity cannot claim protection under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.

Key Points

- **The rule:** Paragraph 3 of the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 limits SC status to Hindus; Sikhs were added in 1956 and Buddhists in 1990.
- **Precedent:** in *C. Selvarani* (2024) the Court held that converting only to obtain reservation is a 'fraud on the Constitution'.
- **Pending questions:** petitions on SC status for Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims remain before the Court, and the K.G. Balakrishnan Commission (set up in 2022) is examining the issue.

Two views

- **For the rule:** SC status addresses untouchability, which grew out of the Hindu caste order; benefits should not follow a change of faith.
- **Against:** caste discrimination often continues after conversion, as the Ranganath Misra Commission (2007) found; a religion-based bar may conflict with equality under Articles 14 and 15.

Prelims Pointers

- Article 341: the President notifies Scheduled Castes; only Parliament can change the list.
- The Ranganath Misra Commission recommended de-linking SC status from religion.
- The SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act was passed in 1989.

17 | SOCIAL JUSTICE GS 2

No-Fault Compensation for Vaccine Injuries

Syllabus Mapping: GS2: Health, government policies; Fundamental rights (Article 21)

Context

On **10 March 2026**, in *Rachana Gangu v. Union of India*, Justices **Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta** directed the Union Health Ministry to frame and publish a **no-fault compensation policy** for serious adverse events following COVID-19 vaccination, and to keep adverse-event surveillance data public. The Court did not hold vaccines responsible for any individual death, and said the policy would not be an admission of liability.

Key Points

- **No-fault compensation:** victims are paid without having to prove negligence, as in vaccine-injury schemes in many countries.
- **The gap:** the Court found no uniform mechanism for redress, which it called a constitutional gap under Article 21.
- **Surveillance:** AEFI (Adverse Events Following Immunisation) committees work at national, State and district levels.

The debate

- **For:** when the State runs a mass programme for the public good, it should bear the rare harms; a fair scheme builds trust in vaccines.

- **Concerns:** proving that a vaccine caused an injury is scientifically hard; publicity could feed hesitancy; costs are open-ended.

Prelims Pointers

- CDSCO regulates vaccines under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940.
- *Jacob Puliyel v. Union of India* (2022) dealt with bodily autonomy and vaccine data transparency.
- Co-WIN was the digital platform for COVID-19 vaccination; U-WIN now covers routine immunisation.

18 | ECONOMY GS 3

The Oil Shock Hits Home: Reserves, Rupee and Investors

Syllabus Mapping: GS3: External sector, foreign exchange reserves, inflation; effects of global events on the Indian economy

Context

The war in the Gulf and the near-closure of the Strait of Hormuz sent energy prices sharply higher in March 2026. India's foreign exchange reserves, which had peaked at about **US$728.5 billion on 27 February**, fell to **US$688.05 billion** in the week ended 27 March, a drop of about US$30.5 billion in a month. The rupee hit record lows of about 92 to the dollar in mid-March, and foreign portfolio investors pulled large sums out of Indian shares (as reported).

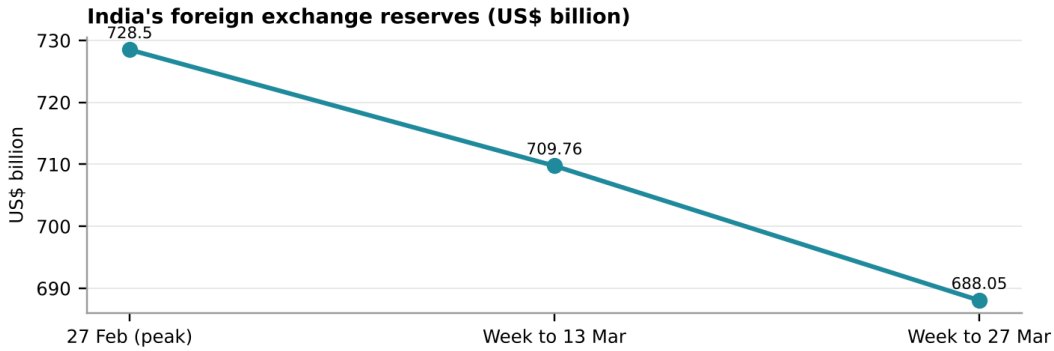


Chart. Part of the fall reflects RBI dollar sales; part reflects lower valuations of gold and other currencies. Source: RBI weekly data as reported by Business Standard and ETV Bharat.

Key Points

- **Four channels:** India imports most of its crude oil, so an oil shock hits inflation, the current account deficit, the rupee and government finances at once.
- **RBI's approach:** to sell dollars to smooth volatility rather than defend a fixed rate; it also used forward contracts, which support the rupee without immediately reducing reserves.
- **Hidden pressure:** analysts noted that the RBI's large short forward dollar position means headline reserves overstate the real buffer.
- **Brent crude** rose above US$110 a barrel in late March (as reported).

Why it matters

- Reserve adequacy is India's main shield against sudden capital outflows and import shocks.
- A weaker rupee raises the cost of oil, fertiliser and electronics imports, feeding inflation.
- The episode strengthens the case for diversifying energy suppliers and building strategic reserves.

Prelims Pointers

- India's forex reserves have four parts: foreign currency assets, gold, Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) and the Reserve Tranche Position in the IMF.
- The RBI manages the reserves under the RBI Act, 1934.
- A current account deficit means the country spends more abroad on goods, services and transfers than it earns.

19 | ECONOMY GS 3

Fuel Tax Cut and an LPG Crunch: Managing an Energy Emergency

Syllabus Mapping: GS3: Energy security, fiscal policy, taxation; GS2: Welfare schemes (Ujjwala)

Context

On **27 March 2026** the Centre cut the Special Additional Excise Duty by **Rs 10 a litre on both petrol and diesel**, leaving Rs 3 a litre on petrol and nil on diesel. Pump prices were **not** reduced: the relief was meant to offset losses of public sector oil marketing companies, reported at about Rs 48.8 a litre. Meanwhile, imports of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) were disrupted; on 30 March the Minister of State for Petroleum told Parliament that the availability of imported LPG had been hit by events in West Asia.

Key Points

- **Who gains:** the cut moves money from the Centre's revenue to oil companies' balance sheets, preventing a sudden rise in pump prices that would push up inflation.
- **Federal angle:** special excise duties and cesses are not shared with States, because they sit outside the divisible pool of taxes.
- **LPG risk:** India imports a large share of its LPG, much of it from the Gulf; strategic reserves exist for crude oil but not for LPG.
- **Government's assurance:** the Petroleum Ministry said there was no shortage of petrol, diesel or LPG and that about two months' supply was held (as reported, 27 March).

Debate

- **For:** protects households from a price spike and keeps public oil companies solvent.
- **Against:** consumers see no direct relief, revenue loss strains the fiscal deficit target, and 'deregulated' fuel prices remain controlled in practice.

Way forward

Build LPG storage, diversify suppliers (the US, Africa, Australia), expand piped natural gas and electric cooking in cities, and expand strategic petroleum reserves.

Prelims Pointers

- Petrol prices were deregulated in June 2010 and diesel in October 2014; petroleum products remain outside GST.
- Strategic crude reserves (ISPRL): Visakhapatnam, Mangaluru and Padur, about 5.33 million tonnes.
- Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana was launched on 1 May 2016 at Ballia, Uttar Pradesh.

20 | ECONOMY GS 3

The Economy Before the Storm: Prices, Output and Outlook

Syllabus Mapping: GS3: Inflation, growth, industrial output, measurement of economic indicators

Context

Data released in March 2026 described an economy that was growing steadily before the oil shock fully arrived. Retail inflation (new CPI, base 2024) rose to **3.21% in February** from 2.74% in January; wholesale inflation rose to 2.13%. Industrial output grew **5.2% in February**. The OECD's interim outlook (late March) projected India's growth at 7.6% in 2025-26 but only 6.1% in 2026-27, naming the Hormuz disruption as the key risk.

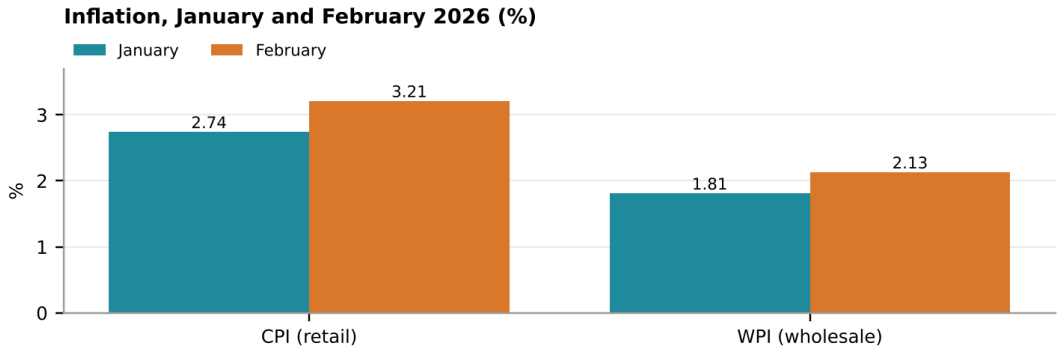


Chart. Both measures rose but stayed below the RBI's 4% target. Source: MoSPI CPI release (12 March 2026); Commerce Ministry WPI release (16 March 2026).

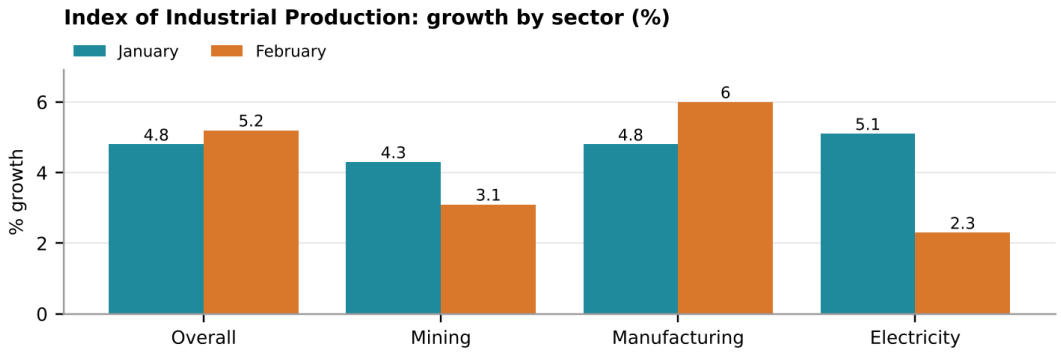


Chart. Capital and infrastructure goods led growth; consumer non-durables shrank. Source: MoSPI IIP releases (2 and 30 March 2026).

