



**DR. RAJKUMAR ACADEMY
BENGALURU**

AN INITIATIVE BY DR. RAJKUMAR FAMILY

WEEKLY NEWS COMPILATION

A CRISP AND COMPREHENSIVE CURRENT AFFAIRS CAPSULE

MARCH WEEK 2

09-03-2026 TO 14-03-2026

**SC UPHOLDS
'RIGHT TO DIE'
FOR MAN IN
VEGETATIVE
STATE**

**ISRO, ESA SIGN
AGREEMENT**

**CHEETAHS MOVING
FROM KUNO TO
RAJASTHAN**

**ECONOMIC
STABILISATION
FUND**

**INDIA AND
SEYCHELLES
CARRYOUT JOINT
MILITARY
EXERCISE**

❖ Rules not ready for new rural job Act

Context: The Viksit Bharat — Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Act, 2025, has several steps to clear before it can be implemented.

- According to sources, the Union Rural Development Ministry is holding weekly consultation meetings with the State governments.
- There are several tricky issues that the Centre must navigate, including a formula for “normative allocation” for the States. The objective parameters for this are yet to be finalised. Under the legislation, these may be prescribed by the Union government.
- The Union government has to frame rules under 11 categories, for example on social audit of the scheme.
- The new rural employment legislation, which was passed by Parliament within two days of its introduction on December 16 last year, replaces the Congress-led UPA government’s flagship scheme, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005.
- Section 4(5) of the legislation says, “The Central government shall determine the state-wise normative allocation for each financial year, based on objective parameters as may be prescribed by the Central government.” This clause is intended to ensure a more equitable distribution of resources, following complaints from several economically weaker States that they receive a smaller proportion of funds. These objective parameters are yet to be finalised.
- “Several State governments that were among the best performers under MGNREGA argue that the objective parameters should also take into account their past performance, while other States contend that the parameters should reflect the demand in a State, especially in those with high rates of migration of rural workers,” a senior official of the Ministry of Rural Development said.
- The legislation requires that all Gram Panchayats be categorised as A, B, or C, based on development parameters. The Act cites only one example — “proximity to urban areas” — of what these “development parameters” could entail. The Centre, currently in consultation with the States, is working on framing these parameters.
- For the scheme to roll out, State governments must have at least five basic elements in place, a top official said. These include ensuring that ongoing work under the old legislation — MGNREGA — is completed. Second, the States must enrol themselves on DBT Sparsh, a banking platform. Third, the ongoing drive to conduct e-Know Your Customer (EKYC) verification of MGNREGA job cards must be completed. Finally, State governments must onboard Yuktdhara, a geospatial planning portal that the Centre wants used for preparing the Viksit Gram Panchayat plan, which will function like a master schedule of all works planned for the year.
- Sources indicated that the new legislation may not be ready for rollout by April 1 this year. From the day the new Act is notified by the Centre — to be treated as the commencement date — States will have six months to implement the scheme.

❖ ISRO, ESA sign agreement for Earth Observation missions

Context: The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the European Space Agency (ESA) have jointly signed an agreement on 'ESA-ISRO Arrangement concerning Joint Calibration and Validation Activities and Scientific Studies for Earth Observation Missions'.

- The agreement was signed on March 4 by M. Ganesh Pillai, scientific secretary, ISRO, and Simonetta Cheli, director, Earth Observation Programme, ESA, in a virtual meeting mode. ISRO said this event highlights the strength of the long-term cooperation in place since 1978 and subsequent renewal in 2002 between two globally significant space research organisations.

❖ India taps alternative crude supplies as conflict in West Asia drags on

Context: Refiners are looking to procure additional cargoes from the U.S., Russia and West Africa to shore up their supplies; refineries have deferred planned maintenance shutdowns to create buffers; analysts warn of rising cost structure of the alternatives

- Indian refiners have begun negotiating for additional crude cargoes from the U.S., Russia and West Africa to ensure supplies remain adequate in the event the West Asia conflict drags on for a longer period, industry officials and analysts said.
- Refineries, which convert crude oil into fuels such as petrol and diesel, have deferred planned maintenance shutdowns and are maintaining normal processing rates to create buffers to meet the country's requirement in the near term, they said.
- India imports about 88% of its crude oil requirement, with roughly half of those supplies in February passing through the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow sea lane between Iran and Oman that serves as a key energy transit route for global markets.
- The recent military strikes by the U.S. and Israel on Iran, and Tehran's retaliatory attacks on U.S. bases in neighbouring countries as well as Israel, have sharply escalated tensions in the region, leading to a near halt in tanker movements through the strategic waterway.
- "Non-strait sources are fully operational and we are sourcing more and more supplies from non-conflict zones," a top oil Ministry source said. "Non-strait sources accounted for 60% of supplies in 2025, which — after the Middle East conflict — climbed to 70%."
- Indian refiners are tapping crude from West Africa, Latin America and the U.S., he said, adding that the U.S. Treasury Department issuing a 30-day waiver to allow the sale and delivery of sanctioned Russian oil that has already been loaded on vessels to India has opened up another avenue.
- The waiver permits the sale, delivery or discharge of crude oil and petroleum products of Russian origin that were loaded onto vessels on or before March 5, including ships subject to certain sanctions. The exemption remains valid until April 5, allowing cargoes already in transit to be completed without violating sanctions restrictions.
- There are 120 million barrels of Russian crude on the water. Of this, as many as 15 million barrels of Russia-origin crude are sitting on tankers close to India — in the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal — while another 7 million Russian crude barrels are idling near Singapore.

- Industry sources said Indian refiners have started buying Russian oil. Reliance Industries, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd., and HPCL-Mittal Energy Ltd. have returned to the market to secure Russian cargoes, they said.
- The Oil Ministry official said India never stopped buying Russian oil — it imported some 1.04 million bpd (barrels per day) of Russian crude in February. “We are in a very comfortable position as far as crude and finished products are concerned,” he said, adding the combined inventory can meet the country’s demand for 50 days.

Challenges ahead

- While India may be able to secure adequate physical crude through alternative sources, analysts cautioned that the overall cost structure could worsen due to higher crude prices, increased freight and insurance premiums, and longer shipping routes.
- International crude oil prices have jumped to over ₹92 per barrel from around ₹70 when the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran on February 28. Liquefied natural gas (LNG) prices have more than doubled to ₹24-25 per million British thermal unit.
- Every ₹10 increase in crude prices could add 20-25 basis points to the consumer price index if passed on to consumers, or widen the fiscal deficit if taxes are cut to neutralise the impact. The immediate impact will be a higher import bill, a widening current account deficit and pressure on the rupee.

❖ Cheetahs moving from Kuno to Rajasthan showing ‘natural territorial behaviour’: NTCA

Context: The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), a body under the Union Environment Ministry, said on Sunday that cheetahs travelling from the Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh to Baran district in Rajasthan were showing “natural territorial behaviour”.

- This follows media reports since late February that two cheetahs from Kuno had been tracked in the Mangrol range and the Banjh Amla Conservation Reserve of Baran district after travelling 60 km to 70 km from Kuno National Park.



The cheetahs being tracked are among the first generation of cubs born in India to African cheetahs. ANI

- The cheetahs, called KP2 and KP3, are among the first generation of cubs born in India to African cheetahs translocated in 2022. Both cheetahs are being tracked round the clock via satellite and are radio-collared. They are being monitored by a joint inter-State team, with field teams deployed from the Kishanganj and Anta forest ranges in Rajasthan.
- “Long-distance dispersal across landscape boundaries is a well-documented, natural territorial behaviour in cheetahs. The Project Cheetah Action Plan explicitly anticipates and provides for inter-State movement within the Kuno–Gandhi Sagar metapopulation landscape,” the NTCA noted. “These movements reinforce the strategic rationale for the proposed 17,000-sq. km Kuno-Gandhi Sagar inter-State wildlife corridor spanning seven Rajasthan and eight Madhya Pradesh districts.”

- Nine cheetahs from Botswana arrived on February 28 as part of the government's Project Cheetah, which aims to reintroduce the species in India after it became extinct in the country in 1952. The animals, six females and three males, were transported by an Indian Air Force cargo aircraft to Gwalior Air Base and then flown by helicopter to Kuno National Park.

Botswana will become the third African country to send cheetahs to India under the programme, after earlier translocations from Namibia and South Africa since the project began in September 2022. Including the animals from Botswana, 29 adult cheetahs have been translocated from Africa since 2022. Nine of them have died from various causes. Twenty-eight cubs have been born in India and around 12 have died so far. Three adult cheetahs are housed in the Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary, also in Madhya Pradesh.

S/KAS Academy



UPSC Integrated Course

ADMISSIONS OPEN
MORNING, AFTERNOON
& EVENING BATCHES

**Don't Miss Out!
Secure Your Spot Now!**

**Exclusive
Opportunity!
Limited Seats**



❖ **If BNS distinguishes between throwing and administering acid, RPwD Act must too: SC**

Context: The Supreme Court on Monday said if the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) distinguished between “throwing” acid and “administering” the corrosive substance with intention to voluntarily cause grievous hurt to a person, the Right to Persons with Disability (RPwD) Act must also follow suit.

- The observation was made by a Bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Joymalya Bagchi to the Union government while hearing a petition filed by an acid attack survivor, Shaheen Malik.
- Ms. Malik, herself an acid attack survivor, has specifically sought to bring victims who were forcibly made to ingest acid, and with a criminal case registered against their attackers, to be brought under the protective umbrella of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.
- “When BNS distinguishes between throwing and administering, the aspect of administration requires to be articulated in the RPwD Act also,” Justice Bagchi addressed Additional Solicitor-General Archana Pathak Dave, appearing for the Centre.
- Chief Justice Kant said statutory provisions should be able to cover not only acts committed, but also be able to foresee offences which in all probability may occur in the future.

