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MARCH WEEK 1

02-03-2026 TO 07-03-2026

**INDIA, CANADA
INK URANIUM
DEAL
AS CARNEY
MEETS MODI**

**CENTRE INKS 5,000-
CR. DEAL TO
STRENGTHEN
MARITIME SECURITY**

**2,000 CR. ELECTRIC
BUS PROGRAMME**

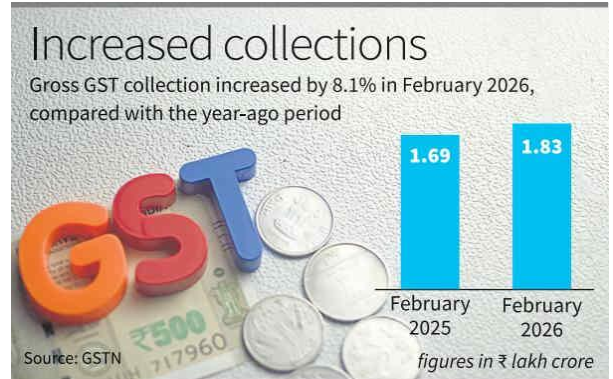
**GST COLLECTION
INCREASES BY
8.1%**

**ORGANIC PUSH
FOR
PANDAVAPURA
TALUK**

❖ GST collection increases by 8.1% to over ₹1.83 lakh crore

Context: Gross Goods and Services Tax (GST) collection increased by 8.1% to over ₹1.83 lakh crore in February, led by higher growth in revenues from imports and improved domestic sales.

- Gross domestic revenue rose 5.3% to about ₹1.36 lakh crore, while gross import revenue climbed 17.2% to ₹47,837 crore. Total refunds were up 10.2% at ₹22,595 crore.
- Total net GST collection stood at over ₹1.61 lakh crore, up 7.9% year-on-year.
- Net cess revenue was ₹5,063 crore, down from ₹13,481 crore in February last year.
- The GST rates on about 375 items were slashed, effective from September 2025. Also, four tax slabs of 5%, 12%, 18% and 28% were merged into two of 5% and 18%, with a highest 40% slab for a select few ultra luxury goods and tobacco products. The GST collections had initially dipped in the first month of tax cut implementation, with revenues declining to ₹1.7 lakh crore in November.
- The collection rose to ₹1.74 lakh crore in December and further to ₹1.93 lakh crore in January.



‘Consumption uptick’

- Deloitte India Partner M.S. Mani said GST collection figures reflected the fact that there had been a consumption uptick that had more than compensated for the rate reductions. However, the negative growth reported by major States such as Tamil Nadu (-6%), Madhya Pradesh (-8%), and Rajasthan (-1%), and the single digit growth below the national average of 8% reported by West Bengal (1%), Haryana (2%), Uttar Pradesh (5%), and Maharashtra (6%) would be a matter of concern, Mr. Mani said.
- EY India tax partner Saurabh Agarwal said this performance reaffirmed the strength of India’s consumption engine.

❖ M.P. CM releases gharials and turtles at Kuno National Park

- Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Sunday released gharials and turtles into the river at the Kuno National Park in Sheopur district, calling it an important step towards conservation. Mr. Yadav released 53 gharials and 25 turtles into the Kuno River, during a programme organised under the aegis of the National Chambal Sanctuary.

Context: India and Canada on Monday agreed to a \$1.9 billion, 10-year uranium supply deal for Indian nuclear power reactors, and agreed to conclude the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) this year, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi held talks with Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney in New Delhi in an effort to establish “strategic trust” and reset ties ruptured over the past few years.

- However, issues over the killing of Canadian-Khalistani activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar persisted after new reports that Canadian investigative agencies believe two officials in the Indian Consulate in Vancouver were linked to the case, a charge that India rejected.
- After the talks between the Prime Ministers, India and Canada announced a number of agreements including a Strategic Energy Partnership in the fields of renewable energy, LPG and uranium supplies, and cooperation in critical and emerging technologies, as well as MoUs on education and culture.
- They also issued the “Terms of Reference” for the CEPA or free trade negotiations, aiming to double bilateral trade by 2030. Canada also decided to join the India-led multilateral International Solar Alliance (ISA) and Global Biofuel Alliance as a member.
- The two leaders discussed the escalation of the conflict in West Asia, although they didn’t put out any joint understanding on the issue. Mr. Modi described the situation as one of “deep concern” and called for “diplomacy and dialogue” to resolve it. India had always called for peace and stability to be maintained, he said.
- On Friday, Mr. Carney, who spent the weekend in Mumbai, issued a statement supporting the U.S.’s strikes on Iran.
- Mr. Carney is the first Canadian Prime Minister to make a bilateral visit to India since his predecessor Justin Trudeau visited India in 2018, and then in 2023 to attend the G-20 summit. Both visits were fraught with tensions, especially over New Delhi’s concerns that the Canadian government is harbouring violent anti-India groups, including Khalistani leaders, and Ottawa’s accusations that Indian government officials are involved in “transnational repression” of these groups.
- In a joint statement issued on Monday, India and Canada agreed to strengthen security cooperation in a number of areas, including addressing “violent extremism, terrorism, organised crime”.
- On Monday, The Globe and Mail, a Canadian newspaper, quoted official sources saying that the Canadian Security Intelligence Services had “evidence” pointing to the involvement of two Indian officials at the Indian consulate in Vancouver in the Nijjar killing case, set to go to trial this year.
- When asked about the reports, Ministry of External Affairs Secretary P. Kumaran said India continues to reject all such charges.

❖ IIP growth in January slows down to 4.8%

Context: India's industrial activity slowed to a three-month low of 4.8% in January 2026, dragged down by a broad-based slowdown across manufacturing, mining, electricity, and consumer-facing sectors, official data showed.

- Growth in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) slowed from a 26-month high of 7.8% in December 2025, which was later revised upwards to 8%.
- Within the index, the manufacturing sector saw growth slow to 4.8% in January from 8.4% in December 2025 and 5.8% in January 2025. The only broad sector to show accelerating growth was infrastructure, which quickened to 13.7% in January 2026, the highest since August 2023.
- The mining sector saw growth slow to 4.3% in January, after accelerating in the previous two months. The electricity sector, too, saw growth slowing to 5.1% in January, down from 6.9% in December 2025. This was, however, faster than the 2.4% growth seen in the same month of last year.
- The capital goods sector continued decelerating, with growth coming in at 4.3% in January, the second consecutive month of slowing growth. Growth had been 10.1% two months earlier.
- The consumer durables goods sector saw growth slow to 6.3% in January, down sharply from the 12.4% in December. The consumer non-durables sector contracted 2.7% in January, down from a growth of 8.5% in the previous month.

❖ Govt., exporters review West Asia crisis disruption

Context: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry on Monday held a meeting with all stakeholder Ministries, key logistics and trade facilitation partners to review the emerging geo-political situation due to the conflict in West Asia and its potential impact on India's export-import cargo flows, including export ecosystem, the government said.

- The meeting was attended by representatives from logistics operators and shipping lines and forwarders, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs, the Department of Financial Services, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, the Reserve Bank of India, and various export promotion bodies.
- "The Government reiterated its readiness to facilitate trade operations, including procedural flexibility in export-related authorisations in cases of genuine disruption, coordination with Customs authorities to ensure smooth clearance, engagement with financial and insurance institutions to support exporter interests, and continued inter-ministerial coordination," the Ministry said in a release.
- During the meeting, the stakeholders presented an assessment of the evolving operational environment, including routing and transit-time changes, vessel scheduling adjustments, container and equipment availability, freight and insurance cost trends, and implications for time-sensitive exports.

Maintain predictability

- “The discussions covered the need to maintain predictability in cargo movement, minimise avoidable delays, and ensure seamless documentation and payment processes for exporters and importers,” a release added.
- The stakeholders agreed to maintain close, real-time coordination for monitoring route and capacity developments, surcharges and equipment availability. “India has successfully navigated multiple global disruptions and continues to strengthen supply chain resilience,” the government said
- Separately, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas also said it reviewed on Monday the supply of oil, natural gas and other petroleum products.

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❖ The U.S.-Israel attacks on Iran threaten global fuel trade

Context: Iran's retaliation to the 'pre-emptive strike' and the closing of the Strait of Hormuz have led to a surge in oil prices.