Key Points

- **Food:** food inflation was 3.47% in February.
- **GST:** gross collections for February were about Rs 1.83 lakh crore, up 8.1%.
- **Trade (February):** merchandise deficit US$27.1 billion, offset by a services surplus of about US$23.2 billion.
- **Pattern:** investment-linked goods are growing fast while mass consumption is weak, a sign of an uneven recovery.

Prelims Pointers

- IIP has base year 2011-12; manufacturing carries the largest weight (about 77.6%).
- The OECD is headquartered in Paris; India is a 'key partner', not a member.
- GST was introduced on 1 July 2017 by the 101st Constitutional Amendment; the GST Council is under Article 279A.

21 | ECONOMY GS 3

March Cabinet Package: Water, Industrial Parks and Regional Flights

Syllabus Mapping: GS3: Infrastructure, investment models; GS2: Government schemes

Context

The Union Cabinet approved three large programmes in March 2026: an extension of the **Jal Jeevan Mission** to December 2028 with a total outlay of about **Rs 8.69 lakh crore** (10-11 March); **BHAVYA** (Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojana), with **Rs 33,660 crore** for 100 'plug-and-play' industrial parks (18 March); and a **Modified UDAN** scheme with **Rs 28,840 crore** over ten years (2026-27 to 2035-36) to develop 100 airports from unserved airstrips (25 March).

Scheme	What it does	Size
Jal Jeevan Mission (extended)	Tap water to rural homes; focus shifts to service delivery, digital mapping ('Sujalam Bharat') and panchayat-led maintenance	Rs 8.69 lakh crore total; to Dec 2028
BHAVYA	Ready-to-use industrial parks with States and private partners, under DPIIT	Rs 33,660 crore; 100 parks
Modified UDAN	Regional air connectivity; 100 airports from unserved airstrips	Rs 28,840 crore over 10 years

Key Points

- **Water:** about 15.8 crore of 19.36 crore rural households (81.6%) had tap connections when the extension was approved.
- **UDAN so far:** 663 routes and 95 airports, heliports and water aerodromes in its first nine years.
- **Industry:** land and logistics are major bottlenecks for manufacturing; BHAVYA complements production-linked incentives.

Concerns

- Jal Jeevan: non-functional taps, sustainability of water sources, and water quality.
- UDAN: many subsidised routes closed once viability gap funding ended.
- Industrial parks: success depends on State land policies, power and connectivity.

Prelims Pointers

- Jal Jeevan Mission was launched on 15 August 2019 (Ministry of Jal Shakti); norm of 55 litres per person per day.
- UDAN ('Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik') was launched in 2016; the first flight was Shimla-Delhi in April 2017.
- DPIIT is under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

22 | AGRICULTURE GS 3

Record Harvest: Second Advance Estimates and Farm Support

Syllabus Mapping: GS3: Agriculture, food security, farm subsidies, MSP

Context

On **17 March 2026** the Agriculture Ministry's Second Advance Estimates put 2025-26 foodgrain output at a record **348.6 million tonnes**, with records for wheat, kharif rice, maize, mustard and sugarcane. On **13 March**, in Guwahati, the Prime Minister released the **22nd instalment of PM-KISAN**: about Rs 18,640 crore to 9.32 crore farmers, taking total payments to about Rs 4.27 lakh crore.

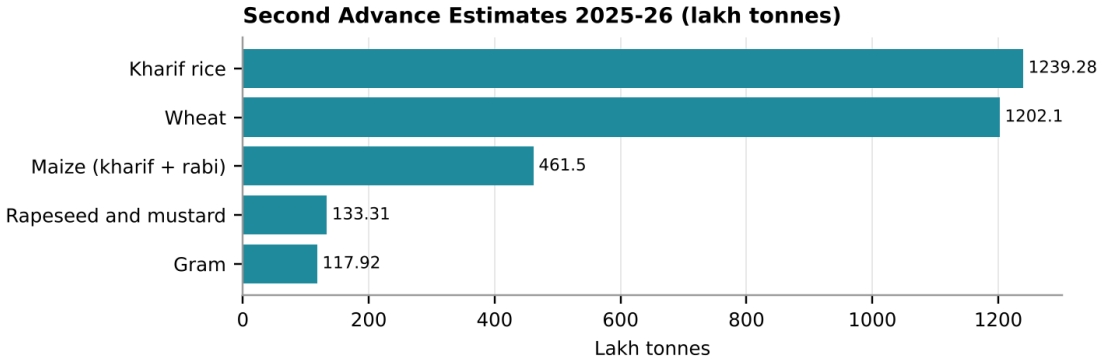


Chart. Total foodgrains: about 3,486 lakh tonnes (348.6 million tonnes), a record. Source: Ministry of Agriculture release of 17 March 2026, as reported.

Key Points

- **Both seasons grew:** kharif about 1,741 lakh tonnes and rabi about 1,745 lakh tonnes, helped by a good monsoon and full reservoirs.
- **Maize and mustard:** records reflect demand for ethanol blending and the edible oils mission.
- **Wheat procurement:** a target of about 30.3 million tonnes for the 2026-27 season at an MSP of Rs 2,585 a quintal (as reported).
- **PM-KISAN:** Rs 6,000 a year in three instalments; about 2.15 crore women among the beneficiaries.

Concerns

- Bumper harvests can crash prices at harvest time; storage and procurement capacity matter.
- Pulses and edible oils remain import-dependent; cereals use a lot of water.
- PM-KISAN excludes tenant farmers and landless labourers, and Rs 6,000 has lost real value since 2019.

Prelims Pointers

- Crop estimates are released by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Department of Agriculture, in four rounds.
- MSP is recommended by the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices and approved by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs.
- PM-KISAN was launched on 24 February 2019 at Gorakhpur; it is fully centrally funded.

23 | ENVIRONMENT GS 3

India's NDC 3.0: Climate Targets for 2035

Syllabus Mapping: GS3: Climate change, international agreements, renewable energy

Context

On **28 March 2026** the Union Cabinet approved India's third **Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)** under the Paris Agreement, for 2031-2035 (as reported by several outlets; check against the PIB release).

Key Targets

- **Emissions intensity:** cut emissions per unit of GDP by **47% by 2035** from 2005 levels (the 2022 NDC set 45% by 2030).
- **Clean power: 60%** of installed electricity capacity from non-fossil sources by 2035 (50% by 2030 in the 2022 NDC, already crossed).
- **Carbon sink:** an additional 3.5-4 billion tonnes of CO_2-equivalent through more forest and tree cover.

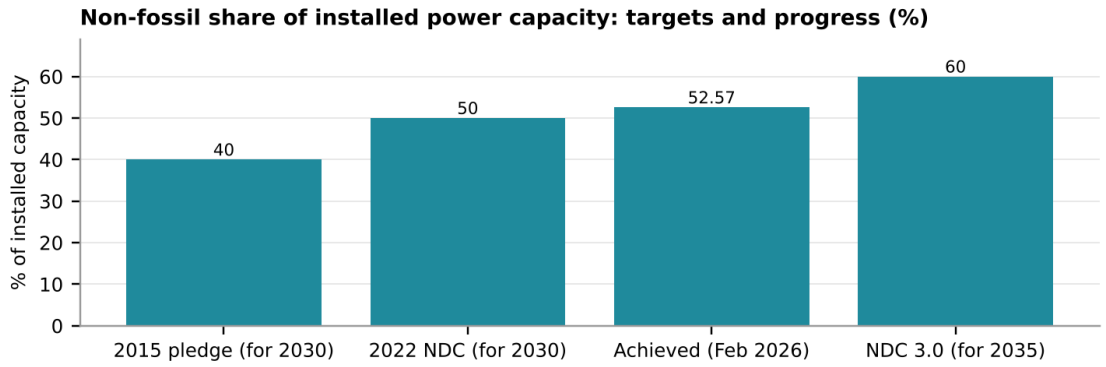


Chart. India met its 2030 capacity target several years early. Source: Cabinet decision of 28 March 2026 as reported by Drishti IAS and Energetica India.

Why it matters

- India keeps an intensity-based approach rather than an absolute emissions cap, reflecting 'common but differentiated responsibilities' and its development needs.
- Meeting the earlier capacity target early adds credibility on the path to net zero by 2070.

Challenges

- Installed capacity is not generation: coal still produces most electricity; storage, transmission and grid flexibility must grow.
- Carbon-sink targets depend on forest quality, not just plantations.
- Climate finance from developed countries remains far below needs.

Prelims Pointers

- Article 4 of the Paris Agreement requires NDCs every five years, each a 'progression' on the last.
- India announced its net-zero target of 2070 at COP26, Glasgow (2021), as part of the 'Panchamrit'.
- The base year for India's intensity target is 2005.