‘Undue advantage’

- “The perpetrators of crime should not be able to take any undue advantage. Even if an offence is capable of being committed, that itself is a sufficient guideline to enact a provision [to counter it],” Chief Justice Kant observed orally.
- Ms. Dave said the definitions in the RPwD Act may have to be amended to incorporate or extend the ambit of the statute. She sought more time to return with a comprehensive response.
- Section 124 of the BNS covers the offence of “voluntarily causing grievous hurt by use of acid, etc.” It provides that “whoever causes permanent or partial damage or deformity to, or burns or maims or disfigures or disables, any part or parts of the body of a person or causes grievous hurt by throwing acid on or by administering acid to that person...”
- In an earlier hearing in the case, the top court had voiced zero tolerance for acid attackers, especially criminals who forcibly administer acid to their victims.

❖ **India’s cheetah population hits 53 with new litter at Kuno**

- India’s cheetah population has crossed 50 since the launch of the Centre’s reintroduction programme for the species, after a Namibian cheetah gave birth to five cubs at Madhya Pradesh’s Kuno National Park, taking the total tally to 53.
- Union Minister for Environment, Forests, and Climate Change Bhupender Yadav shared the news on X, saying the cubs were born to Jwala, a third-time mother now, who had been translocated from Namibia in September 2022 at the launch of Project Cheetah.
- “With this birth, the number of Indian-born thriving cubs has risen to 33, marking the 10th successful cheetah litter on Indian soil — another important milestone in India’s cheetah conservation journey,” he said.

❖ 'Crude price rise impact not to be substantial on inflation'

Context: The impact of global crude price rise on inflation is not estimated to be substantial at this point as India's inflation is near the lower bound, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said.

- In a reply to a written question in the Lok Sabha, she said the price of both global crude oil and the Indian basket has been on a declining trajectory for the past one year, till the geo-political clashes commenced in West Asia on February 28, 2026.
- "Between the end of February and until March 2, 2026, the Crude Oil FOB Price (Indian Basket) rose from \$69.01/barrel to \$80.16/barrel.
- Given that India's inflation is near the lower bound, the impact on inflation is not estimated to be substantial at this point," the FM said. She was replying to a query on whether the government has reviewed the impact of rising global crude oil prices on inflation in the country.

❖ 31.2% of AI learners in India are women: study

Context: Women accounted for 31.2% of those taking AI courses online in India last year, according to a new report by the online learning platform Coursera.

- The findings represent a snapshot of how the digital divide across gender lines is also mapping on to AI access and use. The global share of women taking up AI courses is 36%. In 2024, women as a proportion of course takers was 2.2 percentage points lower.
- The findings also confirm that women's academic outperformance of men is reflected in a higher likelihood of actually finishing courses.
- "Across a meaningful minority of countries, women are more likely than men to complete GenAI courses once they enrol, demonstrating strong persistence and commitment to these pressing new skills," Coursera said.
- The difference is slight though, with the percentage of women course takers being 3 percentage points more than men in India (Coursera did not disclose overall completion rates), as per the report.



The global share of women taking up AI courses is 36%, as per the report.

31.2% of AI learners in India are women: study

❖ RBI buys ₹50,000 cr. G-Secs for liquidity, tranche 2

Context: With the prolonged war in West Asia likely to have far-reaching consequences on the Indian economy, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) held Open Market Operations (OMO) buying ₹50,000 crore Government of India securities (G-Secs) of various maturities.

- 'on a review of the current liquidity and financial conditions,' the RBI decided to conduct OMO for buying G-Secs of ₹1,00,000 crore in two tranches of ₹50,000 crore each on March 9 and 13.

Monetary policy tool

- OMOs are key money market policy tools used by the RBI to regulate money supply by buying or selling G-Secs.
- The latest move is aimed at injecting liquidity.
- The OMO is to offset liquidity constraints arising out of advance tax outflows and have sufficient funds for lending by banks.

Previous operations

- In December 2025 and January this year, the RBI had conducted OMO purchases of ₹2,00,000 crore in four tranches of ₹50,000 crore each.
- In May 2025, the RBI had conducted OMO purchases totalling ₹1,25,000 crore to support growth.
- On Monday, the RBI also notified the Government of India had bought back G-Secs worth ₹6,309 crore via switch auction conducted by it and issued bonds worth ₹6,431 crore.
- The securities purchased by the government were a part of the bonds scheduled to mature in the next financial year.

Rupee plunges

- The Indian rupee fell to a record low of 92.36 against the U.S. Dollar on Monday owing to fears of a prolonged war in West Asia and on account of crude oil prices surging to more than \$110 a barrel.
- With the reported intervention of the RBI, the Indian rupee, as per Clearing Corporation of India spot rate, closed at 92.21 a U.S. Dollar as compared with its previous close of 91.82, down 39 paise.
- “In line with broader weakness across Asian currencies, the Indian rupee has depreciated against the U.S. Dollar as international crude oil prices surged past \$100 per barrel, reclaiming levels not seen since 2022,” said Dilip Parmar, research analyst, HDFC Securities.
- “These soaring energy costs pose a significant threat to India’s trade deficit, GDP growth, and inflation, given the country’s high reliance on oil imports. Amid heightening geopolitical uncertainty, the spot USDINR is expected to remain firm, with a resistance level near 93.00 and established support at 91.80,” he added.

❖ Panel suggests entertainment fee and tax

Context: In what could pinch the pockets of Bengalureans seeking avenues of recreation, the Fifth State Finance Commission has recommended that the city corporations may levy an entertainment fee and impose an entertainment tax to increase the revenue of the newly-formed corporations under the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA). The panel said an annual revenue of ₹300 crore could be generated from GBA area from these.

- Although it is not clear if the corporations will go by this suggestion and impose the fee, significantly, the panel cites “GBA’s estimation” in the report that indicates that the authority has already worked out projections. If the State government accepts the recommendation and gives green signal to the GBA, ticket prices in the city could go up.

❖ Lok Sabha takes up resolution seeking removal of Speaker

Context: The Lok Sabha took up a resolution moved by the Opposition seeking the removal of Speaker Om Birla, with both the Treasury and Opposition benches trading sharp accusations over the neutrality of the Chair.

- Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju described the motion as an “attack on democracy itself”, while the Congress Deputy Leader in the Lok Sabha, Gaurav Gogoi, said the resolution was brought from compulsion to “protect the neutrality” of the institution of the Speaker.
- Initiating the debate, Mr. Gogoi slammed the Speaker’s conduct, alleging partisan behaviour and arguing that the motion was necessary to “save the Constitution”. “We are saddened that we had to bring such a resolution because we all have personal relations with the Speaker. But it is our dharma and duty to protect the decorum and dignity of this House,” he said.
- The discussion, for which 10 hours have been allotted, will continue on Wednesday and conclude with a vote.
- Union Home Minister Amit Shah is expected to intervene in the debate on Wednesday before the House votes on the motion.
- The proceedings began with Congress MP Mohammad Jawed reading out the notice seeking to move the resolution for Mr. Birla’s removal. The motion was also moved by fellow Congress MPs K. Suresh and Mallu Ravi.
- A brief procedural row erupted over who would preside over the proceedings during the debate. AIMIM MP Asaduddin Owaisi raised a point of order, asking why BJP MP Jagdambika Pal was chairing the session, and arguing that Mr. Pal had been appointed to the panel of chairpersons by the Speaker himself.
- The objection was countered by BJP MP Nishikant Dubey and Mr. Rijju, who said the claim was “irrelevant” and that Mr. Pal was competent to preside over the House during the debate.
- Congress MP K. C. Venugopal said that the government had created a “constitutional vacuum” by leaving the post of Deputy Speaker vacant for years now.

- After the presiding officer asked members supporting the notice to stand up, more than the required 50 MPs rose in their seats, allowing the motion to be admitted for discussion.
- The Congress Deputy Leader, in his remarks, alleged that the Opposition had repeatedly been denied the opportunity to raise critical issues in the House and cited the treatment of Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi during the debate on the Motion of Thanks to the President's Address. "In the month of February, when the Leader of the Opposition tried to speak during the Motion of Thanks, he was interrupted 20 times. The interruptions came from the Chair, members of the panel, and senior leaders of the Treasury benches," Mr. Gogoi said.
- "There was an expectation that the Chair would be neutral. But research of the uncorrected transcripts will show the number of times the Leader of the Opposition was interrupted. While he was on his feet, another member was called upon to speak," Mr. Gogoi said.
- "Is this the parliamentary tradition we want to show? Microphones are being used to silence MPs. This stands in direct contradiction with the rituals of this House," he added.
- Mr. Gogoi also cited instances where Opposition members' remarks were expunged, while allegations made by treasury bench members were allowed to remain on record.
- Intervening during the debate, Mr. Rijju rejected the Opposition's charges and strongly defended Mr. Birla, saying that the Speaker had always acted impartially and had, in fact, provided many opportunities to Opposition members to raise issues.

❖ Gas from new sources will end shortage, say officials

Context: Importing natural gas from U.S., Norway has now become viable, though the shipping distance may prolong shortage of the cooking fuel, they say; domestic LPG production has been increased.