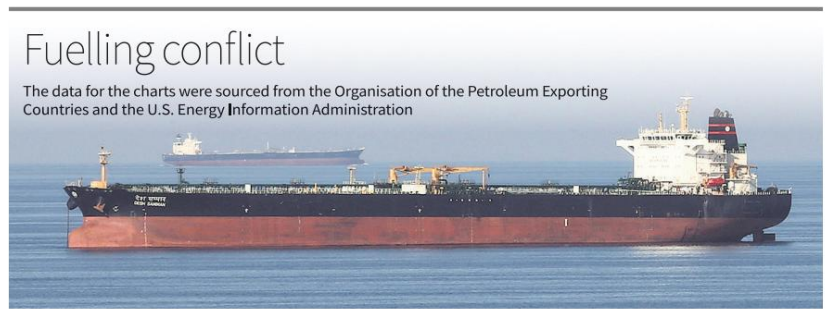
- With Iran targeting U.S. bases in other countries in the West Asian region, the U.S.-Israel attack has created a massive ripple effect extending well beyond the region, threatening global energy security.

- Following a drone attack from Iran on Monday, Qatar halted the production of liquefied natural gas at the world's largest export facility. The suspension of operations across refineries in other Gulf nations such as Saudi Arabia and Iraq have also been announced. Oil and gas prices have surged following the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a gateway to 20% of the world's oil exports from the Gulf.

- Oil prices soared to \$78.31 on Monday, almost 12% higher than a week ago (Chart 1). Prices were slowly inching up last week even as negotiations between the U.S. and Iran were ongoing, largely due to the military build-up by the U.S. in the region.

- According to the Iranian Red Crescent, the U.S.-Israeli attacks, dubbed Operation Epic Fury by the U.S.'s Pentagon, have killed more than 780 people in Iran as of March 3, hitting more than 500 locations since February 28. In retaliation, Iran fired missiles at Israel and nations across the region, particularly targeting U.S. bases in Qatar, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Jordan, pushing what was claimed to be a "pre-emptive strike" by the U.S. and Israel into an all-out regional war. This region accounts for 31% of the global oil production in 2024, and includes five of the top 10 oil-producing countries — Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Iraq, Iran, and Kuwait (Chart 2). West Asia accounted for 38% of global oil exports in 2024.

- Moreover, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps have announced the closure of the Strait of Hormuz which is a narrow channel connecting major oil-producing nations with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea. Ships transporting oil have been effectively halted through threats, mine-laying, and direct attacks by Iran's military, creating a chokepoint.



Fuelling conflict

The data for the charts were sourced from the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and the U.S. Energy Information Administration

Chart 1: Daily Brent crude oil prices in the last year. Figures in \$ per barrel. Oil prices soared to \$78.31 on Monday, almost 12% higher than a week ago



Chart 2: Top 10 producers of crude oil worldwide (1,000 barrels per day)

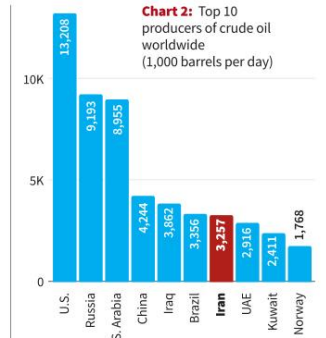


Chart 3: Volume of crude oil and petroleum transported through the Strait of Hormuz by select countries of origin

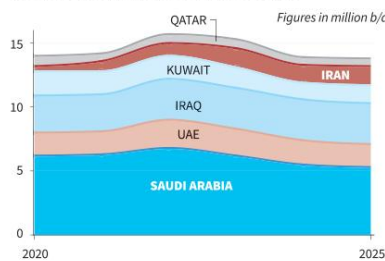
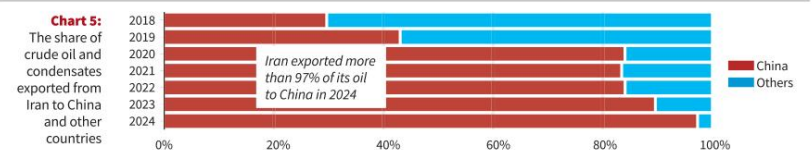
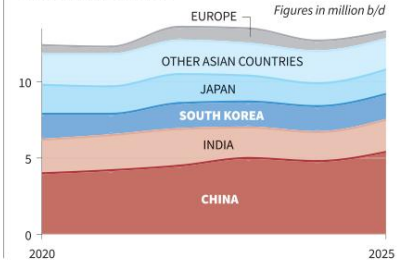


Chart 4: Volume of crude oil transported through the Strait of Hormuz by destination



- Several nations, including Saudi Arabia and Iraq, transport about 14 million barrels of crude oil and petroleum products through the Strait per day (Chart 3). According to energy consulting firm Kpler, the Strait represents 31% of all seaborne crude flows.

Impact on China, India

- The closure could stall supply to countries like China and India that import millions of barrels daily via the Strait. China received 5.4 million barrels of crude oil per day via the Strait in FY25Q1, the highest in volume. India followed at 2.1 million barrels per day (Chart 4).
- Iran, which exported more than 97% of its oil to China in 2024, was a major source of cheap crude for Beijing, a dependence precipitated by longstanding U.S.-led sanctions (Chart 5). Notably, the Strait's closure comes months after the disruption of China's supplies from Venezuela, another key source of discounted crude, following the U.S.'s invasion and naval blockade of the Latin American nation. With two of its major sources of cheap oil now effectively cut off, China faces mounting pressure on its energy security.
- About 56% of China's oil imports came from West Asian countries in 2024. However, China has sought to mitigate this dependence by storing Iranian oil in tankers and onshore inventories. Kpler estimates China has about 1.2 billion barrels in onshore commercial and strategic inventories as of Monday, with levels surging 30% since 2020. In India's case, the Ministry of Petroleum has said that the country has sufficient crude oil stocks to last up to 25 days. The Strait's closure can have detrimental effects if it persists.

❖ Centre inks ₹5,000-cr. deal to strengthen maritime security

Context: Coast Guard to get six ALH Mk-III helicopters from HAL; Russian Shtil missiles to be installed on Navy's frontline warships; acquisitions aim to enhance air defence and generate job opportunities.

- The Defence Ministry on Tuesday signed contracts worth ₹5,083 crore for the acquisition of six Advanced Light Helicopters Mk-III (maritime role) for the Indian Coast Guard and Shtil surface-to-air vertical launch missiles for the Indian Navy.
- The contract for the six choppers, along with operational role equipment, an engineering support package, and performance-based logistics support, valued at ₹2,901 crore, has been signed with Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd.

Indigenous push

- The purchase comes under the category of indigenously designed, developed, and manufactured products, the Ministry said.
- The twin-engine helicopters incorporate state-of-the-art features superior to the airborne platforms currently in operation, and are capable of undertaking a wide spectrum of maritime security missions from shore-based airfields as well as from ships at sea.

- Their induction is expected to significantly enhance the Indian Coast Guard's capability to ensure the safety and protection of artificial islands, offshore installations, and fishermen, as well as safeguarding the marine environment, the Ministry said. The project envisages supply of equipment from more than 200 MSMEs and is expected to generate approximately 65 lakh man-hours of employment.
- The contract reinforces the government's commitment to Aatmanirbhar Bharat, or resilient India, and the Make-in-India initiative, while strengthening the country's maritime security architecture, it added.
- Separately, the contract for the procurement of Shtil missiles and associated missile holding frames, valued at ₹2,182 crore, has been signed with JSC Rosoboronexport, a state-run company of the Russian Federation.
- The acquisition is aimed at substantially enhancing the air defence capabilities of warships on the front line against a wide spectrum of aerial threats, the Ministry said.

Rapid reaction

- The system will bolster the layered air defence architecture aboard Indian Navy platforms by providing rapid-reaction, all-weather engagement capability and improved survivability in contested maritime environments. The contract underscores the longstanding defence partnership between India and Russia.
- The contracts were inked in the presence of Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh at South Block in New Delhi.

❖ Healthcare workers' use of GenAI might risk leaks of sensitive patient data, study reveals

Context: With personal healthcare data being so freely used, stored and shared on digital systems and AI chatbots, the ever-present threat is of safety of such data.

- A recent recce by a professional agency has revealed that regulated data, including patient records and medical information, is especially at risk, accounting for 89% of all data policy violations occurring in the area of generative AI usage, significantly higher than the cross-industry average of 31%.
- Researchers at Netskope Threat Labs, monitoring key cyber threats facing healthcare organisations and their employees in the last 13 months, released their annual healthcare report on Tuesday and threw a spanner in the works.
- The report, which collected data between December 1, 2024, and December 31, 2025, with prior authorisation, indicated that deployment and usage of internal AI tools, which require stringent security guardrails, is already accelerating, and flagged the risks thereof.