24 | ENVIRONMENT GS 3

A Bustard Chick in Kutch: Saving the Great Indian Bustard

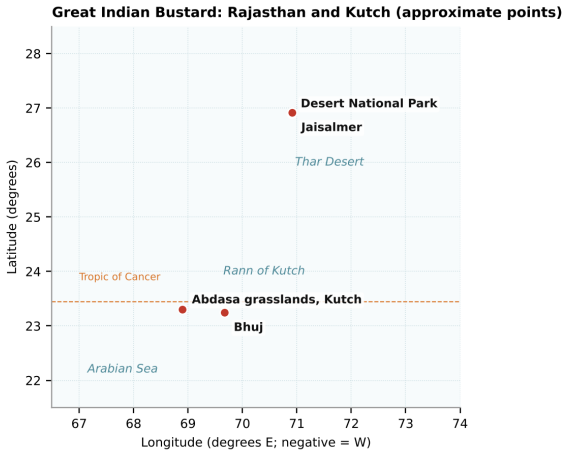
Syllabus Mapping: GS3: Conservation, biodiversity; species protection

Context

A fertile **Great Indian Bustard (GIB)** egg from Rajasthan's captive-breeding centre was carried by road to **Kutch, Gujarat** in a portable incubator and placed in a wild female's nest in the **Abdasa** grasslands on 22 March 2026. The chick hatched on **26 March**, the first in Kutch in about a decade. Gujarat and Rajasthan forest departments worked with the Wildlife Institute of India in what was called the first inter-State conservation effort for the species.

Key Points

- **Why it was needed:** Kutch's small remaining population has only females, so their eggs were infertile.
- **Status:** IUCN Critically Endangered; Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972; CITES Appendix I.
- **Stronghold:** Desert National Park (Jaisalmer-Barmer, Rajasthan); the GIB is Rajasthan's State bird.



Location diagram. Points plotted by latitude and longitude; boundaries not shown. The egg travelled about 19 hours by road from Rajasthan to Kutch.

Threats and way forward

- **Power lines:** collisions with overhead lines are the main cause of death; the Supreme Court has been hearing the issue of undergrounding lines and bird diverters since 2021.
- **Habitat loss:** grasslands are often treated as 'wastelands' and lost to solar parks, farming and the invasive *Prosopis juliflora*.
- **Next steps:** secure grassland habitats, fit bird diverters, more egg transfers or release of captive-bred birds, and community support.

Prelims Pointers

- Scientific name: *Ardeotis nigriceps*; called 'Godawan' in Rajasthan and 'Ghorad' in Kutch.
- Captive breeding is run with the Wildlife Institute of India (Dehradun).
- Desert National Park is one of the largest protected areas in India.

25 | ENVIRONMENT GS 3

Plastic Waste Rules 2026: From Bans to Circularity

Syllabus Mapping: GS3: Environmental pollution, waste management

Context

On **30 March 2026** the Environment Ministry issued a **draft** amendment to the Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016 (G.S.R. 237(E)) for public comment. As summarised in secondary sources, it raises mandatory recycled content in packaging and tightens Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR).

Key Points (as reported)

- **Recycled content:** rising targets for recycled plastic in packaging, especially rigid plastics, by 2028-29.
- **EPR:** producers, importers and brand owners stay responsible for collecting and processing their packaging; plastics grouped as rigid, flexible and multilayered.
- **Flexibility:** unmet targets may be carried forward for a limited period; EPR certificates can be traded.
- **End-of-life options:** recycling, waste-to-energy and co-processing in cement kilns.

Challenges

- Fake EPR certificates found in audits by the Central Pollution Control Board.
- The informal sector of waste pickers, who do much of India's recycling, is left out of formal systems.
- Poor segregation in small towns; emissions from burning plastic in kilns.

Prelims Pointers

- Identified single-use plastic items were banned from 1 July 2022; carry bags must be at least 120 microns thick.
- The Plastic Waste Management Rules are made under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
- EPR guidelines for plastic packaging were notified in February 2022.

26 | DISASTER MANAGEMENT GS 3

Summer in March: Early Heatwaves Across India

Syllabus Mapping: GS3: Disaster management; GS1: Climatology

Context

Heatwaves arrived unusually early in 2026. IMD's bulletin of **13 March** reported a severe heatwave in parts of **Himachal Pradesh** and heatwaves in Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha, Konkan, Saurashtra and Kutch, and Odisha. The country's highest temperature that day was **42.2 C at Amravati** (Vidarbha), and night temperatures were also well above normal in parts of Rajasthan and Bihar.

Key Points

- **Hills too:** heat in Himachal Pradesh shows the Himalaya warming fast, raising the risk of early forest fires.
- **Warm nights:** high minimum temperatures stop the body from recovering and raise health risks.
- **Crops:** March heat can cut wheat yields during grain filling.

Gaps in preparedness

- Heatwaves are not on the national list of notified disasters for SDRF and NDRF funding, though some States have declared heat a State-specific disaster.
- Many city Heat Action Plans use fixed temperature thresholds that ignore humidity and night heat.
- Outdoor and informal workers have little protection.

Way forward

- City Heat Action Plans on the Ahmedabad model (first in South Asia, 2013), with early warnings, cooling centres and changed work hours.
- Cool roofs, shade and urban greening; health system readiness for heat illness.
- Heat-tolerant crop varieties and advisories for farmers.

Prelims Pointers

- IMD heatwave in the plains: maximum temperature of at least 40 C with a departure of 4.5 C or more from normal; for hilly regions the threshold is 30 C.
- NDMA issued national heatwave guidelines in 2016 (revised 2019).
- IMD was established in 1875.

27 | SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY GS 3

ISRO's CE20 Test: Rebuilding Launch Reliability

Syllabus Mapping: GS3: Space technology; indigenisation of technology

Context

On **10 March 2026** ISRO hot-tested its **CE20 cryogenic engine** for 165 seconds at an uprated thrust of about 22 tonnes at the ISRO Propulsion Complex, **Mahendragiri** (Tamil Nadu). CE20 powers the upper stage of LVM3, India's heaviest rocket, which will also carry Gaganyaan. The test came as ISRO worked to recover from two successive PSLV failures (May 2025 and January 2026), both linked to the rocket's third stage.

Key Points

- **More thrust, more payload:** uprating CE20 lets LVM3 lift heavier satellites and supports human spaceflight and the planned Bharatiya Antariksh Station.
- **PSLV review:** ISRO said a committee would probe the repeated failures; no findings were published in March.
- **Gaganyaan:** the first uncrewed flight missed its 'by March 2026' target; ISRO says the crewed flight is planned for 2027.
- **No orbital launch** by ISRO was confirmed in March 2026.

Challenges

- **Transparency:** commentators have asked ISRO to publish failure analyses, as other agencies do.
- **Commercial credibility:** the January loss was the first time ISRO failed to orbit a foreign customer's satellite.
- **Industry handover:** PSLV production by an industry consortium makes quality control across suppliers more important.

Prelims Pointers

- LVM3 stages: S200 solid strap-ons, L110 liquid core stage and C25 cryogenic upper stage powered by CE20.
- Cryogenic engines burn liquid hydrogen with liquid oxygen.
- PSLV stages alternate: solid (PS1), liquid (PS2), solid (PS3), liquid (PS4).

28 | SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY GS 3

World TB Day 2026: Progress and the Last Mile

Syllabus Mapping: GS3: Developments in health science; GS2: Health

Context

On **World TB Day, 24 March 2026** (theme: 'Yes! We Can End TB!'), Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda said India's TB incidence had fallen by 21% and deaths by 25%, and that the TB budget had grown from Rs 607 crore in 2014 to over Rs 6,000 crore. A new **100-day TB Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan** targets about 1.5 lakh villages and urban wards, and a TB Mukt Bharat app and an urban ward initiative were launched.

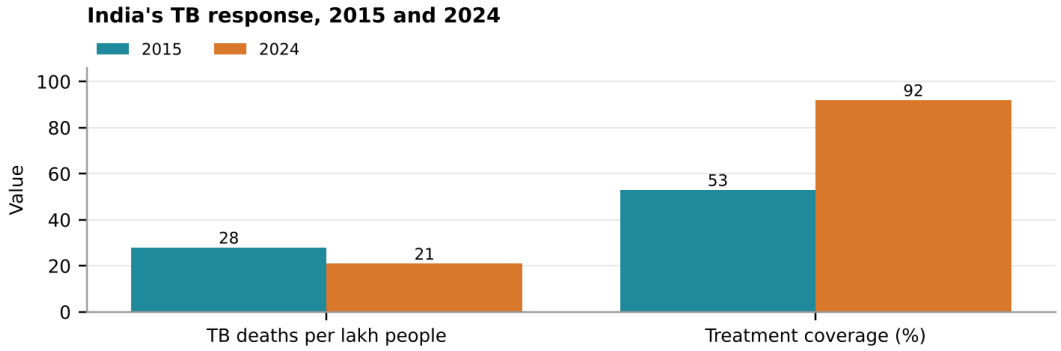


Chart. Coverage has risen sharply and deaths have fallen, but India still has about a quarter of the world's TB cases. Source: WHO Global TB Report 2025, as summarised by Drishti IAS (24 March 2026).

Key Points

- **New tools:** the six-month BPaLM regimen for drug-resistant TB; AI-supported portable X-rays and rapid molecular tests.
- **Nutrition:** undernutrition is a major driver; Ni-kshay Poshan Yojana gives Rs 1,000 a month to each patient; an ICMR trial in Jharkhand showed food support improves outcomes.
- **Genomics:** a national effort has sequenced thousands of TB bacteria genomes to track drug resistance (as reported).

Challenges

- Missing cases in remote areas and the private sector; drug-resistant TB; links with diabetes and malnutrition.
- India missed its own target of ending TB by 2025, five years ahead of the global SDG target of 2030.

Prelims Pointers

- World TB Day marks Robert Koch's announcement of the TB bacterium on 24 March 1882.
- BCG is the only licensed TB vaccine.
- Ni-kshay is the online portal of the National TB Elimination Programme.

29 | SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY GS 3

Quantum Talent: Teaching Labs Under the National Quantum Mission

Syllabus Mapping: GS3: Developments in science and technology; awareness in IT and computers

Context

As reported on **18 March 2026**, the government approved **23 academic institutions** to set up quantum teaching laboratories under the **National Quantum Mission (NQM)**, with more proposals under review. The same week, Canadian computer scientist **Gilles Brassard**, co-inventor of the BB84 quantum cryptography protocol, was named for the ACM Turing Award.