- The current crunch in India's natural gas supply is likely to be short-lived as the prevailing higher prices make imports from distant sources economically viable, according to government sources. However, such shipments typically take longer to arrive, meaning the country could face a shortage in the interim, they said.
- India's LPG output has increased by 10% after prioritising supplies to households over industry users, an official said requesting anonymity. On March 5, the Petroleum and Natural Gas Ministry had asked all oil refining companies to maximise production, directing that all propane and butane produced, recovered, or otherwise available to be utilised for LPG output.
- "On LNG, it is very difficult to make changes quickly," the official said. "Apart from Qatar, our other options are Norwegian or American gas, and that takes a long time to reach India." Shipping industry estimates suggest it takes about two months for vessels to travel to the U.S. or Norway and return to India with gas cargo.
- Another government official said LPG and LNG supplies had been diversified, with cargoes "already arriving". "Some geographies are distant and therefore take time, but supplies are coming," the official said.

- “We were getting Qatar gas at \$6-8 per MMBtu (metric million British thermal unit), and now the price is \$15 per MMBtu,” he said. “But, the economics of it is that, once the price crosses even \$10 per MMBtu, then gas from Norway and the U.S. becomes viable despite the long distance,” he said. “There will, of course, be a lead time between placing orders and receiving deliveries from those countries,” the official said. “Gas will not be a long-term problem, but there will be some short-term pain.”
- Another official, who also did not wish to be identified, said the government’s utmost priority was to ensure an uninterrupted LPG supply to domestic households without “jeopardising commercial entities”. To allay concerns among restaurateurs about potential shortage of commercial LPG cylinders, the government on Monday constituted a committee comprising three executive directors of oil marketing companies (OMCs) to “review the representations for LPG supply and try to provide some volumes to them.”
- The official said, “We [the committee] are already in touch with the restaurateurs. All genuine requirements will be addressed and relief provided to the extent possible.”

❖ 5% GST revenue allocation for ULBs favoured

Context: The Fifth State Finance Commission has recommended that the government earmark 5% of GST revenue generated in cities to Urban Local Self Governments.

- SFC for 5% of GST revenue allocation to municipal bodies, The Fifth State Finance Commission says such a measure will help increase the revenue of municipal bodies by 52% and will help in linking their revenue with the State’s economic growth
- In a bid to ensure mobilisation of resources for infrastructure development and civic services in urban areas, the Fifth State Finance Commission has recommended that the State government earmark a minimum of 5% of its total GST revenue generated in cities to Urban Local Self Governments, including those coming under Greater Bengaluru Authority.
- In its report tabled in the State Legislature on Tuesday, the three-member commission led by former MP Dr. C. Narayanaswamy has observed that the revenue of the municipal bodies would increase by 52% if they get at least 5% share of the State’s GST revenue.
- This would help in linking the revenue of the municipal bodies with the State’s economic growth, states the commission.
- The commission has indicated that its recommendation stems from estimates that urban areas account for 70% of the State’s total GST revenue.
- Interestingly, this is similar to Karnataka’s argument before the Centre that it should get a higher share of GST returns as it is the second highest GST revenue contributor in the country.

Bengaluru revenue

- With respect to Bengaluru, the commission has observed that the five city corporations under the Greater Bengaluru Authority make significant contributions to the industries and services sectors, which in turn positively impact State GST. The commission has estimated that the revenue of these five city corporations will increase by over 40 per cent if they get at least 5 per cent share of the assigned GST revenue in their jurisdiction, considering that Bengaluru accounts for 60 per cent of the State's total GST revenue.
- Observing that it has not been possible to get adequate revenue in the form of rents from the properties belonging to the municipal bodies, and the license fee for private advertisement hoardings, the commission has recommended that the State government adopt innovative policies to formulate competitive land lease/rent models like other States. Particularly focusing on rents from municipal properties and the license fee for advertisement hoardings, the commission has said this sector has the potential to yield high revenue.
- Taking decentralisation to the next level, the commission has recommended the adoption of ward-wise devolution of funds in city corporations to handle natural disasters and communicable diseases.

Natural disasters

- The commission has observed that cities are becoming vulnerable to natural disasters like flooding in low-lying areas during heavy rains and the spread of communicable diseases due to thick population, as the cities are the centres of economic development, and Karnataka is one of the States witnessing fast urbanisation. Hence, measures to prevent the recurrence of such natural disasters and ensuring of funds to back them are important, the commission has stated.

❖ SFC: Revenue deficit looms over city's new corporations

Context: To manage the deficit and take up development works at the corporation level, the SFC suggests that the corporations adopt tools such as levying an entertainment fees, municipal bonds and more.

- The Fifth State Finance Commission (SFC) has emphasised that the five new corporations will likely face an aggregate deficit of ₹57,000 crore over the next five years, as per projections in the Boston Consultancy Group report. It also suggested that the government will have to bear part of the burden.
- The Fifth SFC report, released on Tuesday, noted that the newly formed corporations will have to take up development works in Bengaluru along with service delivery, which will cost an estimated ₹55,586 crore over the next five years, and that a part of it will have to be borne by the government.
- To manage the deficit and take up development works at the corporation level, the commission suggested that the corporations adopt three tools. The primary one is to develop and strengthen their own sources of revenue (OSR), prepare action plans to address the deficit, and look for external sources of income. A few of them are likely to place a burden on citizens' pockets.

- The commission has suggested levying an entertainment fee, issuing municipal bonds, and seeking government aid to fill the deficit.

Property tax and CSR

- To strengthen sources of revenue, the commission's major suggestion is the regular updating of guidance values and periodic revisions of property tax. It suggested that the corporations verify building licences in the Greater Bengaluru Authority's (GBA) records with Bescom's power connection data to crack down on property tax evaders.
- Further, the commission pointed out that there are 20.46 lakh properties in the GBA area, and nearly five lakh properties have not been evaluated. The commission suggested evaluating these properties and bringing them under the GBA tax scheme, which could fetch an annual ₹600–700 crore in property tax.
- To ensure that development works are not halted due to the revenue deficit, the corporations have been asked to raise municipal or even green bonds, making use of the Union Budget's announcement of incentives for issuing bonds. Each corporation is expected to raise ₹200 crore through bonds.
- Pointing out that the city has hundreds of multinational companies and industries, the commission has asked the GBA to set up a portal and for each corporation to form a committee to bring in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds. To ensure transparency, it has asked for the development of a website or portal.

Aid to corporations

- The commission noted that the new corporations face a revenue deficit and also need funds for foundational costs, which should be provided by the government. In particular, it asked the government to aid the west and north corporations.
- The commission noted that the West Corporation is larger in area compared to the others, and its population is also higher. However, its property tax collection is lower, estimated at ₹580 crore, the second lowest after the north corporation (₹543 crore). At the same time, the west corporation has 112 wards, compared to about 70 wards in the other corporations.
- Nonetheless, the commission asked the government to limit financial assistance to three years and allow the corporations to operate independently thereafter, in line with the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act.
- Further, the commission estimated a requirement of ₹640 crore for the development of slums, which it suggested should be taken up by the government. It also asked the government to allocate funds for the development of underground drainage systems and solid waste management.

GBA budget

- After a decade of delay, the GBA is finally drafting the Revised Master Plan (RMP) for Bengaluru. The commission has suggested that the government allocate ₹15 crore to the GBA for this.
- Further, it said the government should allocate ₹35.95 crore to set up and develop geo-local decision and planning systems and an integrated command centre. The GBA also needs ₹35.06 crore to extend IT services, the report said.

❖ IISc professor becomes second Indian woman to summit world's highest volcanic peak

Context: A professor at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) has summited the Nevado Ojos del Salado, which is the highest volcanic peak in the world and the highest mountain in Chile.

- By submitting to Nevado Ojos del Salado, which is 6,893 meters, on March 6, Arpita Patra, professor at IISc's Department of Computer Science and Automation, became the second Indian woman to achieve this feat.

Challenging climb

- Prof. Patra said that Ojos del Salado, located deep in the Atacama Desert, was by far the most challenging climb she has undertaken.
- "The expedition took me to nearly 7000 meters, the highest altitude I have ever reached. Conditions were extremely cold and harsh. The ascent was long and exhausting, culminating in a technical rock-climbing section in the final 50 meters before the summit. With this climb, I became the second Indian woman to reach the summit," Prof. Patra said. Prior to this, she had climbed the highest volcanic peaks of four continents, which are Mt. Kilimanjaro (5,895 meters) in Africa, Mt. Elbrus (5,642 meters) in Europe, Mt. Giluwe (4,367 meters) in Oceania, and Pico de Orizaba (5,636 meters) in North America.
- "This ascent marks a major milestone in my mountaineering journey. So far, I have climbed the highest volcanic peaks of five continents, and when I climbed Mt. Giluwe in May 2025, I became the first Indian woman to summit the peak and also became the second Indian woman to summit the Pico de Orizaba in October 2025," she added.

Balancing act

- "I am not a full-time mountaineer. My primary professional role is that of a full professor at the IISc. Balancing these two seemingly orthogonal pursuits, rigorous academic research and high-altitude mountaineering, has been both challenging and deeply fulfilling," she said.
- "In this journey, I have been fortunate to be guided by Satyarup Siddhanta, a renowned mountaineer who holds several records, including Guinness World Records," she added.

❖ Four Bills, including one on manuscripts, tabled in Assembly

Context: The State Legislative Assembly saw tabling of four Bills, including the Karnataka Jnana Bhandar Manuscripts and Digitisation Bill that seeks to provide for the survey, documentation, conservation, digitisation, research, publication, and public access of manuscripts in the State.

- Tabled by Law and Parliamentary and Tourism Minister H.K. Patil, the Bill seeks to establish the Karnataka Manuscripts Authority to achieve these objectives.