Risk areas

- With healthcare staff adopting and using GenAI at a higher frequency than ever before, the risk of leaking sensitive patient data through prompts and documents shared online is very high. What makes the scenario worse is the use of personal GenAI accounts for verifying information.

- Why is this important to curb? Nearly 43% of healthcare workers are still using personal accounts at work, making it impossible for security systems to detect leaks, the report claims, while adding that healthcare institutions are trying to modify behaviour by getting employees to use approved proprietary software.
- As a result, the proportion of users using GenAI applications managed by the organisation has also increased during the same period, outpacing such development across industries.
- In healthcare, the report claimed, almost two in three organisations are detecting API (application programming interface) traffic to OpenAI and AssemblyAI (63% and 62%, respectively), and more than a third (36%) to Anthropic. Over the past year, more than half of healthcare organisations (56%) that deployed such policies blocked users from uploading files to personal Google Drive accounts, illustrating the frequency of potential data exposure in popular personal cloud applications. Google Drive was followed by Google Gmail (39%) and OneDrive (30%). This is important because attackers also continue to take advantage of the inherent trust employees put in cloud applications, and the files they might find in them. In healthcare, researchers identified several platforms that are frequently exploited by attackers for malware distribution.
- Ray Canzanese, director, Netskope Threat Labs, said: “While building defences against external threats is essential for healthcare organisations that have historically been prime targets for cybercriminals, addressing internal risk is equally important, especially in such a highly regulated industry and in the context of fast-paced cloud and AI adoption.”
- He added that deployment of company-approved applications along with relevant security tools that offer full visibility and control over usage and data movements, should be a priority for healthcare organisations.

❖ **Mandatory update: UIDAI finishes 1.2 crore biometric captures of schoolchildren**

Context: The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has said it has completed mandatory biometric updates for 1.2 crore children between the ages of seven and 15 through large-scale update drives conducted in schools. Updating Aadhaar biometrics is mandatory at least once for children between the ages of seven and 15, and the service is free of cost till October.

- The UIDAI said in a statement that it had “saturated more than 1,03,000 schools across India and helped millions of school students complete their mandatory biometric update (MBU) in Aadhaar at ease and comfort of their school campuses”, and that it had “rolled out the mission mode MBU drive for school children in September 2025, after a successful technological integration with the Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) application”.
- The initiative was undertaken in partnership with State education departments and “ecosystem partners,” the UIDAI said, adding that more than 4,000 machines were used to update children’s biometrics in schools.

- “Keeping biometric updated in children’s Aadhaar helps them while carrying out authentication for receiving benefits under various Government schemes, scholarships, wherever applicable, and registering in competitive and university examinations like NEET, JEE and CUET etc.,” the Aadhaar issuer said. “UIDAI has been encouraging parents and guardians to update their children’s biometrics in Aadhaar.” “In addition to camps held at schools, children can also complete their MBU by visiting any of the Aadhaar enrolment centres and Aadhaar Seva Kendras across India.”

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❖ Panel backs move to grant second official language status to Tulu

Context: A high-level committee constituted by the State government to study the framework adopted by Andhra Pradesh for recognising Urdu as a second official language has submitted its report, backing the State's move to accord similar status to Tulu.

- The six-member panel, headed by K.M. Gayatri, former Director of the Kannada and Culture Department, examined the procedures followed by the Andhra Pradesh government before granting second official language status to Urdu, officials said on Wednesday.
- The committee undertook a field visit to the Andhra Pradesh Secretariat on January 19 and 20 and held consultations with senior officials to understand the legal provisions, administrative mechanisms, and implementation benchmarks involved, they said.
- The panel also included Tharanatha Gatti Kapikad, president of the Karnataka Tulu Sahitya Academy, in an advisory capacity.
- The report, along with a detailed note outlining Tulu's historical, linguistic, and cultural significance, was submitted to J. Manjunath, Secretary, Kannada and Culture Department, at Vikas Soudha here.
- According to official sources, the study was aimed at gathering inputs to help Karnataka frame criteria and procedural guidelines if it decides to grant second official language status to Tulu.
- Senior officials present at the submission included B.S. Manjunath Swami, Director of the Kannada and Culture Department; representatives of the Law Department and the Personnel and Administrative Reforms Department; and office-bearers of various State academies.
- Tulu is predominantly spoken in the coastal districts of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi, and in parts of Kasaragod in neighbouring Kerala.
- The demand to accord it second official language status in Karnataka has been raised by cultural organisations for several years.

❖ State's HPV vaccination plan revived under Centre's national rollout

Context: The programme announced in Karnataka earlier could not take off as planned due to delays in vaccine procurement; around six lakh girls have been identified as eligible beneficiaries in State.

- Although Karnataka had announced a dedicated Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination drive last year for girls in mining-affected districts, the programme could not take off as planned due to delays in vaccine procurement. Now, with the Union government rolling out a nationwide HPV immunisation initiative, the State is set to begin implementation under the national framework.

- The State government had issued a Government Order on August 9 last year, following an announcement in the 2025–26 Budget, to administer two doses of the HPV vaccine to girls aged 9 to 14 in mining-affected districts as a preventive measure against cervical cancer. The initial phase was to cover eight taluks across four mining-affected districts – Gubbi, Chikkanayakanahalli and Tiptur in Tumakuru; Sandur in Ballari; Holalkere, Hosadurga and Molakalmuru in Chitradurga; and Hosapete in Vijayanagara.

KMERC grant

- A grant of ₹4.74 crore had been sanctioned through the Karnataka Mining Environment Restoration Corporation (KMERC), with each dose costing ₹1,260. Officials said extensive groundwork had been completed, and 37,470 eligible BPL beneficiaries — students in government and aided schools as well as out-of-school girls — had been identified.
- However, the vaccination drive was delayed due to changes in the official hierarchy at the Karnataka State Medical Supplies Corporation Ltd. (KSMSCL), which slowed the procurement process.
- On February 28, the Union government formally launched a nationwide HPV vaccination programme, inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Ajmer, Rajasthan. Following this, Karnataka initiated its State-level rollout last Saturday at K.C. General Hospital.

2.54L single dose vials

- Under the national programme, a single-dose HPV vaccine will be administered to girls aged 14 to 15. The State has received 2.54 lakh single-dose vials from the Centre, and distribution to districts is currently under way. The campaign is expected to gather momentum in the coming days.
- In Karnataka, around six lakh girls have been identified as eligible beneficiaries. Nearly 1.15 crore girls across the country in the 14-15 age group are expected to benefit from the programme.
- The vaccine will be administered through Ayushman Arogya Mandirs (Primary Health Centres), Community Health Centres, sub-district and district hospitals, and government medical colleges. In Bengaluru, the drive will be conducted in all government facilities, including hospitals attached to Bangalore Medical College and Research Institute and Bowring and Lady Curzon Medical College and Research Institute.

Three-month campaign

- The three-month campaign will be implemented in phases to ensure that all identified beneficiaries are covered. The Health Department has stepped up awareness efforts at the grassroots level to encourage families to utilise the free vaccination facility.
- Cervical cancer remains one of the leading causes of cancer-related illness among women. The HPV vaccine protects against the Human Papillomavirus, a major cause of the disease.

❖ India backs a Myanmar-led peace process: Jaishankar

Context: India supports a “Myanmar-led and Myanmar-owned” peace process that can deliver lasting peace and development for all in the Southeast Asian country, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said.

- A military-backed party had won the Myanmar general election in January.
- Mr. Jaishankar was speaking virtually at the inauguration of the Sarsobeikman Literary Centre building in the heart of Yangon. The building has been constructed with New Delhi's assistance.
- He highlighted the importance India attaches to its ties with Myanmar saying the country lies at the confluence of New Delhi's three key foreign policy priorities — 'Neighbourhood First', 'Act East', and MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions).
- Mr. Jaishankar said India and Myanmar have been bound together for centuries by spirituality, kinship and geography, as well as by language and literature.