Key Points

- **NQM:** Rs 6,003 crore for 2023-24 to 2030-31, run by the Department of Science and Technology.
- **Targets:** quantum computers with 50-1,000 physical qubits within eight years; secure satellite-based quantum communication over 2,000 km; quantum sensors and atomic clocks; quantum materials.
- **Structure:** four thematic hubs for computing, communication, sensing and metrology, and materials and devices.

Key term	Meaning
Qubit	The basic unit of quantum information; it can be in a superposition of 0 and 1
Entanglement	A link between particles so that measuring one instantly tells you about the other
Quantum key distribution	Sharing encryption keys using quantum states; any eavesdropping disturbs them and is detected
BB84	The first quantum key distribution protocol, proposed by Bennett and Brassard in 1984

Challenges

- Dependence on imported lasers, cryogenic systems and photonic components.
- Funding is small compared with the US, China and the EU; industry participation is thin.
- Skilled people are the biggest constraint, which is why teaching labs matter.

Prelims Pointers

- The Cabinet approved the NQM in April 2023.
- 2025 was the UN International Year of Quantum Science and Technology.
- The Turing Award (from 1966) is often called the 'Nobel of computing'.

30 | SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY GS 3

Artemis II and the New Moon Race: India's Stakes

Syllabus Mapping: GS3: Space technology; GS2: International treaties (outer space)

Context

In March 2026 NASA prepared **Artemis II**, the first crewed flight around the Moon since 1972, rolling it to Launch Pad 39B at the Kennedy Space Center around 19-20 March after replacing a faulty electrical harness. Its launch window opened on 1 April. The crew: Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover, Christina Koch (NASA) and Jeremy Hansen (Canadian Space Agency). China is targeting a crewed Moon landing before 2030.

Key Points

- Artemis II is a fly-by on a free-return path; it does not land.
- SpaceX's next-generation Starship test, important for the later Artemis lander, did not fly in March (as reported).
- Two blocs are forming: the US-led Artemis Accords and the China-Russia International Lunar Research Station (ILRS).

India's stakes

- India signed the **Artemis Accords** in June 2023 while keeping independent missions.
- ISRO plans Chandrayaan-4 (sample return), a joint lunar polar mission with Japan, the Bharatiya Antariksh Station by 2035 and an Indian on the Moon by 2040.
- Rules being written now on lunar resources and 'safety zones' will shape India's options.

Debate

Supporters see the Accords as practical norms for safe operations; critics ask whether 'safety zones' and resource use fit the Outer Space Treaty's ban on national appropriation. India's interest lies in keeping its strategic autonomy and pushing for inclusive rules.

Prelims Pointers

- The Outer Space Treaty dates from 1967; India has signed but not ratified the 1979 Moon Agreement.
- Apollo 17 (1972) was the last crewed Moon mission until Artemis.
- Chandrayaan-3 landed near the lunar south pole on 23 August 2023, now National Space Day.

31 | SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY GS 3

The Total Lunar Eclipse of 3 March: Why the Moon Turned Red

Syllabus Mapping: GS3: Awareness in science (astronomy); GS1: The solar system

Context

A **total lunar eclipse** took place on **3 March 2026**. According to IMD and other reports, totality lasted about 59 minutes (roughly 4:34-5:33 pm IST). In most of India the Moon rose already in eclipse; the North-East and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands saw the most of the total phase.

Key Points

- **How it happens:** the Earth comes directly between the Sun and the full Moon, and the Moon passes through Earth's dark inner shadow (umbra).
- **Why red:** sunlight passing through Earth's atmosphere loses its blue light by scattering, while red light bends into the shadow, giving a 'blood moon'.
- **Only at full moon:** lunar eclipses happen only at full moon, and not every month, because the Moon's orbit is tilted about 5 degrees to Earth's orbit.

Feature	Lunar eclipse	Solar eclipse
Alignment	Sun - Earth - Moon	Sun - Moon - Earth
Moon phase	Full moon	New moon
Visibility	Whole night side of Earth	Narrow path on Earth
Safe to watch?	Yes, with naked eye	Never without proper filters

Why it matters

Eclipses are a chance to build scientific temper, which Article 51A(h) lists as a fundamental duty, and to counter superstitions about eating or travelling during an eclipse.

Prelims Pointers

- Umbra: the darkest central shadow; penumbra: the lighter outer shadow.
- The Moon's orbit is inclined about 5 degrees to the ecliptic.
- Rayleigh scattering explains both the blue sky and the red eclipsed Moon.

32 | INTERNAL SECURITY GS 3

Operation Urja Suraksha: The Navy Guards India's Energy Lifeline

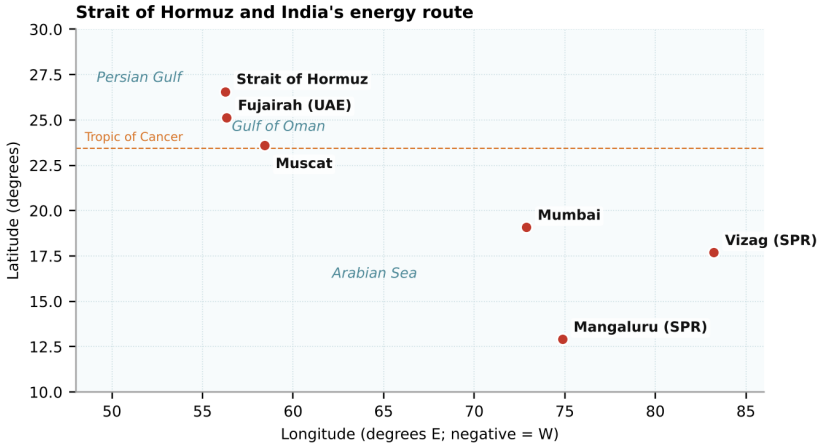
Syllabus Mapping: GS3: Security challenges in maritime areas; energy security; GS2: India and West Asia

Context

With shipping through the Strait of Hormuz largely halted, the Indian Navy launched **Operation Urja Suraksha** in late March 2026 to escort Indian-flagged energy carriers out of the Gulf. Destroyer **INS Surat** led the escort group. Ships escorted included LPG carriers *Pine Gas*, *Jag Vasant*, *Shivalik* and *Nanda Devi* and crude tanker *Jag Laadki*; two of them alone carried about 92,000 tonnes of LPG (as reported).

Key Points

- **Scale of the problem:** dozens of Indian-flagged ships were initially stuck west of Hormuz, and many remained there in late March (as reported).
- **Approach:** a calibrated national escort mission, without joining any coalition.
- **Energy mix:** India also raised purchases of Russian oil because of the West Asia disruption (Commerce Secretary, as reported on 17 March).



Location diagram. Points plotted by latitude and longitude; boundaries not shown. SPR = strategic petroleum reserve. Most of India's LPG and much of its crude come through this route.

Why it matters

- Protecting sea lines of communication is a core naval task; this is a real-world test of India's role as a 'first responder' in the Indian Ocean.
- LPG is the weak link: household cooking gas depends heavily on Gulf supply.
- Escorts still depend on the warring parties not targeting Indian ships.

Prelims Pointers

- INS Surat is the fourth and last Project 15B (Visakhapatnam-class) guided-missile destroyer.
- The Gulf of Oman links the Strait of Hormuz to the Arabian Sea.
- India's strategic petroleum reserves are run by Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Ltd (ISPRL).

33 | INTERNAL SECURITY GS 3

The 31 March Deadline: Is India 'Naxal-Free'?

Syllabus Mapping: GS3: Linkages between development and extremism; internal security

Context

On **11 March 2026**, **108 Maoists**, including 44 women, surrendered at Jagdalpur (Bastar, Chhattisgarh) with 101 weapons, including seven AK-47 rifles; police also recovered about Rs 3.6 crore in cash and 1 kg of gold. All India Radio reported that 2,625 Maoists in Bastar division had surrendered since January 2024. On **30 March**, a day before the government's deadline to end Left Wing Extremism (LWE), Home Minister Amit Shah told the Lok Sabha that India was 'Naxal-free' and that a formal announcement would follow.

Key Points

- **Three-pronged approach:** security operations, surrender and rehabilitation incentives, and roads, mobile towers and welfare schemes in former strongholds.
- **Shrinking footprint:** the number of 'most affected' districts had already fallen sharply by 2025.
- **Politics:** the Home Minister criticised the Congress for past inaction; the Congress rejected his allegations.

Debate

- **Government:** a decades-long insurgency has effectively ended through a combination of force and development.
- **Critics:** declaring victory by a deadline is risky; the rights of Adivasis under PESA and the Forest Rights Act must be protected as mining expands; rehabilitation must last to prevent a revival.

Way forward

Consolidate gains with good governance, land and forest rights, education and jobs for Adivasi youth, and fair benefit-sharing from mining. Monitor surrendered cadres' rehabilitation.

Prelims Pointers

- CPI (Maoist) was formed in 2004 by the merger of the People's War Group and the Maoist Communist Centre; it is banned under the UAPA.
- SAMADHAN (2017) is the Home Ministry's strategy against LWE.
- The Naxalbari uprising (1967) took place in Darjeeling district, West Bengal.

34 | ETHICS GS 4

Case Study: The Medical Board's Decision

Syllabus Mapping: GS4: Ethics in public administration; compassion; dignity; ethical dilemmas in health care

The case

You are the Chief Medical Officer of a district. A poor family asks for a secondary medical board under the Supreme Court's guidelines to consider withdrawing life support from their 25-year-old son, who has been in a permanent vegetative state for six years after an accident. The primary board at a private hospital has agreed. The family is deep in debt from hospital bills. A relative tells you privately that the parents mainly want to stop paying. A local religious group plans to protest, and a television channel wants an interview. Your doctors are divided.

Stakeholders

- The patient, who cannot speak for himself.
- His parents and family, emotionally and financially exhausted.
- The doctors on the boards, who carry legal and moral responsibility.
- Society, including disability-rights and faith groups, and the media.