- The Karnataka Gram Swaraj and Panchayat Raj (Amendment) Bill that seeks to ensure that the secrecy of the ballot is maintained and protect voters from coercion, intimidation, and undue influence in the wake of the government's decision to go for ballot papers in the elections to local bodies instead of EVMs was also tabled. The Bill seeks to ensure that the elections are conducted in a free, fair, and transparent manner, reflecting the democratic will of the people under Article 326 of the Constitution.
- The Karnataka Police (Amendment) Bill, which seeks to include the reasons such as misconduct and dereliction of duty as reasons that could come in the way of ensuring a minimum tenure of two years for police officers, was also tabled.
- The Karnataka Lokayukta (Amendment) Bill that seeks to provide allowances and other service conditions to Lokayukta on a par with those of the judges of Supreme Court or the chief justice of the High Court was tabled in the Assembly.

❖ Chhattisgarh govt. approves draft Bill on anti-conversion

Context: Chhattisgarh's BJP government on Tuesday approved the draft of a new anti-religious conversion law.

- Titled 'Chhattisgarh Freedom of Religion Bill, 2026', the proposed legislation "seeks to effectively curb religious conversions carried out through force, inducement, fraudulent means, undue influence, or misrepresentation", stated a government press note. The decision was taken at a Cabinet meeting.
- The Bill can now be introduced in the State Assembly which is currently in session.
- Allegations of religious conversions through force or inducements have surfaced repeatedly in the State. While right wing groups clashing with Christian preachers are common across the State, the arrest of two Keralite nuns last year on charges of human trafficking and kidnapping of three tribal women for forced religious conversion drew national attention. It had led to massive protests in Kerala and Delhi against the arrests.

❖ SC to look into plea against law on Muslim inheritance

Context: Top court says striking down provisions in Shariat Act could create vacuum in Muslim inheritance framework; says it would be better to defer to Parliament's wisdom to bring a Uniform Civil Code.

- The Supreme Court on Tuesday orally observed that it would be better to defer to Parliament's wisdom to bring a Uniform Civil Code rather than judicially strike down provisions in the Shariat Application Act, 1937, on the ground of discrimination for giving Muslim women a smaller share of family inheritance compared with their male counterparts.
- The law established Islamic law for inheritance among Muslims, providing widows with children a one-eighth share, or a further reduced one-fourth share if they do not have children, and daughters half of a son's share.

- Appearing before a Bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and, Justices R. Mahadevan and Joymalya Bagchi, advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for petitioner Poulomi Pavini Shukla, challenged what he called “artificial discrimination” between Muslim women and men regarding their right to inheritance.
- The Bench, however, posed a practical question of law, asking which law would govern Muslim inheritance if the Shariat Act were struck down.
- Mr. Bhushan responded that the more secular Indian Succession Act could apply. He referred to the landmark judgment in *Mary Roy vs State of Kerala*, in which the petitioner successfully fought for equal inheritance rights for Syrian Christian women in the State, nullifying the discriminatory Travancore Christian Succession Act, 1916. “Does the Indian Succession Act apply to Muslim women? Remember, when you strike an Act, you create a vacuum... In our over-anxiety for reforms, we may deprive them [Muslim women] of whatever they are getting now,” the Chief Justice said.
- Justice Bagchi asked whether it would be wiser to defer to Parliament’s wisdom to realise the aspiration expressed in Article 44 of the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) of the Constitution, which says that the state shall endeavour to secure for citizens a Uniform Civil Code across the country.
- “Look, you are talking about inheritance. But the basic equality of a one man-one woman relationship, a monogamous existence, has it been realised throughout the country? No. Can we declare all bigamous relationships bound by personal law as ultra vires Article 14 of the Constitution? We have to defer to the wisdom of the legislature to bring the DPSP into reality,” Justice Bagchi observed.
- Mr. Bhushan urged the three-judge Bench to refer the case to a Constitution Bench. He said the court had earlier not hesitated to strike down triple talaq, which involved a more religious issue. “Inheritance is a civil right,” he submitted.
- The Chief Justice asked whether he was suggesting that the court strike down the Shariat Act and effectively re-legislate. Mr. Bhushan said the top court could either bring Muslim women under the Indian Succession Act or declare that the Shariat Act provisions on inheritance violated Article 14. The court agreed to list the case.

❖ Jal Jeevan mission gets extension up to 2028

Context: The Union Cabinet on Tuesday approved the extension of the Ministry of Jal Shakti’s Jal Jeevan programme to 2028 and provisioned more money to meet its goal of providing a minimum amount of daily potable water to every rural household in the country.

- A press note from the Ministry notes that the programme’s focus will change “...from infrastructure creation to service delivery.”

Context: Petitioners question who decides if content about the government is 'fake or misleading', and warn against the state becoming the 'sole arbiter of truth'; Centre tells SC 'we know it when we see it'.

- The Supreme Court sought balance between protecting the nation against fake online content and safeguarding the right to free speech while the Centre defended that its Information Technology Rules was not meant to curb humour, satire or criticism of the government.
- “There is no intention under the statute [Information Technology Act] or the Rules to curb any humour, statute, expression of view, critical expression of view and criticism,” Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, for the Union government, addressed a Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant.
- In fact, the government had notified the formation of a Fact Checking Unit (FCU) under the Press Information Bureau through a notification issued in March 2024 via the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, amended in April 2023.
- The FCU was meant to act as a “deterrent” against the creation and dissemination of fake news or misinformation regarding the “business” of the Centre. The Amendment Rules and the establishment of the FCU had come under the judicial scrutiny of the Bombay High Court through petitions filed by the Editors Guild of India and stand-up comedian Kunal Kamra.
- The High Court had, in September 2024, struck down the FCU notification and concluded the amended IT Rules of 2023 “unconstitutional” and violative of Article 14 (right to equality), 19 (freedom of speech and expression) and 19(1)(g) (freedom and right to profession) of the Constitution.
- It had concluded that the expression “fake, false and misleading” in the Rules was “vague and hence wrong” in the absence of any definition. The High Court had said the government cannot assume the role of the “sole arbiter of truth”.
- The Centre appealed in the Supreme Court against the High Court decision, saying it had no subversive intention to crush free speech.
- Senior advocates Arvind Datar and N.H. Seervai, for parties including the Editors Guild, Association of Indian Magazines, News Broadcasters of Digital Association and Mr. Kamra, asked who in the FCU would decide if a particular content was fake or not.
- “Who mans the FCU? How can such a unit be formed on the basis of a notification? The High Court had merely asked the government to frame proper Rules,” Mr. Datar submitted.
- “The question raised in the case is of paramount importance. It would be better for the Supreme Court to lay down the law. The issues flagged by the High Court leads to the question of how to balance rights without destroying the individual constitutional rights,” Chief Justice Kant observed.
- The Chief Justice however indicated that some of the online platforms conducted themselves in an offensive manner. “You can damage a personal life... you can damage the nation... I am bothered about the impact on the nation,” the CJI said.

- Mr. Datar said whatever was misleading or fake should be taken down. “But then who defines ‘misleading?’” he asked.

Need clear guidelines

- “There should be clear guidelines,” the CJI responded, “but, at the same time, shifting all the onus on the state machinery without putting any obligations on those who play mischief requires a lot of consideration” the CJI responded.
- “When we see it, we know it is fake,” Mr. Mehta interjected.
- Issuing notice on the special leave petition by the Centre, the court refused Mr. Mehta’s request to stay the High Court decision.

❖ Union Cabinet tweaks 2020 rules to allow Chinese investments

Context: Press Note 3 issued in 2020 had said all investments from countries sharing a land border with India would need the Centre’s approval first.

- The Union Cabinet has amended its 2020 rules that had placed restrictions on foreign direct investment from countries that shared a land border with India, the government announced.
- The amendment now incorporates a provision of ‘beneficial ownership’ and specifies that companies with non-controlling stake belonging to entities from these countries can invest in India without first seeking Indian government approval.
- Press Note 3, issued in 2020, had specified that any entity of a country that shares a land border with India can invest in India only after securing Government approval. Earlier, this rule had applied only to entities in Bangladesh and Pakistan. The 2020 rule expanded this to the other countries that shared a land border with India, with the biggest investor by far being China.
- “The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved changes in guidelines on investments from countries sharing land border with India (LBCs),” the government said in a release. “Investors with non-controlling LBC beneficial ownership of up to 10% shall be permitted under the automatic route as per the applicable sectoral caps, entry routes, attendant conditions,” the government said. “Such investments shall be subject to the reporting of relevant information/details by the investee entity to the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade of India (DPIIT).”
- Apart from these, the government added that proposals for LBC investments in specified sectors such as the manufacture of electronic capital goods, electronic components, polysilicon and ingot-wafer “shall be processed and decided within 60 days”.
- The Committee of Secretaries under the Cabinet Secretary may also revise the list of specified sectors.

❖ Govt. invokes Essential Commodities Act for natural gas allocation

Context: Invoking the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG) has sought diverting natural gas to certain priority sectors with a tiered structure.

- In a gazette notification dated March 9, the Ministry underlined domestic piped natural gas (PNG), Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) for vehicular fuel, and Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) production alongside fertilizer manufacturing, tea industries, manufacturing and other industrial consumers, among the priority sectors.
- Earlier this week, the Centre had invoked the Essential Commodities Act for prioritising LPG supply to domestic consumers.
- The latest gazette notification introduced tiered allocation priorities to each of the mentioned sectors. For example, domestic piped natural gas supply, CNG for transport and LPG production, among others, have been accorded for “priority allocation” with supplies to be upheld uninterrupted at “hundred per cent”, subject to operational availability.
- This would be premised on their average consumption from the previous six months. Fertilizer plants would be supplied 70% of consumption requirements, premised on their average consumption in the previous six months.

❖ ‘Record foodgrain output likely’

Context: The foodgrain production scenario in the country appears very strong and at a record level, the Second Advance Estimates of production of major crops for 2025–26, released by Union Agriculture Ministry here noted.

- Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said the Government was continuously working towards the development of agricultural sector and for the prosperity of farmers. “As a result, our agriculture sector is making steady progress,” the Minister said.
- Government data showed foodgrain output in kharif at an estimated 1741.44 lakh metric tonne (LMT) and rabi foodgrain production at 1745.13 LMT. This was approximately 46 LMT (2.8%) and 53 LMT (3.2%) higher year-on-year.

❖ 'IT exports from State set to cross ₹5.5 lakh

Context: Karnataka's IT exports are expected to cross ₹5.50 lakh crore in 2025-26, IT and BT Minister Priyank Kharge told the Legislative Assembly.

- Bengaluru Urban tops the list with a contribution of 39.9% to GSDP; Kalaburagi, Bengaluru Rural contribute 1.9% each. Karnataka's IT exports are expected to cross ₹5.50 lakh crore in 2025-26, IT and BT Minister. Priyank Kharge told the Legislative Assembly.
- Responding to a question from Vedavyas Kamath of the BJP, Mr. Kharge said the State's IT/BT exports were ₹3.55 lakh crore in 2022-23, ₹4.09 lakh crore in 2023-24, and ₹4.58 lakh crore in 2024-25. "I am 100% confident that this year we will cross ₹5.5 lakh crore in exports," he said.
- Of the projected ₹5.5 lakh crore exports, Mysuru contributes around ₹3,000 crore, while Mangaluru and Udupi together contribute around ₹3,500 crore, he said.
- By contributing 5.4% to the State Gross Domestic Product (GSDP), Dakshina Kannada district ranks second in the State and has the potential to add another 2% to the GSDP, Mr. Kharge said.
- Bengaluru Urban district topped the list with a contribution of 39.9% to the GSDP. Kalaburagi and Bengaluru Rural districts contribute 1.9% each to the GSDP, he said while replying to Mr. Kamath's question on IT services exports and the start-up ecosystem in the coastal region.
- Mr. Kharge clarified that he had never said that Mangaluru lacked potential for growth. "The region has huge potential if local leaders create the right climate. We can accelerate the local economy," he said.

Coastal region

- Mr. Kamath said that despite challenges, the coastal region stands next only to Bengaluru in economic contribution and sought the Minister's response on the relatively low contribution from districts such as Kalaburagi, which have lower GDP levels.
- The Minister explained climatic and geographical factors for growth of different sectors in different parts of the State.
- Replying to Kiran Kumar Kodgi of the BJP, Agriculture Minister N. Cheluvayaswamy said the government would take a decision on upgrading the agriculture diploma college at Brahmavara in Udupi district into an Agricultural Science College based on the recommendations of an expert committee.
- The diploma college is attached to the Keladi Shivappa Nayaka University of Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences, Shivamogga.
- V. Sunil Kumar (BJP) said the diploma college already has the required infrastructure such as land and laboratories, and the government only needs to provide faculty to upgrade it into a full-fledged college.

Context: Three crew members missing from India-bound Thai cargo ship hit in the Strait of Hormuz; MEA deplors attacks on ships; Iran warns of targeting financial institutions in West Asia; energy agency to unlock 400 million barrels of oil from reserves.

- Iran attacked commercial ships across the Persian Gulf and targeted Dubai International Airport in the UAE on Wednesday, escalating a campaign of squeezing the oil-rich region as global energy concerns mounted and American and Israeli airstrikes pounded the Islamic Republic.
- Authorities were searching for three crew members from India-bound Thai cargo ship Mayuree Naree, which was set ablaze off the Oman coast in the Strait of Hormuz after a projectile strike. The Omani Navy rescued 20 from the vessel, according to Thailand's Marine Department.
- Taking note of the attack on the ship which was on its way to Kandla in Gujarat, the Ministry of External Affairs said it "deplors the fact that commercial shipping is being made a target of military attacks".
- "Precious lives, including of Indian citizens, have already been lost in multiple such attacks in the earlier phase of this conflict and the intensity and lethality of the attacks only seems to be increasing", the Ministry said in a statement, adding that targeting commercial shipping and endangering innocent civilian crew members must be avoided.
- Four people were wounded in Dubai when two Iranian drones hit near the airport, but flights continued, the Dubai Media Office said.
- The U.K. Maritime Trade Operations centre, run by the British military, reported an attack on a container ship off the UAE, saying the "extent of the damage is currently unknown but under investigation by the crew."
- Another ship was hit by a projectile in the Persian Gulf, it said. The crew was reported safe.
- Separately, Kuwait said its defences downed eight drones and Saudi Arabia said it intercepted five heading toward its Shaybah oil field.
- Iran's joint military command said it would target financial institutions in West Asia after the state-run IRNA news agency reported that the state-owned Bank Sepah in Tehran, sanctioned by the U.S. over funding armed forces, came under attack early, killing staffers.
- The ship attacks follow intense American airstrikes targeting Iranian Navy assets and the port city of Bandar Abbas on Tuesday.

Oil crisis

- Oil prices remained well below Monday's peaks but the price of Brent crude, the international standard, was still up some 20% on Wednesday from when the war began, and consumers around the world were already feeling the consequences.
- In an attempt to manage price jumps, the International Energy Agency said its member countries would unlock 400 million barrels of oil from their reserves — the biggest such release ever.

Context: The Supreme Court upheld the right to die with dignity of 32-year-old Harish Rana, who has been in a persistent vegetative state for nearly 13 years, by allowing the withdrawal of clinically assisted nutrition and hydration (CANH).

- A Bench of Justices J.B. Pardiwala and K.V. Viswanathan delivered the judgment in a packed courtroom where emotions bubbled to the surface, even reaching up to the judges' raised podium where stoicism usually ruled.
- Mr. Rana had sustained severe head injuries and 100% quadriplegic disability after sustaining a fall from the fourth floor of his accommodation as a Panjab University student in in 2013.
- "To Harish's family, we want to acknowledge the deep emotional weight this decision carries. This decision can feel like an act of surrender, but we believe it is, in truth, an act of profound compassion and courage. You are not giving up on your son. You are allowing him to leave with dignity. It reflects the depth of your selfless love and devotion towards him," Justice Pardiwala read from his 286-page opinion.
- This was the first time the Supreme Court had implemented its own 2018 Constitution Bench guidelines for what it had then called 'passive euthanasia'.
- The top court also acknowledged the general consensus that 'passive euthanasia' was an obsolete and rather confusing term. "Euthanasia' will refer strictly to active euthanasia, which remains impermissible. 'Withdrawing or Withholding of Medical Treatment' will replace the term 'passive euthanasia'," Justice Pardiwala said.
- Justice Viswanathan joined his lead colleague on the Bench in a separate and concurrent opinion that the family had left no stone unturned to care for their son and brother. "It is only when the matter reached a point of no return, that to relieve Harish from what he is undergoing, they have resorted to this legal course of action. One can only imagine the agony they would have undergone during this period," Justice Viswanathan said.
- The court directed AIIMS Delhi to shift Mr. Rana from his residence to their palliative care centre. The process of withdrawal of CANH must be part of a well-structured, tailored, robust and articulated palliative care plan for a PVS patient in his or her most vulnerable phase of life.
- "The right to die with dignity is inseparable from the right to receive quality palliative and End-of-Life (EOL) care. It is imperative to ensure that the withdrawal process is not marred by pain, agony, or suffering," the Supreme Court held.
- The court directed Chief Medical Officers in all districts to form panels of registered medical practitioners to constitute secondary medical boards to examine applications for the withdrawal of life support.
- The area Judicial Magistrates of First Class must be intimated by hospitals if a primary and second medical boards unanimously recommend withdrawal of life support in cases. The court urged the Centre to initiate a specific legislation detailing the procedure for life support withdrawal.

❖ Panel estimates Lakkundi treasure to be at least 500 years old

Context: Treasure found in Lakkundi of Gadag district which comprised mainly gold ornaments is estimated to be at least 500-600 years old.

- Members of the Treasure Evaluation Committee led by archaeologist M.S. Krishna Murthy verified and evaluated the gold ornaments in Gadag, before coming out with their assessment on the age of the ornaments.
- “After verification of the size and design of the 466 gm of gold ornaments found in Lakkundi, it is estimated that they may be of the age of Vijayanagar empire. The common public did not use ornaments having faces of lion and keertimukh (face of glory). They appear to be ornaments made for offering to a female deity,” Mr. Krishna Murthy told presspersons.
- “In the golden ornaments we have found pearls, emerald and blue sapphire,” he said. “According to the rate of gold, the value of the ornaments will be ₹80 lakh. However, since they are ancient, the value will be 10 times more,” he said.
- After gold ornaments weighing around a half a kg were found in a container during excavation for renovation of a house belong to the Ritti family in Lakkundi village on January 10, the government constituted the five-member committee led by Mr. Krishna Murthy to evaluate the age of the treasure.
- The treasure, kept in a copper container (charige/ tambige), was found at a depth of five feet when workers were excavating for laying the foundation of the house being built by the Ritti family.
- Prajwal Ritti was the first to notice the container with about half-a-kilogram of gold ornaments. Subsequently, he and his family members handed it over to the local administration.



The ornaments and other articles that were found during excavation in Lakkundi.

❖ SFC report: Bengaluru needs 1,074 km of new roads in four years

Context: The commission has recommended that the govt. allocate funds to the new city corporations to meet this requirement by taking up at least 250 km of road construction every year.