❖ India ranks second globally in childhood obesity: study

Context: China, India and the U.S. each have over 10 million children with obesity; the World Obesity Atlas' report highlights risk factors such as poor physical activity levels and sub-optimal breastfeeding

- Nearly 15 million children aged five to nine and more than 26 million children aged 10 to 19 in India were overweight or obese in 2025, according to the World Obesity Atlas, 2026 released on World Obesity Day, which falls on March 4.
- The World Obesity Federation, a global organisation focused on obesity, warned that the world was set to miss the 2025 global target to halve the rise in childhood obesity. Though the deadline is now being extended to 2030, most countries remain off track, and India is no exception, it said.
- Over 200 million school-age children aged five to 19 who are overweight and living with obesity are concentrated in just 10 countries across the world. By the end of 2025, eight countries were projected to have over 10 million children with high Body Mass Index (BMI). China, India and the United States each had over 10 million children living with obesity. India stood second only to China in the number of children with high BMI (41 million high BMI; 14 million obesity). China led the two categories with 62 million children with high BMI and 33 million with only obesity. The U.S. had 27 million children with high BMI and 13 million with obesity.
- This rise in childhood obesity is expected to have serious health consequences. The Atlas pointed out that in India, the number of children with disease indicators linked to high BMI is projected to rise substantially by 2040.
- The report also highlighted several preventable risk factors across different age groups in the country. It noted that 74% of adolescents aged 11 to 17 failed to meet recommended physical activity levels, while only 35.5% of school-age children (primary and secondary) receive school meals. Nearly 32.6% of infants aged one to five months experience sub-optimal breastfeeding. Among women aged 15 to 49, 13.4% have high BMI and 4.2% live with Type 2 diabetes. Children aged six to 10 consumed sugary drinks, averaging up to 50 ml per day. The Atlas found that over one in five (20.7%)

children worldwide are living with obesity and are overweight. This was an increase from 14.6% in 2010. The Federation predicts that by 2040, a total of 507 million children will be living with obesity or be overweight.

Call for action

- There is an emphasis on governments to act immediately. Johanna Ralston, chief executive of the World Obesity Federation, said, “The increase in childhood obesity worldwide shows we have failed to take seriously a disease that affects one in five children. Governments urgently need to step up prevention and management efforts for children living with overweight and obesity, and ensure that they receive the care they need.”
- It has called for strong action to reverse current trends, including taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages and restrictions on marketing to children.

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❖ BEL ties up with Bellatrix Aerospace to design, develop satellite systems

Context: Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) and Bengaluru based space startup Bellatrix Aerospace have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to collaborate on the design, development and manufacturing of satellite systems and payloads.

- “The collaboration brings together BEL’s decades of experience in developing advanced electronics and mission-critical payloads for defence and strategic applications with Bellatrix Aerospace’s innovative capabilities in satellite propulsion and satellite subsystems.
- By combining their complementary strengths, the partnership aims to advance indigenous capabilities in satellite platforms designed for Very Low Earth Orbit (VLEO) operations,” BEL said.
- It added that this partnership is expected to be transformational in accelerating innovation and strengthening India’s capabilities in building next-generation satellite systems for VLEO.
- BEL further said that as space continues to play an increasingly strategic role in today’s scenario, partnering with innovative deep-tech startups like Bellatrix allows BEL to combine its expertise in defence electronics with emerging space technologies.
- “Such collaborations are essential to strengthen India’s indigenous capabilities in the evolving space sector. Together, the two companies aim to develop integrated satellite solutions that support India’s strategic and civilian space missions,” the defence PSU said.

❖ HC directs inclusion of left-out 55 sq. km reserve forest area into Kappatagudda Wildlife Sanctuary

Context: The Bench found an anomaly in the area of the sanctuary, as was approved by KSWB and the notification on declaration of sanctuary; the petitioners had claimed that the reduced area was declared as a sanctuary to benefit a few units.

- The High Court of Karnataka has directed the State government to issue a further notification to include the left-out areas of the Kappatagudda reserve forest as part of the Kappatagudda Wildlife Sanctuary in Gadag district, as per the resolution passed at the 11th meeting of the Karnataka State Wildlife Board (KSWB) in January 2019.
- A Division Bench comprising Chief Justice Vibhu Bakhru and Justice C.M. Poonacha issued the direction after noticing that only 244.15 sq. km area was declared as a wildlife sanctuary in the May 16, 2019, notification, even though the KSWB had on January 9, 2019, unanimously resolved to declare the entire 300 sq. km of Kappatagudda reserve forest as wildlife sanctuary.

Petition dismissed

- The Bench issued the directions while dismissing petitions filed by Shivaganga Stone Crushing Industries and other operators of stone-crushing units on patta lands in the immediate vicinity of the fourth block of the Kappatagudda reserved forest, challenging the May 16, 2019, notification.

- The petitioners had contended that their business was affected due to the declaration of 244.15 sq. km of areas as a sanctuary, as their land comes under the eco-sensitive zone around the Kappatagudda Wildlife Sanctuary.
- They had sought a direction from the government to confine the boundary of the Kappatagudda Wildlife Sanctuary to only 178 sq. km, as was initially proposed in 2017. The petitioners had claimed an increase in the sanctuary area beyond 178 sq. km was without the approval of the National Board of Wildlife.

'To benefit few'

- As the Bench found the anomaly in the area of the sanctuary, as was approved by the Board and the notification on declaration of sanctuary, the petitioners had claimed that the reduced area was declared as a sanctuary to benefit a few units, which are owned by influential persons.
- In response to the court's query on why the area was reduced, the government counsel had told the Bench that no document is available regarding any decision to reduce the area of the sanctuary, while pointing out that there was an error in recording the area of Kappatagudda reserve forest as 300 sq. km when actual area is 288 sq. km.
- Reducing the area of the sanctuary is ex facie arbitrary as it was contrary to the decision of the Board meeting chaired by the Chief Minister, and acted upon by the State government, the Bench said while directing the government to issue a notification to add the left-out area of 55 sq. km to the sanctuary.

Govt.'s view

- However, the Bench clarified that if the government is of the view that it is necessary or expedient to exclude a part of the area from the boundaries of the sanctuary, then this order would not preclude the government to take a decision on altering the boundaries of the sanctuary (which includes the left-out portions of the reserve forest), in accordance with the law.

❖ Mascots Pragati, Vikas to serve as the friendly faces of Census 2027

Context: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday unveiled two mascots, Pragati and Vikas, for the upcoming Population Census 2027. Mr. Shah also soft-launched four digital tools to be used during the exercise. This will be the first Census that will be digital, and the first to allow self-enumeration and enumeration of caste.

- The Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) developed the advanced digital platforms to facilitate enumeration operations across the country. Census 2027 is to be conducted in two phases — Houselisting Operations (HLO), and Population Enumeration.
- The mascots Pragati (female enumerator) and Vikas (male enumerator) have been unveiled to serve as friendly faces of the Census 2027, a statement by the Ministry of Home Affairs said.
- The four digital platforms soft launched by Mr. Shah are — Houselisting Block Creator (HLBC) web application, HLO mobile app, Self-Enumeration (SE) portal, and Census Management and Monitoring System (CMMS) portal.



Amit Shah launches digital tools and the mascots Pragati and Vikas for Census 2027, in New Delhi. @PIB_INDIA

Mascots Pragati, Vikas to serve as the friendly faces of Census 2027

❖ India condoles Khamenei death as Misri visits Embassy of Iran

Context: The Supreme Leader was killed in U.S.-Israel strikes; Jaishankar dials Iranian counterpart Araghchi; Iranian interlocutor says Tehran is facing an ‘existential war’ and that access to the Strait of Hormuz for energy buyers remains uncertain.

- India condoled the death of Iran’s Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was assassinated in the opening salvo of the U.S.-Israel war on Iran on February 28.
- Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri signed the book of condolence that was opened at the Embassy of Iran here, as External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar held a round of telephone conversation with his Iranian counterpart, Seyed Abbas Araghchi.
- The outreach from India coincided with remarks from a senior Iranian interlocutor who announced here that Iran is facing an “existential war” and that access to the Strait of Hormuz for energy buyers remains uncertain in the current circumstances.
- “Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri visited the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran and signed the condolence book, on behalf of the people and the Government of India, on the demise of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Syed Ali Khamenei,” said External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal.
- India had so far remained silent following the assassination of Khamenei.

- The conversations between Indian and Iranian officials coincided with senior Iranian officials expressing disappointment over India's unwillingness to condemn the assassination of Khamenei as officials in the External Affairs Ministry expressed disappointment over Iran targeting oil tankers, which left at least three Indian sailors dead.
- The overall state of current India-Iran relations came up during the Jaishankar-Araghchi telephone conversation, with sources indicating that India is urging for an "early cessation of hostilities" and conveying to all sides that safety of Indian citizens in the West Asian states and on oil tankers near the Strait of Hormuz is of utmost interest.