Ethical issues

- **Sanctity of life versus dignity:** keeping a body alive is not the same as protecting a person's dignity.
- **Best interest of the patient:** the decision must be about the patient, not the family's finances or public pressure.
- **Justice:** poverty should not decide who lives; the State has a duty to provide palliative care and support.
- **Procedural integrity:** the board must be independent, reasoned and transparent.

Option	Merits	Demerits
Refuse to form the board because of the controversy	Avoids protests	Denies the family a legal right; abdicates duty
Form the board and approve quickly	Ends suffering and cost	Risk that money, not medicine, drives the decision
Form an independent board, assess the patient's best interest on medical grounds, arrange financial and palliative support, and record reasons	Lawful, humane and defensible	Takes time; needs resources and courage under pressure

A reasoned course of action

Choose the third option. Constitute the board with experts who have no link to the treating hospital. Separately, connect the family to government health schemes and palliative care, so that the decision is not forced by debt. Let the board decide only on medical evidence and the patient's best interest, record its reasons, and inform the magistrate as the guidelines require. Speak to the media only about the process, protecting the family's privacy. Meet the protesting group to explain the law calmly.

Ethics vocabulary to use

- **Best interest standard:** deciding what serves the patient, not others.
- **Ethics of care:** attention to relationships and the burdens carried by caregivers.
- **Dignity:** a person's inherent worth, which Article 21 protects in life and in dying.

35 | ETHICS GS 4

Ethics in the News: Values Behind March's Headlines

Syllabus Mapping: GS4: Ethics and human interface; ethical issues in international relations, governance and technology

Why read the news for ethics

These links between March's stories and ethical ideas give ready examples for GS Paper IV. For each, practise one paragraph that names the value, gives the example, and balances it against the competing value.

Story	Ethical question	Concepts to use
Harish Rana judgment	When does continuing treatment stop serving the patient?	Dignity; autonomy; best interest; compassion
Transgender Amendment	Who decides a person's identity: the person or the State?	Autonomy; privacy; dignity; inclusion
Conversion and SC status	Should benefits follow faith or disadvantage?	Justice; equality; fairness
Vaccine compensation order	What does the State owe those harmed by a public-good programme?	Responsibility; solidarity; trust
Gulf evacuations and escorts	How far must a State go to protect its citizens abroad?	Duty of care; courage; prudence
Karnataka's social media plan	Should the State protect children from technology, or teach them to use it?	Paternalism; autonomy; well-being
'Naxal-free' declaration	Is peace the absence of violence or the presence of justice?	Justice; rights of Adivasis; rehabilitation

Thinkers to quote

- **Mahatma Gandhi:** the talisman of the poorest person; also his view that means must be as pure as ends. Use it for counter-insurgency and governance.
- **Immanuel Kant:** treat humanity always as an end. Use it for dignity, identity and end-of-life questions.
- **John Rawls:** the 'veil of ignorance'. Use it for reservation and welfare design.
- **Amartya Sen:** development as freedom, expanding people's capabilities. Use it for social justice and health.

How to use these in an answer

- Define the value in one line, give the current example, then suggest what an administrator should do.
- Show the competing value and explain how you would reconcile the two.

36 | ESSAY ESSAY

Essay Corner: Themes from This Month

Three essay themes from March's news, with a sample outline. Write one practice essay (1,000-1,200 words) this week.

Themes to practise

- **A narrow strait, a nation's kitchen.** Energy security, geography and everyday life.
- **To live with dignity, and to die with dignity.** Rights, care and the limits of medicine.
- **Salt, sacrifice and self-reliance.** What the freedom struggle teaches today.

Sample outline: 'A narrow strait, a nation's kitchen'

- **Opening:** a family in a small town waiting for an LPG cylinder while ships wait at the Strait of Hormuz.
- **Geographical dimension:** chokepoints such as Hormuz and Malacca, and India's dependence on imported oil and gas.
- **Economic dimension:** oil shocks feed inflation, weaken the rupee and strain public finances.
- **Social dimension:** cooking fuel and transport costs hit the poor hardest; clean cooking gains are at risk.
- **Strategic dimension:** naval escorts, diplomacy with all sides, diverse suppliers and strategic reserves.
- **Environmental dimension:** renewables, electric cooking and efficiency as long-term security.
- **Counter-view:** full self-sufficiency is neither possible nor efficient; interdependence brings both risk and resilience.
- **Conclusion:** energy security is built in calm times; storage, diversity and clean energy are cheaper than crisis management.

Did you know?

Use examples from different fields and regions. Keep a notebook of examples from each month's magazine, grouped by theme.

37 | HISTORY PRELIMS

History, Art and Culture: Quick Notes

Anniversaries, heritage and literature from March 2026.

Anniversaries

- **Dandi March (12 March 1930):** 96th anniversary; Sabarmati to Dandi, about 385 km, with 78 companions; salt law broken on 6 April 1930.
- **Shaheed Diwas (23 March):** 95 years since the execution of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev in Lahore (1931); also Ram Manohar Lohia's birth anniversary (1910).

Heritage and literature

- **Tamil Nadu excavations:** ASI approved eight sites, including Keeladi (11th phase), Adichanallur, Vellalore and Nagapattinam (as reported, 13 March).
- **Saraswati Samman 2025:** Ramkumar Mukhopadhyay (Bengali), for *Hara Parbati Katha*; K.K. Birla Foundation; Rs 15 lakh.
- **Sahitya Akademi Awards 2025:** announced in 24 languages; English award to Navtej Sarna (*Crimson Spring*), Hindi to Mamta Kalia (*Jeete Jee Allahabad*).

38 | ART AND CULTURE PRELIMS

Awards, Personalities and Appointments: Quick Notes

People and prizes in the news in March 2026.

International prizes

- **Abel Prize 2026:** Gerd Faltings (Germany), for work in arithmetic geometry, including his proof of the Mordell conjecture (1983); awarded by the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters.
- **ACM Turing Award:** Gilles Brassard, co-inventor of the BB84 quantum cryptography protocol (announced in March).
- **98th Academy Awards (15 March, Los Angeles):** Best Picture *One Battle After Another*; Best Director Paul Thomas Anderson; Best Actor Michael B. Jordan (*Sinners*); Best Actress Jessie Buckley (*Hamnet*). India's *Homebound* was shortlisted for International Feature but not nominated.

Appointments (6 March)

- **R.N. Ravi** moved from Tamil Nadu to West Bengal as Governor.
- **Taranjit Singh Sandhu** (former Ambassador to the US) became Lieutenant Governor of Delhi; V.K. Saxena moved to Ladakh.
- **Lt Gen (retd) Syed Ata Hasnain** became Governor of Bihar.
- Governors are appointed under Article 155 and hold office during the President's pleasure (Article 156).

People

- **Harish Rana** (31) died at AIIMS, New Delhi on 24 March, the first person in India whose life support was withdrawn under a Supreme Court order on passive euthanasia.

39 | ART AND CULTURE PRELIMS

Sports: Quick Notes

Results of Prelims value from March 2026.

Cricket

- **ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 final (8 March, Narendra Modi Stadium, Ahmedabad):** India beat New Zealand by 96 runs (India 255/5).
- India's third T20 World Cup title (after 2007 and 2024), the first team to win three and the first to win at home; captain Suryakumar Yadav.
- **Player of the Final:** Jasprit Bumrah (4/15); **Player of the Tournament:** Sanju Samson (321 runs).

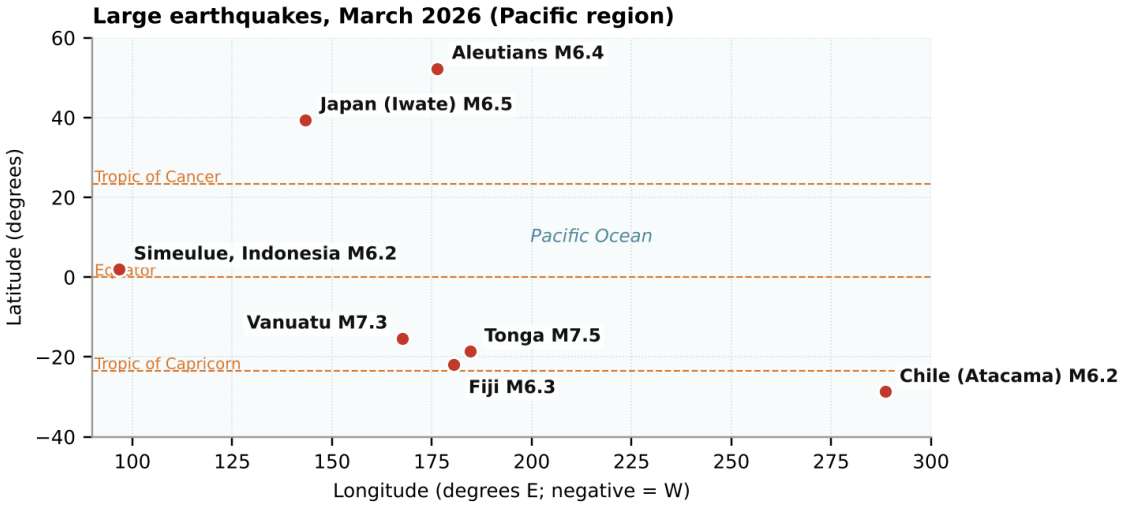
Other sports

- **All England Open badminton (Birmingham, 8 March):** Lakshya Sen was runner-up in men's singles to Lin Chun-yi (Chinese Taipei).
- **Winter Paralympics, Milano Cortina (6-15 March):** China topped the medal table.
- **FIDE Candidates Tournament 2026:** began on 28 March at Pegeia, Cyprus, to choose the challenger to world champion D. Gukesh.

40 | GEOGRAPHY PRELIMS

Geography: Phenomena in the News

Earthquakes, volcanoes, ice and weather from March 2026.



Location diagram. Points plotted by latitude and longitude; boundaries not shown. Longitudes run eastward from 0 to 360 so the Pacific is not split (for example, 184.5 E is 175.5 W). Almost all lie on the Pacific Ring of Fire; the Simeulue quake is on the Sunda megathrust.