- Bengaluru will require 1,074.05 km of additional road network over the next four years, the Fifth State Finance Commission noted in its report. The commission has recommended that the government allocate funds to the new city corporations to meet this requirement by taking up at least 250 km of road construction every year.
- The recommendation follows the requirement proposals submitted by the city corporations, aimed at addressing congestion in the city. Bengaluru currently has a road network of nearly 13,000 km, which has remained stagnant for more than a decade. Meanwhile, the number of vehicles has doubled in the last decade and has reached nearly 1.3 crore. About 1,500 new vehicles are added in the city every day.
- According to the commission, the East City Corporation requires 311 km of roads, the North City Corporation 160.35 km, the South City Corporation 480 km, and the Central City Corporation 122.70 km. Strangely, the West City Corporation, which covers the largest area among the city corporations, has stated that it has no requirement.

- V. Ravichandar, a member of the Brand Bengaluru Committee, said that adding to the road network is desirable, but the feasibility and cost of land acquisition need to be reckoned with. “If the corporations are planning to complete the street grid where it is absent, especially in the eastern part of the city and the city periphery, then it is good. Road widening is desirable in select areas,” he said.
- A senior official from the North City Corporation told The Hindu that the proposal largely includes developing ‘kuccha’ roads, so there will not be much of a problem of acquisition. “The exercise is essentially to expand connectivity and eliminate congestion points. The proposal was drafted taking into account inputs from engineers’ field notes and ward-level inputs,” the official added. The officer explained that the expansion will allow commuters to have alternatives to a given road in a specific area. This will help address micro-level congestion.
- Ultimately, the corporations are aiming to increase road density per sq. km (the total length of all roads within a one-square-kilometre area), enabling commuters to move freely and avoid bottlenecks by alleviating traffic.
- Traffic police sources said that addressing micro-level congestion will automatically have an impact on arterial and sub-arterial roads because the load on these roads will be shared as people start using alternative routes as well.
- However, officials suggested that when the works are taken up, it would be better to include traffic police officers as well, as high-priority roads can be identified and then developed, which will culminate in on-ground change. For example, the West City Corporation has not submitted its requirement, but there is significant scope for improvement in Kamakshipalya, Peenya, and Gorguntepalya, traffic police sources said.

❖ Judge distinguishes between active and passive euthanasia

Context: The distinction between “active” and “passive” euthanasia goes beyond the simplistic binary of “act” versus “omission”, Supreme Court judge Justice J.B. Pardiwala said.

- “The true distinction between active and passive euthanasia lies not merely in the nature of the conduct, i.e., acts or omissions, but also in the source of the harm that leads to death,” Justice Pardiwala said in a judgment.
- The judge characterised active euthanasia as causing death by introducing a new, external agency of harm, such as a lethal injection.
- “In such cases, death is not the result of the patient’s underlying illness, but of an intervention that sets a new chain of events in motion. It is for this reason that active euthanasia is understood as an intervention that disrupts the natural path towards death,” Justice Pardiwala observed in the judgment.

Underlying condition

- Conversely, he explained that passive euthanasia should be understood as allowing death to occur. By withdrawing or withholding life support, the physician is not creating a new risk of death. Rather, the doctors are choosing to allow the underlying fatal condition to take its natural course by no longer continuing the medical interventions that were artificially prolonging life.

- “The undeniable fact is that the patient’s affliction, i.e., the underlying medical condition, is not caused by any act or omission of the doctor. Rather, the underlying condition is due to factors independent of the doctor or their actions,” Justice Pardiwala said. However, withdrawing treatment should not violate the duty of care a doctor owes a patient in all circumstances. “The surrendering of any medical effort must not be at loggerheads with the duty of care which joists all medical action,” Justice Pardiwala emphasised.
- The judgment said active euthanasia involved a “positive, overt act” designed to curtail the natural lifespan and extinguish life.

❖ ‘Right to dignified death prevails over interest of the state’

Context: The Supreme Court held that the state’s absolute interest to preserve life must become subservient to a patient’s right to dignity at a tipping point when medical interventions become increasingly futile and invasive while the chances of recovery keep dropping.

- “When the degree of bodily invasion progressively increases, and the prognosis for recovery progressively decreases, there arises a certain point when the state’s absolute interest in preserving life must become subservient to the dignity of the individual, though he is unconscious or incompetent,” Justice J.B. Pardiwala said in a judgment upholding the withdrawal of life support to a 32-year-old man in a persistent vegetative state for over 12 years.
- The court said that the interest of the state must not be allowed to overpower the dignity which must be equally assured to individuals in the process of life and death.
- “Dignity is the most sacred possession of a human being. Its possession can neither be said to lose its sanctity in the process of death nor when death occurs,” Justice Pardiwala observed.
- Temporarily keeping alive a terminally ill patient who was brain dead or in PVS, solely because doctors are able to leverage the technological advancements in medicine, and compelling such patients to endure a slow, agonising death, cannot fully be compatible with the Constitutional ideal of dignity, Justice Pardiwala said.

❖ IEA proposes largest ever oil release from strategic reserves

Context: The International Energy Agency has proposed the largest release of oil reserves in its history to restrain soaring crude prices amid the U.S.-Israel war with Iran, the Wall Street Journal said, citing officials familiar with the matter.

- The release would exceed the 182 million barrels of oil that IEA member nations put on the market in two releases in 2022 when Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the newspaper said.
- The IEA called an extraordinary meeting of members on Tuesday, with nations expected to decide on the proposal the following day, the paper added. The plan would be adopted if there were no objections, it said, but protests by even one country could delay the effort.
- Meanwhile, the Centre said it welcomes the decision from the International Energy Agency to release emergency oil stocks amid the prevailing supply disruptions.reuters

❖ Why is India staring at LPG deficit?

Context: With LPG shortage hitting day-to-day life in India, data suggest while the nation opted for a dramatic surge in LPG use, especially among poor households, driven by imports, there was no plan to boost long-term, strategic LPG reserves in parallel.

- With more than 85% of all of India's imports having to cross Strait of Hormuz to reach the nation's shores and limited back-up storage, the disruption hit quickly unlike in the case of auto fuels where strategic reserves of crude oil and products are equal to two months of consumption.
- The Indian LPG system is designed for operational flow, not stockpiling. And there are no concrete proposals currently to increase large underground storage either. The International Energy Agency (IEA) has flagged the lack of such storage as an infrastructural weakness in India.

Surge in domestic gas

- IEA figures show India's LPG imports increased threefold from 2011-12 to 2024-25 to some 20 million tonne. Imports constitute some 60% of India's needs. India's import dependency has increased from 47% in 2015 to the current levels.
- In FY26, imports had crossed 18 million tonne till January. India's total LPG consumption a month is some 3 million tonne making it the second-largest consumer of LPG in the world. But, the total storage capacity can feed less than half of that monthly requirement and almost all of it in tanks at import terminals such as Ennore.
- In terms of long-term storage, India has two underground caverns for LPG – Mangaluru and Visakhapatnam with a total storage capacity of 1.4 lakh tonne. While Visakhapatnam storage was commissioned in 2007, only one has been commissioned since the ramping up of LPG consumption started – Mangaluru with 80,000 metric tonne or just a day's consumption.
- The total underground storage amounts to 1.4 lakh tonne or less than two days of consumption. India's daily LPG consumption stands at some 80,000 tonne with more than 85% going to households.
- The country has 33 crore domestic LPG connections out of which some 10 crore were added since 2017 through the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY).
- The PMUY scheme sought to offer clean cooking gas to poor people as well, freeing women from the drudgery of firewood-based chulhas, cow-dung and kerosene stoves. The scheme gave deposit-free LPG connections to adult women from poor households and subsidised the purchase as well. The surge in Indian LPG consumption as well as import dependency is attributed to this scheme.
- The MoPNG, in its demand for grants in 2025 in Parliament, said there were no plans for constructing additional caverns, besides the two. The Mangaluru cavern became operational in 2025.
- India signed an LPG import agreement with the U.S. in February for 2.2 million tonne per year but the U.S. cargoes take some 45 days to reach India unlike the Persian Gulf cargoes.

Underground caverns

- Europe can store roughly 25% of total annual gas consumption, says Christoph Halser, Senior Analyst, Gas & LNG Research, Rystad Energy, an energy research and business intelligence firm in Norway.
- “Unlike for oil, where a mandate for 90 days emergency stock equivalent exists, European countries do not have a strategic government-controlled gas reserve and are not required to go by the EU.
- The EU imposed storage filling targets for public storage facilities first in 2022, following the outbreak of war in Ukraine.
- These mandate member countries to reach 90% filling levels before the winter, with exceptions for market disruptions and technical constraints.” adds Mr. Halser.
- India can be broadly divided into three geological zones relevant for such gas storage. The most proven is the Peninsular Shield—the Archean cratonic basement of granite, gneiss and charnockite underlying about 60% of peninsular India.

Both operational LPG gas caverns sit on this rock.

- At Visakhapatnam, the storage cavern lies 162 to 196 metre below ground level in Precambrian gneiss, using the hydraulic containment principle.
- At Mangaluru, the host rock is granitic gneiss, with the floor at 141 metre below mean sea level. The engineering is proven. The rock is cooperative.
- The second zone is the Deccan Traps—the vast basaltic plateau covering some 5,00,000 square kilometre of western and central India. For storage purposes, the traps present challenges. Engineers India Limited, designing a new LPG facility on the west coast, has encountered difficulties.
- The third zone is the salt formations of Rajasthan’s Bikaner–Barmer belt. These halite deposits can be used as cavern storage.

Cheaper, faster

- Salt caverns are cheaper and faster to construct, naturally impermeable, and capable of rapid injection and withdrawal.
- A refinery is under construction at Barmer and crude pipelines traverse the region. EIL has signed a partnership pact with Germany’s DEEP for salt cavern know-how.
- A fourth option—depleted gas reservoirs in the Krishna–Godavari, Cambay and Mumbai offshore basins — is under study.