Iranian strikes

- A senior Iranian diplomatic source, however, argued that Tehran's retaliation to the U.S.-Israeli attacks was "precise and deliberate" and was aimed at the military and intelligence assets of its adversaries. The blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, the source said, was part of Iran's strategy to deal with the "existential threat" posed by the U.S.-Israel coalition.
- He said that Iran's relation with India had been "consistent" and that Iran expected that "third party" like Israel or the U.S. would never be able to influence that relation. He expressed disappointment that third parties are at present a reality in India-Iran relations.
- "All our actions are based on what we had told our neighbours before the beginning of the war. We had told them that this is what we would have to do if your airbases and assets are used to attack us," said the official pointing to the attacks on U.S. military bases in the West Asian states and the choking of the Strait of Hormuz.
- "We stop attacks as soon as they stop. We were pragmatic and that is why we went for negotiation with the U.S. but now that they started the war we are left with no other strategy apart from resisting. We have to resist and that is our only strategy," said the senior Iranian official.
- Explaining Iran's position on the situation at the Strait of Hormuz, he pointed to the insurance companies that are backing out of extending insurance to cargo vessels and said, "It is not just Iran's Army that has closed the Strait of Hormuz." He said there was a moral and ethical requirement on every stakeholder to condemn the killing of Khamenei, saying, "We call upon everyone, including India, to condemn the killing of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. That they can decapitate or assassinate the head of another state at will is a breach of law and this breach of law is going to haunt everyone."
- Trying to balance the interest of the West Asian states that host more than a crore Indian expatriate workers and Iran, which controls the Strait of Hormuz, India has maintained a cautious approach in the conflict. Against this backdrop, India has reached out to multiple suppliers to ensure that the energy shockwave of the conflict is absorbed without disrupting the Indian economy.

Context: An ICMR study of whether a single dose of Indian-made Cervavac vaccine generates a stable immune response compared with Gardasil will determine if it can be officially recommended.

- A relaxation by the World Health Organization (WHO) in the prescribed dosage for the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccine and 'free' doses may have pushed back the inclusion of an Indian-made vaccine into the national programme to inoculate children against HPV.
- This is despite the Health Ministry in 2023 committing to preparing the Indian-made vaccine for inclusion in the Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP), publicly available documents suggest.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on February 28, launched a campaign in Ajmer, Rajasthan, to vaccinate 1.15-crore 14-year-old girls with Gardasil-4, developed by Merck and available in India since 2009. It is one of the most well-tested HPV vaccines and part of the immunisation programmes in several countries.
- The inclusion of Gardasil-4, however, pushed back Cervavac, an indigenously developed quadrivalent HPV vaccine. Following Phase 2/3 trials of the vaccine that showed it was "non inferior" to Gardasil, it was officially launched in September 2022 when Science Minister Jitendra Singh lauded it as an example of the private sector and the government coming together to create an affordable product.
- Reports in January 2023 said that the Health Ministry was planning to float a global tender for 16.02 crore doses of HPV vaccine in April towards the immunisation programme rollout in 2026. The minutes of a meeting of the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI) — India's apex advisory body on vaccination — in July 2023 note that "...indigenously developed qHPV vaccine (Cervavac) may be considered for introduction in the UIP as a two-dose regimen".
- In the same meeting, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) had also stated, "...The introduction of the vaccine has been approved, and MoHFW is currently working on its implementation in the UIP." However no such tender came.
- The absence of Cervavac from India's current UIP is due to an ongoing study led by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), which is testing whether a single dose of Cervavac generates enough protective antibodies and generates a stable immune response compared with a single dose of Gardasil vaccine. The results of this study are only expected in 2027, N.K. Arora, a member of the NTAGI told The Hindu.
- Until early 2022, the WHO recommended a two-dose schedule for administering HPV vaccines for girls in the 9-15 age group for maximum generation of antibodies.



India has launched a campaign to vaccinate 1.15-crore 14-year-old girls with the Gardasil-4 HPV vaccine. PTI

- However faced with “...stagnating pace of introductions, the low HPV vaccine coverage in many countries and the gap with the 2030 target of 90% coverage ...” a Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) of Immunisation of the WHO, recommended in March 2022 that national immunisation programmes could use either a two-dose or a single-dose vaccination schedule.

Why choose Dr. Rajkumar IAS/KAS Academy?



❖ Multi-pronged approach to tackle inequalities, push to develop AI

Context: The Karnataka Budget for 2026–27 has adopted a multi-pronged approach through sectoral and issue-based measures to address socioeconomic inequalities, combining short-term welfare schemes with long-term investments aimed at accelerating infrastructure growth.

- The Budget focused on addressing the skill deficit among youth and promoting the adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, who presented the State Budget in the Legislative Assembly on Friday, proposed a total outlay of ₹4,48,004 crore, while continuing allocations of over ₹50,000 crore for the government’s guarantee schemes.
- The Budget — the 17th presented by Mr. Siddaramaiah in his political career — estimated a revenue deficit of ₹22,957 crore, making it the third consecutive deficit Budget tabled by the ruling Congress government. It has proposed borrowings of ₹1.32 lakh crore, compared with ₹1.16 lakh crore in 2025-26.
- While the Budget outlines measures to mobilise revenues for welfare and development programmes, it also raises questions about the long-term sustainability of the fiscal path chosen by the government.
- Highlighting the “11G Economic Model” for Karnataka’s development — encompassing the guarantee economy, gig economy, green economy, grassroots economy, geographical equality — the Budget emphasises principles of equity, inclusivity, and justice associated with the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi and economist Amartya Sen.
- Mr. Siddaramaiah said the government is pursuing a developmental path that balances growth, welfare, and fiscal discipline, adding that the Budget does not propose any new taxes.
- Responding to growing unrest among youth over lack of job opportunities, the Budget has proposed to fill 56,432 vacant posts in departments. It also seeks to promote self-employment among youth belonging to tribal and minority communities through the Entrepreneurship Development Scheme, which offers financial aid of 75% or a maximum subsidy of ₹4 lakh to establish food kiosks.
- To bridge the gap between education and employable skills and to harness the State’s ‘demographic dividend’, the Budget proposed a skill training academy in Hubballi-Dharwad, an on-line employment exchange for skill-based job opportunities, and the Karnataka Quality Upgradation for Employment and Skills Transformation Project (₹1,386 crore).
- It also focused industry-academia collaboration and the strengthening of infrastructure in industrial training institutes.
- Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a key focus area in the Budget with several initiatives aimed at integrating advanced technologies across agriculture, education, governance and start-up ecosystem.

Karnataka Budget 2026-27

Total outlay ₹4,48,004 crore Revenue expenditure ₹3,38,007 crore	Capital expenditure ₹74,682 crore	Revenue deficit ₹22,957 crore	Liabilities ₹8,24,389 crore (24.94% of GSDP)
	Loan repayment ₹35,316 crore	Fiscal Deficit ₹97,449 crore (2.95% of GSDP)	State's own tax revenue ₹2,20,000 crore
	Government of India receipts ₹79,050 crore	Borrowings ₹1,32,000 crore	

- In collaboration with IIT-Dharwad, it has proposed to develop an AI-enabled self-learning digital tutor for around 12.28 lakh students from Classes 8 to 12 (₹5 crore).
- About 15 new high-demanded courses, including AI-generated programmes, will be introduced in 11 government polytechnics and engineering colleges in Chitradurga. In addition, modern AI data labs will be established in 60 government colleges in tier-2 and tier-3 cities (₹10 crore) to improve youth employability.
- A Centre of Excellence for AI will be set up at IIIT, Raichur, along with two more centres in Bengaluru. It has planned to introduce an AI-based facial recognition attendance system in anganwadis, schools, colleges and hostels across Karnataka.
- In the 205-page Budget, Mr. Siddaramaiah accused the Centre of “doing injustice” to Karnataka by “disregarding the principles of cooperative federalism”.
- He said the GST rate restructuring in September last year had reduced the State’s revenue collections by ₹10,000 crore this year and could lead to a ₹15,000 crore loss in 2026-27.
- The government also announced the creation of three more development corporations, including one for Buddhists, and a separate Commission of Scheduled Tribes.

❖ Budget announces excise duty based on alcohol in beverage

Context: In what is aimed at reforming Excise sector and that could have an impact on prices of alcohol sold in Karnataka, the State government on Friday announced that it would step away from regulating prices of alcohol and introduce Excise duty structure based on Alcohol in Beverage (AIB). Over the next three to four years, the State will bring in a system of levying uniform Excise duty based on the alcohol content per litre.

- The AIB is an Excise duty structure that is globally recognised as the gold standard for alcohol taxation and this will be introduced from April 2026, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced in the 2026-2027 Budget on Friday, in which he set a revenue target of ₹45,000 crore for the Excise department. So far, ₹36,492 crore has been collected, reflecting a growth of 12.7 % till February this year. “The government will ensure that the price changes are gradual and not disruptive,” he said.
- Under the new policy, the government-administrated price fixation will be completely deregulated and product placement within slabs will be left to the producers based on market considerations. While the government had rationalised and reduced the Excise duty slabs last year from 18 to 16 slabs, the Chief Minister announced that it would be further reduced to 8 slabs.
- Sources said that the announcements were part of reforms in Excise sector that commenced last year. “We are hoping that this would increase excise revenue, but will take time. Due to rate rationalisation, Excise revenue from super premium brands have gone up by 50% and premium brands have gone up by 30% though they do not contribute heavily to overall excise collection.” On deregulation of prices, sources said, “There is no reason why the government should fix prices of alcohol.”