Earth

- **Deep earthquakes:** the Tonga (234 km) and southern Italy (375 km, 9 March) quakes were deep, so shaking at the surface was weaker.
- **Mid-ocean ridges** produce shallow quakes where plates move apart.
- **Indonesian volcanoes:** Semeru (East Java), Marapi (West Sumatra), Ibu (Halmahera) and Ili Lewotolok erupted repeatedly in March.

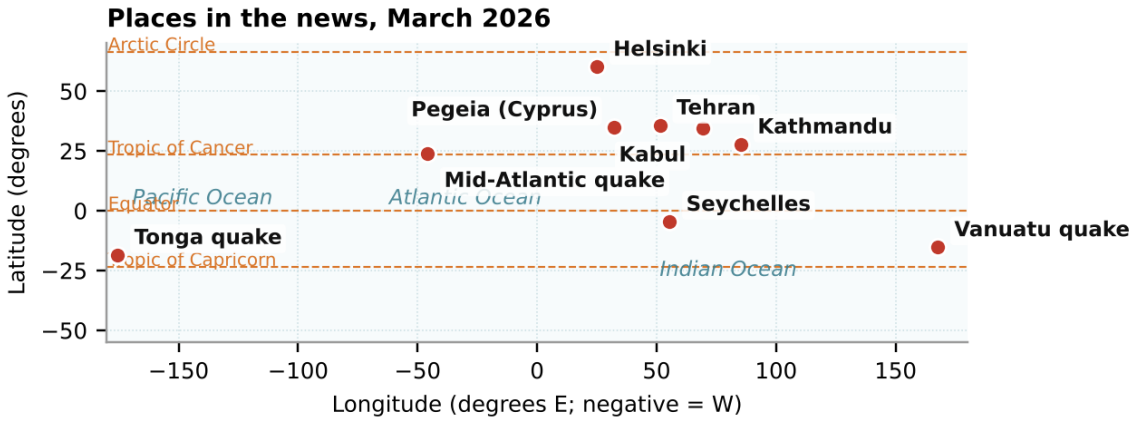
Ice and weather

- **Arctic sea ice:** winter maximum of 14.29 million sq km on 15 March, tied for the lowest on record (NSIDC).
- **March 2026:** fourth-warmest March globally; Europe's second-warmest (Copernicus).
- **Cyclone Narelle:** three severe landfalls in Australia (Queensland, Northern Territory, Western Australia).
- **India:** 42.2 C at Amravati on 13 March; severe heatwave in Himachal Pradesh.

41 | GEOGRAPHY PRELIMS

Places in the News: March 2026 on the Map

Locate each place and learn one fact about it.



Location diagram. Points plotted by latitude and longitude; boundaries not shown. Red dots mark the places; dashed lines mark the Tropics, the Equator and the Arctic Circle.

Asia and Europe

- **Kathmandu:** new Prime Minister Balendra Shah after the 5 March election.
- **Kabul:** India condemned a Pakistani air strike on a hospital (17 March).
- **Helsinki:** capital of Finland, now a strategic partner in digitalisation and sustainability.
- **Pegeia, Cyprus:** venue of the FIDE Candidates Tournament.

Oceans and islands

- **Tonga:** magnitude 7.5 earthquake on 24 March, about 234 km deep, the month's strongest.
- **Vanuatu:** magnitude 7.3 earthquake near Espiritu Santo on 30 March.
- **Mid-Atlantic Ridge:** magnitude 6.6 quake on 21 March at a divergent plate boundary.
- **Seychelles:** Exercise LAMITIYE 2026 (11th edition) with India.

42 | POLITY PRELIMS

Polity and Governance: Quick Notes

Courts, Parliament and elections in March 2026.

Supreme Court

- **Harish Rana (11 March):** clinically administered nutrition is medical treatment that can be withdrawn; Justices J.B. Pardiwala and K.V. Viswanathan.
- **Rachana Gangu (10 March):** Union told to frame a no-fault compensation policy for COVID-19 vaccine injuries.
- **'Industry' (Section 2(j), Industrial Disputes Act):** nine-judge Bench heard arguments from 17 March and reserved judgment on the 1978 *Bangalore Water Supply* 'triple test'.
- **SC status (24 March):** conversion to a religion other than Hinduism, Sikhism or Buddhism ends SC status.
- **IT Rules 2023 fact-check unit:** the Court issued notice on the Union's appeal against the Bombay High Court ruling and refused a stay (10 March).

Parliament and elections

- **Assembly polls:** announced 15 March for 824 seats in Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry; counting 4 May.
- **Speaker:** a resolution to remove Om Birla was rejected by voice vote (11 March).
- **Transgender Persons Amendment:** passed by both Houses (24-25 March).
- **Appropriation Bill** passed 17 March; **Finance Bill** passed by the Lok Sabha on 25 March with 32 amendments.
- **New Bills introduced:** Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions), CAPF (General Administration), FCRA Amendment and Corporate Laws Amendment.

43 | SOCIAL JUSTICE PRELIMS

Society, Health and Welfare: Quick Notes

Reports, health campaigns and the census in March 2026.

Reports and indices

- **World Happiness Report 2026 (20 March):** India ranked 116th of 147 (118th in 2025); Finland first; published by the Oxford Wellbeing Research Centre with Gallup and the UN SDSN.
- **South Asian neighbours in the report:** Nepal 99, Pakistan 104, Bangladesh 127, Sri Lanka 134.

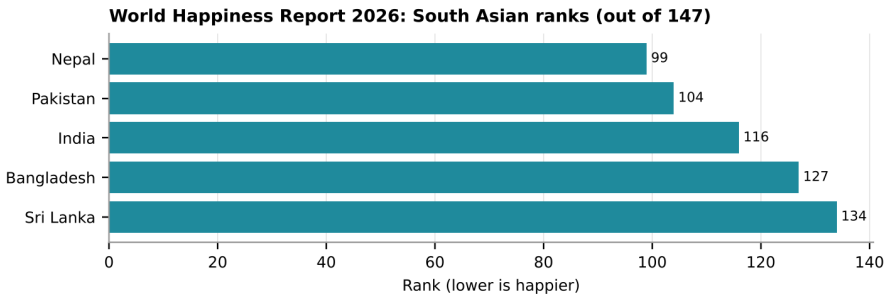


Chart. India improved two places from 2025. Source: World Happiness Report 2026, as summarised by Drishti IAS.

Health and census

- **HPV vaccination:** single dose of a quadrivalent vaccine for 14-year-old girls, about 1.15 crore girls a year (as reported).
- **World TB Day:** 100-day TB Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan; TB Mukt Bharat app and urban ward initiative.
- **Census 2027:** houselisting from 1 April 2026 in a 30-day window per State, preceded by 15 days of online self-enumeration; 33 questions; records confidential under Section 15 of the Census Act, 1948.
- **International Women's Day (8 March):** UN theme 'Rights. Justice. Action. For ALL Women and Girls'.

44 | INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS PRELIMS

International Relations and Security: Quick Notes

Visits, conflicts, exercises and security items from March 2026.

Relations

- **Raisina Dialogue (5-7 March):** 11th edition; theme 'Samskara: Assertion, Accommodation, Advancement'; chief guest Finland's President Alexander Stubb.
- **Iran:** Mojtaba Khamenei chosen as the third Supreme Leader by the Assembly of Experts (8-9 March).
- **Gulf returns:** over 52,000 Indians returned from the Gulf in the first week of March.
- **Nepal:** RSP's Balendra Shah sworn in as Prime Minister (27 March).
- **India-US trade:** India to sign the interim deal only after clarity on US tariffs; a temporary US tariff under Section 122 applied from 24 February.

Security

- **Operation Urja Suraksha:** Navy escort of Indian energy ships through the Strait of Hormuz, led by INS Surat.
- **LAMITIYE 2026:** 11th India-Seychelles joint military exercise at the Seychelles Defence Academy.
- **Jagdalpur surrender (11 March):** 108 Maoists, including 44 women, with 101 weapons.
- **'Naxal-free':** Home Minister's statement in the Lok Sabha on 30 March, ahead of the 31 March 2026 deadline.

45 | ECONOMY PRELIMS

Economy: Quick Notes

Numbers and policies from March 2026.

Numbers

- **CPI inflation (February):** 3.21% (January 2.74%); food 3.47%. **WPI:** 2.13%.
- **IIP:** January 4.8%; February 5.2% (manufacturing 6.0%, capital goods 12.5%).
- **GST (February):** about Rs 1.83 lakh crore, up 8.1%.
- **Forex reserves:** US$688.05 billion in the week to 27 March, down about US$30.5 billion in March.
- **OECD interim outlook:** India 7.6% (2025-26) and 6.1% (2026-27).
- **Foodgrains (2nd Advance Estimates):** record 348.6 million tonnes; wheat about 120 million tonnes.

Policy

- **Excise cut (27 March):** Rs 10 a litre on petrol and diesel; pump prices unchanged.
- **PM-KISAN 22nd instalment (13 March, Guwahati):** about Rs 18,640 crore to 9.32 crore farmers.
- **BHAVYA:** Rs 33,660 crore for 100 plug-and-play industrial parks.
- **Modified UDAN:** Rs 28,840 crore over ten years for 100 airports.
- **Jal Jeevan Mission:** extended to December 2028.
- **SEBI (23 March):** net settlement of funds for foreign investors' cash trades; minimum investment in Social Impact Funds cut to Rs 1,000; an Office of Ethics and Compliance for SEBI itself.

46 | ENVIRONMENT PRELIMS

Environment and Ecology: Quick Notes

Climate policy, species and resources from March 2026.

Policy and resources

- **NDC 3.0 (28 March):** 47% cut in emissions intensity by 2035 (from 2005); 60% non-fossil installed capacity; 3.5-4 billion tonnes additional carbon sink.
- **Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules, 2026:** draft issued 30 March.
- **Critical minerals:** 7th tranche of auctions launched 23 March with 19 blocks; 46 blocks auctioned in earlier tranches.