Context: India has co-sponsored a resolution at the United Nations Security Council that condemned actions by Iran aimed at interfering with navigation through the Strait of Hormuz.

- The resolution demands the ‘immediate cessation of all attacks by the Islamic Republic of Iran’ on GCC countries; India prioritises the safety of ‘all civilians’, says Ministry in wake of criticism over unbalanced responses on conflict in West Asia.
- India has prioritised the safety of “all civilians”, the government said on Wednesday in an effort to deflect criticism that it had only condemned Iran’s actions, and not those by the U.S. and Israel in the ongoing war in West Asia.
- India co-sponsored a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) resolution at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) along with 134 countries that demanded the “immediate cessation of all attacks by the Islamic Republic of Iran” against GCC countries Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Jordan. The resolution was passed with 13 UNSC members voting in favour while Russia and China abstained.
- It condemned “any actions or threats by the Islamic Republic of Iran aimed at closing, obstructing, or otherwise interfering with international navigation through the Strait of Hormuz”.
- “The resolution reflects several of our positions,” said Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal at a weekly press briefing on Thursday.
- “We have a large diaspora in the GCC countries, and their well-being and welfare are of utmost importance. The Gulf is also very important for our energy security needs,” Mr. Jaiswal added, in references to about 10 million Indians who live and work in West Asia, and India’s energy purchases from the region that make up about 50% of its crude oil and 90% of its liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) imports.
- In contrast, there are about 9,000 Indians in Iran and India has discontinued its energy imports from Iran since 2019, under threat of U.S. sanctions. The Indian support for the UNSC resolution comes on the heels of a number of statements by the Ministry condemning specific Iranian actions such as the attacks on various countries across the West Asian region, buildings in Dubai, Omani facilities and a Thai ship bound for India.

U.S.-Israeli actions

- However, India has not similarly condemned the attacks by the U.S. and Israel on Iran, in which an estimated 1,255 people have been killed, including Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, his family and advisors; the sinking of Iranian ship IRIS Dena in the Indian Ocean that had been hosted for exercises by India; or the bombing of a school in Mubin in which 150 schoolgirls are believed to have been killed. Nor has India or the GCC-led resolution spoken about Israel’s strikes on Lebanon, where the government said more than 630 people have been killed, and 8,00,000 displaced from their homes.

- To a question from The Hindu about the seemingly unbalanced responses, Mr. Jaiswal said that the MEA had issued statements, and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar had made suo motu statements in both Houses of Parliament that regretted the loss of lives.
- “As far as the question of the schoolchildren is concerned... we have issued several statements on the ongoing conflict. We have underlined the need for prioritising the safety of all civilians. We regret the precious lives lost, and express our grief in that regard,” Mr. Jaiswal said.
- In the past few days, India’s “silence” on U.S. and Israeli actions has come in for criticism from a number of senior former diplomats speaking to the media and at various public events.
- “Diplomacy should recognise complexity, not reduce it to a single culprit,” former Indian Foreign Secretary and former Ambassador to the U.S. Nirupama Menon Rao said on Thursday in a post referring to the Ministry of External Affairs statement, suggesting that India’s sponsorship of the UN resolution would “endorse a narrative that begins the story with Iranian retaliation rather than the escalation that preceded it”.
- In an interview to news agency ANI, former Foreign Secretary Kanwal Sibal said India should have issued a statement condoling the death of Ayatollah Khamenei “to recognise that the head of state contrary to norms of international law has been politically assassinated”.
- Speaking about the March 4 submarine torpedo attack that sank the IRIS Dena “very close to India shores”, former Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran said that India must assert itself in the face of U.S. actions. “Tactical subservience can easily result in strategic irrelevance,” he added.

❖ Committee on Responsible AI formed

Context: The Government of Karnataka has constituted a Committee on Responsible Artificial Intelligence (AI) to develop a comprehensive framework to guide the safe, ethical and transparent adoption of AI across government systems and public services.

- The committee, chaired by Kris Gopalakrishnan, co-founder of Infosys, and co-chaired by N. Manjula, Secretary, Department of Electronics, IT, Biotechnology and Science & Technology, brings together leading experts from industry, academia, policy and law.
- According to a government communique, the first meeting of the committee was held on Thursday (March 12, 2026) in Bengaluru, where members discussed the rapidly evolving AI landscape and the need to establish strong governance frameworks to ensure the responsible use of AI technologies, particularly in systems that impact citizens.
- The committee would develop a Responsible AI Policy and implementation road map for Karnataka, aimed at enabling innovation while ensuring that AI systems deployed across government are safe, fair, transparent and accountable, it said.

- Commenting on the initiative, Priyank Kharge, Minister for Electronics, IT, Biotechnology and Rural Development & Panchayat Raj, said, “As Karnataka enters its Deeptech Decade, the State is focused not only on accelerating AI innovation but also on ensuring that these technologies are deployed responsibly and in the public interest.”
- The Responsible AI Committee brought together leading experts from industry, academia and policy to help shape a governance framework that promotes innovation while safeguarding transparency, accountability and citizen trust, said Mr. Kharge, adding, this initiative would help the State to continue to lead in building an AI ecosystem that is both cutting-edge and responsible.

AI for growth

- “Artificial Intelligence is a highly disruptive technology, and we are already seeing its potential to significantly accelerate the growth of Karnataka’s economy. If we are able to leverage this opportunity effectively, Karnataka can become the first in the country to develop a comprehensive framework for responsible AI—one that drives better citizen services, creates the jobs of the 21st century, and strengthens our innovation ecosystem,” said Mr. Gopalakrishnan, chairperson, Committee on Responsible Artificial Intelligence.
- By harnessing AI thoughtfully and responsibly, Karnataka would be able to significantly accelerate the growth of its economy, he further said.
- Some of the topics which came under discussion at the maiden meeting of the Responsible AI Committee included establishing responsible AI principles and policy guidelines for the State, aligned with India’s AI governance guidelines and global best practices, including legality, fairness, non-discrimination, privacy, safety, security, transparency, accountability, human oversight, inclusion and national interest.

❖ Bengaluru woman becomes life-saving stem cell donor for teenager with severe aplastic anaemia

Context: A young aplastic anaemia survivor, who received a second chance at life through a life-saving blood stem cell transplant, met his donor in Bengaluru.

- Nineteen-year-old Anandu received the blood stem cells from 32-year-old Swathi, a resident of Bengaluru, after being diagnosed with severe aplastic anaemia - a life-threatening blood disorder.

Life-saving decision

- At 15 years, when he was in 10th grade, Anandu was diagnosed with the illness. Aplastic anaemia is a life-threatening condition in which the bone marrow fails to produce enough new blood cells. Physician V.P. Krishnan, consultant, pediatric hemato-oncology and BMT, MVR Cancer Centre and Research Institute, Kozhikode, advised that he undergo a stem cell transplant as it was the only curative option.
- Swathi, an IT consultant, had participated in a donor recruitment drive at her workplace in 2016, organised by DKMS Foundation, a non-profit organisation dedicated to fight against blood cancer and other blood disorders.

- In 2022, she received a call from DKMS requesting that she donate her stem cells, to which she agreed. Anandu had received support through the DKMS Patient Funding Programme, India, which provides partial financial assistance to eligible patients undergoing blood stem cell transplantation.

More donors crucial

- Reflecting on Anandu's journey, Dr. Krishnan said, "He underwent a matched unrelated donor hematopoietic cell transplant in early 2023. Although he experienced expected complications such as febrile neutropenia and mucositis during the transplant period, his recovery progressed well."
- Today, Anandu is leading a healthy life and is preparing for his 12th board examinations.
- "Anandu and Swathi's story highlights why more people need to register as potential blood stem cell donors. It is the generosity of donors like Swathi that makes life-saving transplants possible. With only 0.09% of India's eligible population currently registered as donors, the chances of finding a match remain limited," said Patrick Paul, executive chairman, DKMS, India.
- He also added that in Karnataka, more than 49,000 individuals have registered as potential blood stem cell donors with the DKMS Foundation India. Bengaluru alone accounts for approximately 38,000 registered donors.
- Individuals between 18 and 55 years of age, in good general health, with a BMI under 40, and not already registered are eligible to sign up as potential blood stem cell donors.

❖ SC to study what constitutes 'personal data' in DPDP laws

Context: Chief Justice of India says a balance has to be struck between privacy and the right to information; court issues formal notice to Union government and asks advocate to frame questions of law.

- The Supreme Court agreed to examine what constitutes "personal data" under India's new digital personal data law, which is being accused of using data privacy norms to block the right to information.
- A three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant said the need to define "public data" and "personal data" has arisen following the implementation of the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023 and its corresponding Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025.
- The court issued formal notice to the Union government on a petition jointly filed by journalist Geeta Seshu and the Software Freedom Law Center, represented by senior advocate Indira Jaising and advocate Paras Nath Singh, who said the DPDP laws effectively stall journalists from accessing data of public interest concerning those who hold public offices.
- "The term 'public interest' has been deleted from the DPDP Act. Journalists cannot access data which is in public interest. A journalist need not have personal data, but needs information which is in the public interest to satisfy the public's right to information and knowledge," Ms. Jaising submitted.
- She said the Act does not clearly define terms such as "information" and "personal". The state could mount sweeping surveillance on anyone, Ms. Jaising said.