- Welcoming the reforms, The International Spirits and Wine Association of India Chief Executive Officer Sanjit Padhi said, “Market-determined pricing allows market conditions to define prices in a way that benefits consumers, government and suppliers alike. The reduction of slabs will provide brands greater headroom to set appropriate pricing for consumers.”

❖ **Social media curbs for children below 16, reintroduction of student union polls**

Context: With the objective of preventing adverse effects of increasing mobile phone usage among children, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced in his 17th State Budget that usage of social media will be banned for children under the age of 16.

- He also announced the re-introduction of student union elections in colleges and universities, after it was banned nearly four decades ago.
- He said it would “foster leadership, responsibility, and democratic values among students”. Both have been much-debated contentious issues.
- In a recent meeting with the Vice-Chancellors of State public universities chaired by the Governor, the Chief Minister had proposed a mobile ban for schoolchildren and sought opinion from all stakeholders. There has been public debate on this issue since, and experts are divided on the impact and feasibility of a blanket ban.
- Mr. Siddaramaiah in his presentation did not spell out a road map for implementation of the ban.
- A similar ban on social media for children below the age of 16 was made into a law in Australia in December 2025.
- Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu told the State’s Assembly on Friday that the State will restrict access to social media for children below the age of 13 over the next 90 days.
- Responding to the proposal, Associated Management of Primary and Secondary Schools in Karnataka has welcomed the move, but emphasised the need for planning its implementation. “The government should form an expert committee, obtain a detailed report regarding its implementation, prepare appropriate Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and implement them,” urged Shashi Kumar D., general secretary of the association.
- Student union elections were banned in the State decades ago, following involvement of rowdy sheeters in the elections. However, Rahul Gandhi, Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, has been advocating reintroducing them. Following this, the KPCC had constituted a committee of legislators headed by Ministers for Higher Education and Medical Education, which held multiple stakeholder meetings.

Rohith Vemula Act

- The Budget also announced that the much-awaited Rohith Vemula Act will be enacted to prevent caste-based atrocities in the higher educational institutions. It was part of the Congress’s manifesto for 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

❖ State's agri sector clocks a robust growth of 9.1%

Context: Karnataka's agricultural sector has registered a robust growth rate of 9.1% in 2025-26, bolstered by a conducive environment, including good monsoon.

- Karnataka's agri sector clocks a robust growth of 9.1%, up from previous years
- The State Budget has set a target of disbursing interest-free agricultural loans to the tune of ₹30,000 crore to 38 lakh farmers
- Karnataka's agriculture sector has registered a robust growth rate of 9.1% in 2025-26, bolstered by a conducive environment, including good monsoon. The rate stood at 4% in 2024-25 and was in the negative (- 4.9%) in 2023-24. The subsequent good monsoon seasons marked by rich harvests have contributed to a healthy growth rate of the sector.
- However, agricultural experts insist that this healthy growth rate would not mean much to farmers unless there are schemes to ensure they become beneficiaries of it.
- "The need of the hour is to take measures to ensure that the benefits of growth reach farmers," said noted agricultural economist Dr. T.N. Prakash Kammaradi. "It can happen only when there is a system for ensuring assured prices to their crops and proper market linkages. This can be done only through positive interventions at the post-production stage," he observed.
- The State Budget has set a target of disbursing interest-free agricultural loans to the tune of ₹30,000 crore to 38 lakh farmers.
- The government has disbursed interest-free loans to the tune of ₹22,000 crore to 25 lakh farmers till February 2026, as against the target of disbursing ₹28,000 crore loan to 37 lakh farmers in 2025-26.

Eco-friendly practices

- The State Budget has announced a few schemes to support eco-friendly agricultural practices, along with measures to strengthen the initiatives to back cultivation of millets.
- The Budget has proposed the Vasudhamruta programme to promote eco-friendly and sustainable agricultural practices by enhancing the organic carbon content of soil along with its physical, chemical, and biological properties. The programme will be implemented over the next three years. Similarly, the Sasya Sanjeevini scheme has been announced to identify pests and diseases at an early stage and to provide timely advise to farmers on control measures such as the use of eco-friendly bio-control agents and bio-pesticides, along with other safer control measures.
- The Budget has proposed to strengthen the Millet Hub, which is being established to promote millets and organic produce in the State. The hub, which had been announced in the previous Budget, will now be developed into a self-sustaining institution.
- The Agriculture Department's Raitha Kare Kendra (Farmer Call Centre) is set to be upgraded using AI technology to provide farmers quick access to reliable information on weather, markets etc.
- To fight the menace of spurious farm inputs, the Budget has announced constitution of a State-level advisory panel to recommend measures to fight the supply of spurious, unsafe, or defective seeds and pesticides to farmers, and to curb the sale of agricultural inputs at prices exceeding market rates.

❖ 1.16 lakh hectares of land to be brought under irrigation

Context: The State Budget has proposed to prioritise the completion of 37 ongoing schemes with an aim to bring 1.16 lakh hectares of land under irrigation. The proposed works include 12 irrigation projects, 22 tank-filling schemes, and extension, repair, and modernisation projects that are nearing completion.

- The Budget further stated that 75 irrigation works amounting to ₹8,045 crore will be implemented in the Krishna, Cauvery, Godavari, and other river basins.
- Describing the dismissal of petitions filed by Tamil Nadu by the Supreme Court with regard to the Mekedatu balancing reservoir project as a “significant legal victory” for Karnataka, the Budget says that a revised Detailed Project Report (DPR) along with a proposal for forest clearance will be submitted shortly to the Centre. It states that the remaining 18.73-km-long canal works in the second phase of the Yettinahole Comprehensive Drinking Water Project will be completed shortly. It says that the land acquisition process for increasing the height of Almatti Dam from 519.6 m to 524.256 m will commence this year.
- The Budget has reiterated that the replacement of 33 dilapidated gates of the Tungabhadra Dam with new gates will be completed before the onset of monsoon.

❖ ₹2,000 cr. electric bus programme with World Bank aid announced

Context: The government also plans to induct 4,000 electric buses into the fleets of various State-run transport corporations

- As Karnataka’s State-run road transport corporations continue their transition towards electric buses, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday announced a ₹2,000-crore electric bus programme with assistance from the World Bank while presenting the State Budget for 2026–27.
- He said that under the programme, 32 electric bus depots of the Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTCL) and 62 depots of other State Road Transport Corporations will be developed.
- Under the Karnataka Electric Bus Programme (KEBP), the government plans to significantly expand the electric bus network across the State by developing new infrastructure and inducting thousands of buses into the public transport fleet. In addition, the government plans to induct 4,000 electric buses into the fleets of various State-run transport corporations as part of the initiative to promote sustainable and environmentally friendly public transport. The Chief Minister also announced that 1,000 additional diesel buses will be procured in 2026–27 to further strengthen public transport services.

Arrears

- Meanwhile, addressing the long-pending demands of employees of State-run road transport corporations regarding wage revisions and arrears, the Chief Minister blamed the previous BJP government for the delay.

- He said the present government had decided to sympathetically consider the demand. “Our government has decided to pay the salary arrears for the period from January 1, 2021, to February 28, 2023. Further, salaries will be revised with effect from April 1, 2025. An amount of ₹1,271 crore will be provided for payment of these arrears,” he added. Transport corporation employees across Karnataka have held several protests in recent months demanding the clearance of arrears and revision of wages.

Transport revenue rises

- Meanwhile, the Transport Department has also recorded revenue growth, collecting ₹11,630 crore up to February 2026, an increase of 8.5% compared to the previous year. Mr. Siddaramaiah said the department has set a revenue target of ₹15,500 crore for 2026–27. “Vehicle sales have shown a strong recovery in the current year. Two-wheeler sales have increased by 13%, and car sales have increased by 4% up to January, compared to the corresponding period of the previous year. The revenue collection target from motor vehicles for the financial year 2026–27 is ₹15,500 crore,” he said.

❖ Comprehensive coastal tourism plan in Budget

Context: Recognising the tourism potential of Karnataka’s coastal districts, the State government plans to prepare a “Comprehensive Coastal Tourism Development Plan”, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced in the Budget on Friday. Connectivity to key attractions will be enhanced through sea plane and heli-taxi services, developed in collaboration with private stakeholders, while joy rides and river cruises will also be promoted, he said.