Species

- **Great Indian Bustard:** chick hatched in Kutch on 26 March from an egg brought from Rajasthan; IUCN Critically Endangered; WPA Schedule I.
- **New species described (as reported):** night frog *Nyctibatrachus kali* (Kali Tiger Reserve, Karnataka); wild kiwi *Actinidia indica* (Ziro Valley, Arunachal Pradesh); earthworms from Silent Valley (Kerala); a sleeper goby fish from the Rupnarayan river (West Bengal).

47 | SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY PRELIMS

Science and Technology: Quick Notes

Space, health, quantum and physics items from March 2026.

Space and astronomy

- **CE20 cryogenic engine:** 165-second test at about 22 tonnes thrust, Mahendragiri (10 March).
- **Total lunar eclipse (3 March):** totality about 59 minutes; best seen from India's North-East and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- **Artemis II:** rolled out to Launch Pad 39B around 19-20 March; window opened 1 April.

Health, quantum and physics

- **BPaLM:** six-month regimen (bedaquiline, pretomanid, linezolid, moxifloxacin) for drug-resistant TB.
- **National Quantum Mission:** 23 institutions approved for quantum teaching labs (18 March).
- **Superconductivity:** researchers reported raising the ambient-pressure critical temperature of a mercury-based cuprate to about -122 C using 'pressure quenching' (as reported; check the original paper).
- **IT Rules on synthetic media:** labelling of AI-generated content and three-hour takedowns in force.

48 | REVISION REVISION

Days and Themes of March 2026

Important days observed in March, with their 2026 themes.

Days with themes

- **World Wildlife Day (3 March):** 'Medicinal and Aromatic Plants: Conserving Health, Heritage and Livelihoods'; marks the signing of CITES (1973).
- **International Women's Day (8 March):** 'Rights. Justice. Action. For ALL Women and Girls'.
- **International Day of Forests (21 March):** 'Forests and Economies'.
- **World Water Day (22 March):** 'Water and Gender' ('Where water flows, equality grows').
- **World Meteorological Day (23 March):** 'Observing Today, Protecting Tomorrow'.
- **World TB Day (24 March):** 'Yes! We Can End TB!'.
- **Earth Hour (28 March):** 20th edition, 8:30-9:30 pm.

Also observed

- **International Day of Happiness (20 March)**, with the World Happiness Report.
- **World Day for Glaciers (21 March)**, during the UN Decade of Action for Cryospheric Sciences (2025-2034).

49 | REVISION REVISION

Practice Questions: Prelims and Mains

1. Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt threw bombs in the Central Legislative Assembly to protest against:
(a) the Rowlatt Bill (b) the Public Safety Bill and Trade Disputes Bill (c) the Simon Commission (d) the Communal Award
Answer: (b). The bombing was on 8 April 1929.

2. The Hindustan Republican Association was renamed the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association in 1928 at:
(a) Kakori (b) Lahore (c) Feroz Shah Kotla, Delhi (d) Allahabad
Answer: (c). Chandra Shekhar Azad was its commander-in-chief.

3. Who led the salt march to Vedaranyam in 1930?
(a) K. Kelappan (b) C. Rajagopalachari (c) Sarojini Naidu (d) Abbas Tyabji
Answer: (b). K. Kelappan led the march in Malabar.

4. The Dharasana salt satyagraha of 1930 was reported to the world by:
(a) Louis Fischer (b) Webb Miller (c) William Shirer (d) Edgar Snow
Answer: (b). Sarojini Naidu led the volunteers.

5. Keeladi, where excavations were approved in March 2026, lies on the banks of the:
(a) Kaveri (b) Vaigai (c) Tamirabarani (d) Palar
Answer: (b). Adichanallur lies on the Tamirabarani.

6. Consider the following: 1. Sahitya Akademi Awards are given in 24 languages. 2. English is an Eighth Schedule language. Which is/are correct?
(a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both (d) Neither
Answer: (a). English and Rajasthani are recognised by the Akademi but are not in the Eighth Schedule.

7. Saraswati Samman 2025 was awarded to a writer in which language?
(a) Odia (b) Bengali (c) Marathi (d) Kannada
Answer: (b). Ramkumar Mukhopadhyay, for Hara Parbati Katha.

8. The Arctic sea ice usually reaches its annual maximum in:
(a) December (b) March (c) June (d) September
Answer: (b). It reaches its minimum in September.

9. WMO's State of the Global Climate 2025 says most of the extra heat trapped by greenhouse gases goes into:

(a) the atmosphere (b) land (c) the ocean (d) ice

Answer: (c). About 91% goes into the ocean.

10. In the Southern Hemisphere, tropical cyclones rotate:

(a) clockwise (b) anticlockwise (c) either way (d) they do not rotate

Answer: (a). Because of the Coriolis effect.

11. Entry 31 of the Union List, relevant to State moves to regulate social media, deals with:

(a) Public order (b) Posts, telephones, wireless and broadcasting (c) Education (d) Public health

Answer: (b). Communications are largely a Union subject.

12. Iran's Supreme Leader is chosen by:

(a) the Guardian Council (b) the Majlis (c) the Assembly of Experts (d) a national referendum

Answer: (c). The Assembly of Experts has 88 members.

13. Which of these evacuation operations is correctly matched? 1. Ganga - Ukraine 2. Kaveri - Sudan 3. Ajay - Israel

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (d). Operation Sindhu (2025) covered Iran and Israel.

14. Nepal's House of Representatives has how many seats?

(a) 205 (b) 245 (c) 275 (d) 300

Answer: (c). 165 by first-past-the-post and 110 by proportional representation.

15. The chief guest at the Raisina Dialogue 2026 was the President of:

(a) Finland (b) France (c) Germany (d) Indonesia

Answer: (a). Alexander Stubb.

16. The Durand Line separates:

(a) India and Pakistan (b) Afghanistan and Pakistan (c) Iran and Afghanistan (d) India and China

Answer: (b). Drawn in 1893.

17. Puducherry has an elected legislature under which Article?

(a) Article 239A (b) Article 239AA (c) Article 240 (d) Article 241

Answer: (a). Article 239AA concerns Delhi.

18. In the Harish Rana case (2026), the Supreme Court held that clinically administered nutrition is:

(a) basic care that cannot be withdrawn (b) medical treatment that can be withdrawn (c) a fundamental right (d) outside judicial review

Answer: (b). It applied the Common Cause (2018) framework.

19. Which case first allowed passive euthanasia in principle in India?

(a) Common Cause (2018) (b) Aruna Shanbaug (2011) (c) Gian Kaur (1996) (d) P. Rathinam (1994)

Answer: (b). Common Cause (2018) recognised living wills.

20. The Supreme Court's NALSA judgment (2014) recognised:

(a) decriminalisation of homosexuality (b) transgender persons' right to self-identify gender (c) the right to privacy (d) passive euthanasia

Answer: (b). The 2026 amendment moved away from self-identification.

21. Under the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950, SC status is available to persons professing: 1. Hinduism 2. Sikhism 3. Buddhism 4. Christianity

(a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2 only (c) 1, 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: (c). Sikhs were added in 1956 and Buddhists in 1990.

22. A resolution to remove the Speaker of the Lok Sabha requires:

(a) a simple majority of members present (b) a majority of all the then members after 14 days' notice (c) a two-thirds majority (d) the President's approval

Answer: (b). Article 94(c).

23. Within how many days must the Rajya Sabha return a Money Bill?

(a) 7 (b) 14 (c) 30 (d) 60

Answer: (b). Article 109.

24. Which of the following is NOT a component of India's foreign exchange reserves?
(a) Gold (b) SDRs (c) Reserve Tranche Position (d) Non-resident deposits
Answer: (d). NRI deposits are liabilities of banks, not reserve assets.

25. Special Additional Excise Duty on petrol and diesel is:
(a) shared with States through the divisible pool (b) outside the divisible pool (c) a GST levy (d) collected by States
Answer: (b). Cesses and surcharges are not shared with States.

26. India's strategic crude oil reserves are located at: 1. Visakhapatnam 2. Mangaluru 3. Padur 4. Paradip
(a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 2 and 4 only (c) 1 and 4 only (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4
Answer: (a). Chandikhol and Padur expansions are planned; Paradip is not an existing SPR site.

27. The base year of the Index of Industrial Production is:
(a) 2004-05 (b) 2011-12 (c) 2022-23 (d) 2024
Answer: (b). CPI now uses 2024 and GDP 2022-23.

28. BHAVYA, approved in March 2026, aims to develop:
(a) 100 smart cities (b) 100 plug-and-play industrial parks (c) 100 airports (d) 100 logistics hubs at ports
Answer: (b). Modified UDAN targets 100 airports.

29. The Jal Jeevan Mission norm for rural drinking water supply is:
(a) 40 litres per person per day (b) 55 litres per person per day (c) 70 litres per person per day (d) 135 litres per person per day
Answer: (b). 135 litres is the urban benchmark.

30. PM-KISAN's 22nd instalment (March 2026) was released from:
(a) Varanasi (b) Gorakhpur (c) Guwahati (d) Bhagalpur
Answer: (c). PM-KISAN was launched at Gorakhpur in 2019.

31. Under India's NDC 3.0, the target share of non-fossil sources in installed electricity capacity by 2035 is:
(a) 50% (b) 55% (c) 60% (d) 70%
Answer: (c). The 2030 target of 50% has already been crossed.

32. The Great Indian Bustard is: 1. IUCN Critically Endangered 2. In Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act 3. The State bird of Gujarat
(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3
Answer: (a). It is the State bird of Rajasthan.

33. Plastic carry bags in India must have a minimum thickness of:
(a) 50 microns (b) 75 microns (c) 120 microns (d) 150 microns
Answer: (c). In force since 31 December 2022.

34. For the plains, IMD declares a heatwave when the maximum temperature is at least:
(a) 35 C (b) 37 C (c) 40 C (d) 45 C
Answer: (c). Along with a departure of 4.5 C or more from normal.

35. The CE20 engine powers which stage of LVM3?
(a) S200 strap-ons (b) L110 core stage (c) C25 cryogenic upper stage (d) Crew escape system
Answer: (c). It burns liquid hydrogen and liquid oxygen.