- In January, Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar had announced that the State government plans to unveil a separate tourism policy for coastal Karnataka after consulting with stakeholders. He noted that despite the region’s pristine beaches, rich knowledge base, and natural resources, tourism in coastal Karnataka has not developed as expected.
- The Budget has allocated ₹1 crore specifically to train tourist guides, taxi and auto drivers, and security staff to ensure that tourists visiting the State have a pleasant experience.
- Furthermore, to preserve the State’s heritage, 1,000 ‘smaraka mitra’ (firms, NGOs designated for conserving, maintaining, and developing tourist amenities at a site for at least five years) will be trained and accredited by the Tourism Department to protect 844 protected monuments and 1,000 unprotected monuments across Karnataka.

Anjanadri Hill

- A ₹100 crore plan to develop Anjanadri Hill in Koppal district into a world-class tourist destination will proceed after getting the required forest and environmental clearances from the Union government, and concurrence of UNESCO, the Chief Minister said.
- The Gadag-Kappatagudda-Lakkundi tourism circuit will be developed. A ropeway in PPP mode will connect Mullayangiri, Seethalayyagiri, and Kaimara in Chikkamagaluru district, aimed at boosting tourism in the region.
- Moreover, ₹10 crore has been set aside for completing the remaining infrastructure development of the Karnataka Exhibition Authority in Mysuru.

Allocation for Bengaluru
₹ 7,000 cr.
 Allocation for Bengaluru remains the same as 2025-26, ₹4,000 crore goes to B-SMILE for big ticket infra projects, ₹3,000 crore to five corporations

The intermediate ring road is a good development though it must be accompanied by local area development to avoid it being just a road strip like the Outer Ring Road.
 V. RAVICHANDAR, MEMBER, Brand Bengaluru Committee

Just ₹500 crore at this stage does not show great interest from the State government. The Chief Minister has not spoken about Corridor-1, which is the most important corridor.
 RAJKUMAR DUGAR, founder of Citizens for Citizens

Bengaluru's ₹7,000 crore allocation shows intent, but it must balance essential needs against non-urgent projects. We welcome pedestrian-focused upgrades.
 SRIKANTH NARASIMHAN, Founder of Bengaluru NaraViranna Party

Budget highlights
 Hundred Miyawaki parks will be developed in selected urban areas by densely planting native species

Bengaluru city corporations will mobilise resources for development works by issuing municipal bonds based on their balance sheets

More than 450 km of roads will be white-topped at an estimated cost of ₹3,000 crore in the next three years

A fresh Revised Master Plan 2041 (RMP) for Bengaluru will be implemented by the end of 2027

A Comprehensive Mobility Plan will be prepared within six months

For students coming for higher studies and preparation of competitive exams, four 'Vidyarthi Indra Canteens' will be started in Dharwad and two in Bengaluru

❖ Leopard Rehabilitation Centre to be established

- A Leopard Rehabilitation Centre will be established in Bannerghatta for rehabilitating leopards captured from the residential areas on the outskirts of Bengaluru, at a cost of ₹5 crore. Over the last few years there have been frequent sightings of leopards on the outskirts of the city.
- Last year, Bengaluru with an estimated population of 80 to 85 leopards overtook Mumbai's documented population of around 54 leopards and became the largest metropolis with the highest known number of free-ranging big cats. A Nature Interpretation Centre will be established under the PPP model to attract tourists.

❖ State govt. allocates ₹500 crore for suburban rail project

Context: The Karnataka government has allocated ₹500 crore in the State Budget for the long-delayed Bengaluru Suburban Railway Project (BSRP), Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced.

- The allocation comes in addition to the ₹500 crore announced by the Union government in the Union Budget 2026-27 earlier this year, officials from Rail Infrastructure Development Company (Karnataka) Limited (KRIDE) said.
- In his Budget speech, Mr. Siddaramaiah said that land acquisition for Corridor-2, connecting Benniganahalli and Chikkabanavara, has already been completed and construction works were currently under way. He set a deadline of December 2030.
- A KRIDE official said, "Since the project is a 50:50 joint venture between the State and the Centre, the State government has now allocated ₹500 crore in the Budget, while the Union government had announced ₹500 crore in the Union Budget presented in February 2026."
- However, activists said the allocation was insufficient to accelerate the delayed suburban rail project. Rajkumar Dugar, founder of the citizens' group Citizens for Citizens (C4C), said that the State government's allocation did not reflect strong commitment to the project. "Just ₹500 crore at this stage does not show great interest from the State government.
- The Chief Minister has not spoken about Corridor-1, which is the most important corridor and has been ignored," he told The Hindu. The Corridor-1, also known as the Sampige Line, is a 41.4-km stretch connecting KSR Bengaluru City to Devanahalli via Yelahanka and includes 15 stations. According to Mr. Dugar, the corridor was crucial for Bengaluru's connectivity, and it was an important stretch that connects airport and should be prioritised.
- Mr. Siddaramaiah announced that Bengaluru's metro network was expected to expand by 41 km by the end of 2026, despite the relatively slow progress of ongoing construction works on the upcoming Pink and Blue lines of Namma Metro.

- The proposed expansion includes the Pink Line corridor between Kalena Agrahara and Tavarekere (21.26 km) and the Blue Line stretch from Silk Board Junction to K.R. Pura (19.75 km).
- Officials from Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) said the Pink Line was expected to open in phases. A 7.5-km elevated stretch was likely to be operational by May 2026, while the entire underground corridor was expected to be completed by December 2026.
- According to the BMRCL officials, for the Blue Line, the K.R. Pura-Silk Board Junction section (19.75 km) was projected to open by December 2026. The remaining sections would follow in phases, with the Hebbal-Airport stretch (27.44 km) likely to open by June 2027, and the K.R. Pura-Hebbal section (11 km) by December 2027.

❖ New operation to be initiated as part of prison reforms

- To curb the use of mobile phones, narcotics and other prohibited items in prisons, 'Operation Parishuddhikarana' was announced in the Budget, at an outlay of ₹20 crore. Modern security systems, including AI-based detection, will be installed in prisons.
- The Chief Minister announced the second phase of the construction of the Mangaluru Central Prison, while work on the Raichur District Central Prison will begin this year. In addition, district central prisons with a capacity of 1,000 inmates each will be constructed in Vijayapura and Bidar at a cost of ₹471 crore, and a Drug De-Addiction Centre will be set up at the Bengaluru Central Prison.

❖ Kayaking centre to come up at Hesaraghatta Lake

- A Centre of Excellence for Kayaking and Canoeing to come up at Hesaraghatta Lake under the PPP model. Modern cycling velodrome will be constructed on the land identified in Dattagalli, Mysuru, to promote cycling. A modern Sport Science Centre will be setup in Kalaburagi to provide specialised services in the Kalyana-Karnataka region.

❖ Organic push for Pandavapura taluk

Context: The State Budget has said that an authorised organic certification system will be developed in Pandavapura taluk to promote organic farming in this agrarian taluk located in the Cauvery basin.

- The Budget has said that the intention of such a move was to bring the Pandavapura taluk of Mandya district under organic cultivation. This taluk, which is located in the sugar bowl of the state's southern region, is already seeing efforts by several farmers to promote organic jaggery. Access to the organic jaggery is expected to provide a platform for export of chemical free produce.

❖ New bodies for the uplift of deprived communities

Context: Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced the formation of Karnataka Adivasi Development Corporation for the upliftment of some of the most backward among tribal communities, including Irula, Soliga, Jenukuruba, Kadukuruba, Kudiya, Siddi, and other vulnerable communities living in and around the forest fringes.

- He announced that a Scheduled Tribes Commission will be established to hear their grievances and issues. Separately, the Chief Minister set aside ₹100 crore for the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Nomadic and Semi-nomadic Development Corporation.
- In the year 2026-27, a total of ₹44,632 crore has been provided under Karnataka Scheduled Castes Sub-Plan (SCSP) and Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP).
- Mr. Siddaramaiah announced four KREIS residential schools with the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) curriculum, to be named after Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in the places visited by him at Kalaburagi, Vijayapura, Belagavi, and Kolar.
- The Budget announced a high-level committee led by the Chief Minister to oversee the implementation of Backward Classes programmes, employment and educational quotas.

❖ CM proposes human-animal conflict mitigation programme for next 5 years

Context: Taking note of recent incidents of human-animal conflict in the State, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, in his Budget, has proposed the Karnataka Man-Animal Conflict Mitigation Programme with a total outlay of ₹1,500 crore for the next five years. The statement has gained significance in the light of recent deaths in elephant attacks in parts of Chikkamagaluru and Hassan districts.

- Mr. Siddaramaiah, stated that the government spent ₹1,044 crore over the last three years to mitigate the conflict.
- The proposed mitigation programme is expected to include the soft release centre, installation of railway barricades and other measures to avoid the conflicts.
- In a bid to increase green cover, improve air quality, protect wildlife, and raise tourist footfall in the State, Mr. Siddaramaiah, in his Budget announced a slew of measures.
- With regard to afforestation activities, the Chief Minister said, “In accordance with the National Forest Policy, priority will be given to districts having less than 10% forest cover, including Kalyana Karnataka districts in the State, and afforestation activities will be carried out in 75,000 hectares. For this, a total of ₹150 crore will be allocated, including ₹50 crore from Kalyana Karnataka Region Development Board (KKRDB)”.
- Siddaramaiah announced the setting of 15 new continuous ambient air quality monitoring centres to further strengthen air quality monitoring in the State.

❖ New academy for Havyaka dialect, funds for publishing works of Kannada poets

Context: Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, in his Budget, has announced setting up the Havyaka Bhasha Academy, a chair in the name of Prof. U.R. Ananthamurthy, a project to showcase great poets and writers of Kannada to children, and publishing books to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Dalit literature movement, among others.

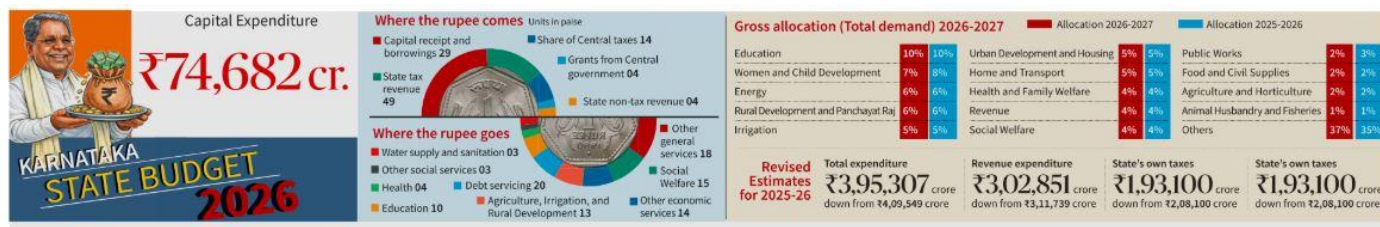
- Havyaka, a dialect of Kannada, is spoken by Havyaka Brahmins in the coastal and Malnad region of Karnataka and Kasaragod in Kerala. The academy will be a new addition to the list of academies in the State. Earlier, the government had constituted an academy for Arebhashe, also a dialect of Kannada, the Tulu Sahitya Academy, the Beary Sahitya Academy, and the Konkani Sahitya Academy. The announcement of Havyaka Academy was welcomed by the community on social media platforms.
- The CM said that the Karnataka Sahitya Academy will publish the works of poets including Pampa, Ranna, Janna, Basavanna and other Sharanas, Kanakadasa, Purandara Dasa, Lakshmisha, Sanchi Honnamma, and writers of modern days like Kuvempu, Shivarama Karanatha, and Devanur Mahadeva, among others, with colour pictures, particularly for children. Similarly, he announced the publishing of works of Dalit writers to mark the 50th anniversary of the Dalit literature movement. He has earmarked ₹1 crore for the purpose. The Budget proposes to earmark ₹5 crore for the Bengaluru Hubba and another ₹2 crore for Janapada Sangama, a cultural event.
- The CM proposed to bring out a book on nameless freedom fighters of Karnataka, including those who served dreadful punishments in the Andaman Islands.

❖ New scheme to commission solar and EV charging infra

Context: The State government will implement a new scheme called 'Mukhya Mantri Saura Krishi Yojane' under the KUSUM-C model, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced while presenting the Budget. The scheme aims to commission solar power plants with a total capacity of 3,000 MW across Karnataka Power Transmission Corporation (KPTCL) sub-centres under the Renewable Energy Service Company model, at an estimated cost of ₹10,500 crore.

- The objectives of the KUSUM-C scheme, initiated by the Union government, are to enable farmers to generate solar energy, shift grid-connected agricultural pumps to solar power, reduce reliance on conventional electricity, and sell surplus power back to the grid.

- Under the KUSUM-C framework, decentralised feeder solarisation of irrigation pumps is under way, with projects totalling 2,777 MW planned for the current year. To strengthen the transmission network, KPTCL added 100 new sub-stations in 2025-26, with another 100 planned for 2026-27. An additional 2,000 MWh BESS will be installed at Huliur, Pavagada, and Kushtagi, at an estimated cost of ₹3,400 crore, to manage peak demand effectively, the CM said.
- Electric mobility is being promoted, with plans to set up 1,250 public EV charging stations under the PM-E Drive scheme, supported by ESCOMs, at a cost of ₹777 crore. To encourage start-ups in the renewable energy sector, the State will establish an Incubation Centre in collaboration with IIM Bangalore, IISc, and the University of New South Wales (Australia), at a cost of ₹20 crore.



❖ **Karnataka's GSDP expected to grow at 8.10% as against India's GDP growth of 7.4%**

Context: The agriculture and industry sectors recorded growth over the previous year while the services sector reported a marginal decline even as Karnataka's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) is expected to grow at 8.10% as against India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of 7.4%. Karnataka's per capita income at ₹4.33 lakh is 97% higher than the all India average of ₹2.19 lakh.

- Good monsoon during this year and anticipated growth of meat production has contributed to the agriculture sector's growth by 9.1% compared to 7.0% in 2024-25, said the Economic Survey of Karnataka 2025-26, released here on Friday. The per capita income in Karnataka has registered a growth of 12.2% over ₹3.86 lakh in 2024-25.
- While Bengaluru Urban has the highest per capita income at ₹8.55 lakh, Kalaburagi has the lowest at ₹1.44 lakh.
- Manufacturing (7%) and electricity (7.5%) contributed mainly to the industrial sector's growth by 6.7% in 2025-26 compared to the sector's growth of 4.1% in 2024-25.
- However, the services sector is expected to grow by 8.1% in 2025-26 compared to 8.4% in 2024-25. The survey noted that growth in the service sector is mainly due to expansion of IT-related services, hotel and restaurants, public administration, and other services.
- The survey noted that between 2024-25 and 2025-26, the share of agriculture and industry in Karnataka's GSDP declined marginally; the contribution of agriculture decreased from 11.02% to 10.77% and contribution of industry declined from 19.82% to 19.36%. The services sector, the largest contributor to the GSDP, recorded a slight increase from 69.16% to 69.87% during the same period.

❖ Hot-cooked meals to resume under Mathru Poorna

Context: Acknowledging that take-home-rations were not as effective as Mathru Poorna Yojane, under which hot-cooked meals were provided to pregnant as well as lactating women at anganwadi centres, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced that the scheme will be re-implemented.

- The Mathru Poorna scheme was introduced in 2017 during the previous Siddaramaiah-led government. “This scheme was helpful in preventing anaemia and malnutrition in women. Subsequently, with emphasis on take-home-rations instead of hot-cooked meals, the scheme has deviated from its original purpose. Taking note of this, the scheme of providing hot-cooked meal in anganwadi centres every day will be restored,” he said in the Budget speech.
- The Chief Minister also announced construction of anganwadi buildings in 1,668 available sites across the districts of Kalyana Karnataka region. In the 50th year of Integrated Child Development Services, Mr. Siddaramiah also announced the formation of a high-level committee for comprehensive reforms of anganwadi centres.
- The Karnataka Budget has set aside ₹5 crore to formulate and implement a dedicated programme to widen the access to higher education for children of former devadasis and provide necessary financial assistance to girl children for undertaking self-employment and income-generating activities.
- The Chief Minister also announced that the incentive being paid to former devadasis, individuals from gender minority communities and beneficiaries of Chethana and Dhanashree schemes will be enhanced from the present ₹30,000 to ₹45,000 for engaging in income-generating activities.
- The devadasi survey report had recommended a special package for the former devadasi families for their rehabilitation and special student scholarships for children belonging to former devadasi families.
- The survey of gender minorities recommended 1% reservation in private sector jobs for people from gender minorities in the State and establishment of a gender minority welfare board.
- Akkai Padmashali, gender and sexual minority rights activist, said that the Budget reflected “indifferent attitude of a government that lacks sensitivity towards communities”.
- The Gruha Lakshmi scheme will see an allocation of ₹28,608 crore this year, a sum that has remained unchanged for the third consecutive year.

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