36. World TB Day (24 March) marks the anniversary of:
(a) the BCG vaccine (b) Robert Koch's announcement of the TB bacterium (c) the first TB sanatorium (d) WHO's founding
Answer: (b). Announced in 1882.

37. The BB84 protocol, linked to the 2026 Turing Award, is used in:
(a) blockchain (b) quantum key distribution (c) 5G networks (d) GPS
Answer: (b). Proposed by Bennett and Brassard in 1984.

38. A total lunar eclipse can occur only at:
(a) new moon (b) first quarter (c) full moon (d) last quarter
Answer: (c). The Moon passes into Earth's umbra.

39. INS Surat, which led Operation Urja Suraksha, belongs to:
(a) Project 15B destroyers (b) Project 17A frigates (c) Kalvari-class submarines (d) Project 75I
Answer: (a). It is the fourth and last Visakhapatnam-class destroyer.

40. The SAMADHAN doctrine relates to:

(a) cyber security (b) Left Wing Extremism (c) coastal security (d) disaster response

Answer: (b). Announced by the Home Ministry in 2017.

41. India won the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 by defeating:

(a) Australia (b) South Africa (c) New Zealand (d) England

Answer: (c). By 96 runs at Ahmedabad on 8 March.

42. In the World Happiness Report 2026, India's rank was:

(a) 99 (b) 104 (c) 116 (d) 126

Answer: (c). Up from 118th in 2025.

Mains Practice

- **Q1.** Revolutionary nationalism complemented rather than contradicted the Gandhian movement. Discuss with reference to Bhagat Singh and the HSRA. (GS I, 15 marks, 250 words)
- **Q2.** Why did salt become a powerful symbol in the Civil Disobedience Movement? (GS I, 10 marks, 150 words)
- **Q3.** Recent excavations in Tamil Nadu are changing our understanding of early urbanisation in India. Discuss. (GS I, 10 marks, 150 words)
- **Q4.** What does Earth's energy imbalance tell us about future warming? Discuss its implications for India. (GS I, 15 marks, 250 words)
- **Q5.** Should States regulate children's access to social media? Examine the constitutional and social issues. (GS I/II, 15 marks, 250 words)
- **Q6.** Examine the challenges the 2026 Gulf war poses for India's diaspora, energy security and strategic autonomy. (GS II, 15 marks, 250 words)
- **Q7.** Political change in Nepal brings both opportunities and risks for India. Discuss. (GS II, 10 marks, 150 words)
- **Q8.** Assess the significance of India's strategic partnerships with Nordic countries. (GS II, 10 marks, 150 words)
- **Q9.** Special intensive revision of electoral rolls must balance integrity and inclusion. Examine the role of the judiciary in this balance. (GS II, 15 marks, 250 words)
- **Q10.** The right to die with dignity is part of the right to life. Discuss with reference to recent judgments. (GS II, 10 marks, 150 words)
- **Q11.** Critically examine the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment, 2026 in the light of the NALSA judgment. (GS II, 15 marks, 250 words)
- **Q12.** Should Scheduled Caste status depend on religion? Critically examine. (GS II, 15 marks, 250 words)
- **Q13.** Discuss the case for a no-fault compensation framework for vaccine injuries in India. (GS II, 10 marks, 150 words)
- **Q14.** Decriminalisation of minor offences improves ease of living and business, but has limits. Discuss with reference to the Jan Vishwas laws. (GS II, 10 marks, 150 words)
- **Q15.** How did the West Asian conflict of 2026 affect India's external sector? What buffers does India need? (GS III, 15 marks, 250 words)
- **Q16.** Should fuel taxes be used to cushion oil price shocks? Discuss in the Indian context. (GS III, 10 marks, 150 words)
- **Q17.** Record harvests do not always mean prosperous farmers. Discuss. (GS III, 15 marks, 250 words)
- **Q18.** Evaluate the role of infrastructure schemes such as BHAVYA, Jal Jeevan Mission and UDAN in balanced regional development. (GS III, 15 marks, 250 words)
- **Q19.** Assess India's updated NDC for 2035 in terms of ambition and feasibility. (GS III, 15 marks, 250 words)
- **Q20.** Conservation of the Great Indian Bustard requires protecting grasslands, not just birds. Discuss. (GS III, 10 marks, 150 words)
- **Q21.** Heatwaves should be treated as a notified disaster. Do you agree? (GS III, 10 marks, 150 words)
- **Q22.** What steps should ISRO take to restore launch reliability and confidence after successive PSLV failures? (GS III, 10 marks, 150 words)
- **Q23.** India has made progress against TB, but the last mile is the hardest. Discuss. (GS III, 15 marks, 250 words)
- **Q24.** Why is human capacity the biggest constraint for India's quantum ambitions? (GS III, 10 marks, 150 words)
- **Q25.** The new race to the Moon raises legal and strategic questions. What should India's approach be? (GS III, 15 marks, 250 words)
- **Q26.** Operation Urja Suraksha shows the link between maritime security and energy security. Discuss. (GS III, 10 marks, 150 words)

- **Q27.** Ending Left Wing Extremism needs justice as much as security. Discuss. (GS III, 15 marks, 250 words)
- **Q28.** 'Compassion without procedure can be dangerous; procedure without compassion can be cruel.' Discuss with reference to end-of-life decisions. (GS IV, 10 marks, 150 words)

Official Sources to Bookmark

Scan or click to open the official sites used most for monthly current affairs.

Press Information Bureau
https://pib.gov.in
Scan or click to open the official source.

Ministry of External Affairs
https://www.mea.gov.in
Scan or click to open the official source.

PRS Legislative Research
https://prsindia.org
Scan or click to open the official source.

Election Commission of India
https://eci.gov.in
Scan or click to open the official source.

India Meteorological Department
https://mausam.imd.gov.in
Scan or click to open the official source.

51 | SOURCES REVISION

Sources and Notes

- **Iran war and India:** All India Radio (8, 13 and 21 March 2026); Vision IAS digest of The Hindu (10 March); AP via CDA Press and Fortune (8-9 March); ETV Bharat (16 March).
- **Nepal:** Citizen Digital; Ada Derana; WION (March 2026).
- **Raisina and Finland:** IANS (5 March); PM India joint statement; All India Radio (6, 15, 16 and 26 March).
- **Afghanistan:** All India Radio (17 March); Kabul Now.
- **Elections and SIR:** All India Radio (16 March); The Week (15 March); SC Observer monthly review (March 2026); Verdictum (1 April).
- **Supreme Court:** LiveLaw (Harish Rana, 11 March; industry reference); SCC Online and Verdictum (Rachana Gangu); All India Radio and The Quint (SC status, 24 March); SC Observer.
- **Parliament:** PRS Session Track and Bill summaries (Transgender, Jan Vishwas, CAPF); Scroll and Business Standard (Speaker motion, 11 March); All India Radio and ETV Bharat (Appropriation and Finance Bills).
- **Economy:** Business Standard and ETV Bharat (forex, 20 March and 3 April); PIB/MoSPI CPI release (12 March); MoSPI IIP releases; All India Radio (GST, OECD); Morung Express/PTI, Drishti and Moneylife (excise cut); All India Radio and ORF (LPG); SEBI press release 18/2026.
- **Agriculture:** Ministry of Agriculture estimates as reported by Global Agriculture (17 March); PIB backgrounder on PM-KISAN; ETV Bharat (wheat target).
- **Schemes:** Drishti IAS (Jal Jeevan Mission, 11 March); DTNext and NBMCW (BHAVYA); All India Radio (Modified UDAN, 25 March).
- **Environment and geography:** Drishti IAS, Energetica India and Swarajya (NDC 3.0); WMO (23 March); CIRES/NSIDC (26 March); Copernicus C3S; IMD press release (13 March); All India Radio, Drishti and Mongabay (Great Indian Bustard); Simpliance and PMF IAS (plastic rules); Australian Bureau of Meteorology (Narelle); USGS earthquake catalogue; All India Radio (critical minerals).
- **S&T:** All India Radio (CE20, 12 March; TB Day, 24 March); Drishti IAS (TB, NQM); Cornell CS (Turing Award); NASA blogs (Artemis II, 16-17 March); IMD and Business Today (lunar eclipse).
- **Security:** Vision IAS/The Hindu (Operation Urja Suraksha, 27 March); Naval News; All India Radio (Jagdalpur surrender, 11 March); Onmanorama (30 March).
- **History, culture, people and sport:** pwonlyias and All India Radio (Shaheed Diwas); Drishti IAS (Dandi March, T20 World Cup, Sahitya Akademi, Happiness Report, Abel Prize); SuperKalam/The Hindu (Tamil Nadu excavations); All India Radio (Saraswati Samman, All England); President's Secretariat (Governors); Vajiram (Oscars).

Please verify before use

- **Facts are as reported up to 31 March 2026.** The Iran war (a ceasefire came on 8 April), US tariffs, the West Bengal roll appeals and the Assembly elections continued into April.
- **Reported, not confirmed from primary documents:** NDC 3.0 targets (check the PIB release); plastic rule details (draft); Nepal seat totals; Brent crude levels; FPI outflows; rupee record low; LPG measures; crop-wise estimates; Tamil Nadu excavation details; the superconductivity result; IndiaAI GPU numbers.
- **Figures that differ between sources:** the date Mojtaba Khamenei was named (8 or 9 March); the launch date of Operation Urja Suraksha; the Jagdalpur bounty; TB treatment success (90% or 92%); the Sahitya Akademi announcement date.
- **Approximate map points:** Nepal border sites, Pancheshwar, the salt march sites, Tamil Nadu excavation sites and the bustard sites are placed approximately; all maps are location diagrams without boundaries.
- **Placed outside March:** the cheetahs from Botswana arrived on 28 February (covered in the February issue); the DAC approval of Rs 3.60 lakh crore was in February; the Khajuraho Dance Festival was in February.
- The ethics case study and essay themes are original practice material, not reports of real events.

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