- She highlighted how the Act allowed compensation for illegally accessing personal data to go directly to the government and not the injured person.
- “While the DPDP Act introduces a penalty-centric framework with fines running into hundreds of crores, such penalties are payable exclusively to the Consolidated Fund of India. The data principal whose privacy is violated receives no compensation, restitution or restoration, even in cases involving identity theft, financial fraud, reputational harm or dignitary injury,” the petition said.
- The Chief Justice said a balance had to be struck between privacy and the right to information. One right should not compromise the other, the court said.
- “At what point should data regarding a respectable person holding public office be treated as public and when should it be seen as personal,” the CJI asked. The Chief Justice pointed out that an individual’s data privacy has to be protected against sweeping provisions of law.
- “Entire personal data of the citizenry from a substantial part of the globe are flowing into bigwig private entities. Data has become the true wealth of the day,” Chief Justice Kant said.
- The court asked Ms. Jaisingh to frame questions of law and scheduled the case for detailed hearing on March 23.

❖ ‘Parental income alone cannot set creamy layer status’

Context: Settling the decades-long confusion over how to calculate wealth or income to determine the creamy layer status of OBC candidates for reservation, the Supreme Court ruled this week that it “cannot be decided solely on the basis of the [parental] income”.

- This is likely to widen the reservation pool to include the children of senior public sector officials who had earlier been excluded on the basis of their parents’ annual salary income being above the ₹8 lakh threshold.
- The court said the framework to exclude the creamy layer from the OBC quota is clear that parental income from salaries and agricultural land are to be kept out while applying the income/wealth test.
- A Bench of Justices P.S. Narasimha and R. Mahadevan was hearing an appeal by the Union government against lower court rulings in favour of such OBC candidates. The cases arise from confusion over how to apply the income/wealth test for OBC children of PSU/PSB officials in the absence of equivalence with government posts, and whether income from salaries can be included in these calculations. During the hearings, OBC candidates selected in civil services examinations over the past decade argued that the Centre had incorrectly deemed them as part of the excluded creamy layer by including the salaries of their parents who worked in Central and State PSUs.

‘Based on status’

- In its March 11 judgment, the court noted that the creamy layer exclusion criteria were “status-based rather than purely income-based, reflecting the policy understanding that advancement within the governmental service hierarchy denotes social progression independent of fluctuating salary levels”.

- When the OBC quota was introduced in 1993, a guiding charter was created to exclude OBC candidates whose families had accumulated certain social and economic privileges over the years, known as the creamy layer.
- This would then allow reservation benefits only for those declared as “non-creamy layer” candidates, based on several criteria, including a crucial income or wealth test.
- The 1993 charter of the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) had declared some OBC families ineligible on the basis of their occupations.
- Thus, children of people in constitutional posts, senior Central and State government employees, members of the armed forces, and property owners supposedly could not avail themselves of the OBC quota for the civil services.
- However, exceptions were carved out of these exclusions: for instance, children of MPs and MLAs; government officials who have been promoted, not hired, into senior positions; and owners of unirrigated agricultural land, among others, are all eligible for OBC quotas, subject to a parental annual income limit of ₹8 lakh.
- However, the DoPT has differentiated in how this income test is applied. With the help of a clarificatory letter issued in October 2004, the interpretation that has been applied was that parental salaries could be counted separately to apply the income test for determining the creamy layer for candidates whose parents worked in Central or State PSUs, an interpretation that was contested in the present cases.

‘Unequal treatment’

- Delivering the judgment in this batch of cases, the Supreme Court said, “Treating the children of those employed in PSUs or private employment, etc., as being excluded from the benefit of reservation only on the basis of their income derived from salaries, and without reference to their posts (whether Group A or B, or Group C or D) would certainly lead to hostile discrimination between parties who are similarly placed and would amount to equals being treated unequally.”

❖ CPI inflation quickens to 10-month high of 3.2% in February

Context: Retail inflation in India quickened to a 10-month high of 3.2% 2026, driven up by inflation in the food and tobacco categories, the latest data shows.

- The Consumer Price Index data released on Thursday by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation is the second edition of the new series of the Index, and so category-wise historical data is not yet available.
- However, the new series allows for a calculation of the headline inflation numbers from February 2021. Data show CPI inflation was last higher in April 2025, when it was 3.3%.
- Economists, however, warn that the ongoing disruption in fuel supplies due to the conflict in West Asia would likely push up inflation in March in the electricity, gas and other fuels, and restaurant and accommodation categories of the CPI.
- “As expected, the uptick was almost entirely led by the food and beverages (F&B) segment, which accounted for as much as 44 basis points of the 47 basis points rise in the headline print between these months [January and February],” Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist at ICRA said.

- She added that core inflation, which excludes F&B and electricity, gas & other fuels remained unchanged at 3.4% between January and February 2026.
- Inflation in the food and beverages category stood at 3.35% in February, up from 2.1% in January. The other category to see markedly higher inflation was ‘paan, tobacco and intoxicants’, which saw inflation quicken to 3.5% in February from 2.9% in January.
- Notably, the new series also shows that inflation in the ‘personal care, social protection and miscellaneous goods and services’ has remained above 19% in both January and February, largely driven by the higher prices of previous metals.
- That is, inflation in this category quickened to 19.6% in February from 19.02% in January.

West Asia crisis impact

- “The main upward thrust comes from the personal care segment where inflation was 19.6%,” Madan Sabnavis, Chief Economist at the Bank of Baroda said. “The relentless increase in prices of silver and gold has contributed to this increase.”
- This will be a factor that will continue to exert pressure in March, too, given the global uncertainty, he added, saying that the rupee depreciation would also add to this.

**KPSC
PRELIMS
CUM MAINS**

**ADMISSIONS OPEN
MORNING, AFTERNOON
& EVENING BATCHES**

**WALK-IN FOR FREE
COUNSELING TODAY!**



*IF YOU CAN DREAM IT
YOU CAN DO IT!!*

**TAKE THE FIRST STEP!
JOIN OUR COURSE NOW!**

Context: The 'Economic Stabilisation Fund' from supplementary grants to provide fiscal space amid global uncertainties, says Finance Minister; Lok Sabha clears grant with around ₹2 lakh crore cash outgo.

- Amid the \$100-per-barrel oil shock and fears of energy shortage and supply chain disruptions arising out of the West Asia conflict, the **Centre has allocated ₹57,381 crore for an Economic Stabilisation Fund that would provide it fiscal space to address global headwinds**, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in the Lok Sabha on Friday. She was replying to the debate on the Second Supplementary Demand for Grants the government placed before Parliament.
- **The Lok Sabha passed the Centre's demand for a net cash outgo of ₹2.01 lakh crore, including the ₹57,381-crore allocation.** Ms. Sitharaman said the Centre would meet its fiscal deficit target for 2025-26 even after taking these fresh allocations into consideration.
- The Centre had sought approval for spending around ₹2.81 lakh crore extra in the current fiscal. With additional receipts of around ₹80,000 crore estimated in the supplementary, the net additional cash spending will be ₹2.01 lakh crore.

Emergency response

The Lok Sabha on Friday passed the Centre's Second Supplementary Demand for Grants

- Approval sought for gross additional expenditure of around **₹2.81 lakh crore**
- Savings and receipts aggregates to around **₹80,000 crore**
- Around **₹2.01 lakh crore** net cash outgo for additional expenditures

I want to highlight the point that the proposed Economic Stabilisation Fund will provide fiscal headroom to allow India to respond to the global headwinds

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN
Union Finance Minister



'Strong framework'

- The Minister said policy initiatives undertaken post COVID-19 "made sure that the economy recovered well" and helped the government strengthen the macroeconomic framework. This has enabled the country to absorb economic shocks without deviating from the fiscal consolidation road map, she said.
- "But I want to highlight the point that the proposed Economic Stabilisation Fund will provide fiscal headroom to allow India to respond to the global headwinds, such as the recent crisis, unanticipated supply chain disruptions, unexpected shocks to sub-sectors in the Indian economy and any other event that may have significant fiscal implications," Ms. Sitharaman said.
- In her Budget speech on February 1, Ms. Sitharaman had stated that the government was targeting a fiscal deficit target of 4.4% of India's Gross Domestic Product.
- The Finance Minister said the extra expenditure would not entail the Centre's fiscal deficit target being missed.
- "I wish to reiterate that with all these extras that we are coming up with, whether it is technical supplementaries or cash supplementaries, I don't want any Member of Parliament to wonder if I will be able to reach the fiscal deficit number that I have said while placing the Budget," she said.
- "The commitment given to this House, inclusive of the second supplementary demand for grants, will be within the fiscal deficit target that had been presented in this Parliament on February 1, 2026," she added.

❖ Bengaluru shows consistently low PM2.5 levels

Context: A report states that Bengaluru shows consistently low PM2.5 levels compared to other cities and stands out for maintaining the lowest and most stable air quality.

- The report says that median concentrations remain relatively stable, with a slight increase during the winter months.
- A new report states that Bengaluru shows consistently low PM2.5 levels compared to other cities and stands out for maintaining the lowest and most stable air quality.
- The report, **‘Meteorology-Driven Persistence of PM2.5 Pollution in Indian Cities: Implications for NCAP Phase-III’**, by Climate Trends, analyses how meteorological conditions influence the persistence of PM2.5 pollution across six major Indian cities: Delhi, Patna, Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai, and Bengaluru.

On CPCB data

- The report is based on the Central Pollution Control Board’s (CPCB) air quality monitoring data from 2024–2025, and the analysis integrates station-averaged CPCB observations with meteorological clustering to characterise PM2.5 behaviour across monthly, seasonal, and regime-specific scales.
- **“Bengaluru shows consistently low PM2.5 levels compared to other cities. Median concentrations remain relatively stable, with only a slight increase during the winter months.** The narrow interquartile ranges across most months indicate low variability and fewer extreme pollution events, making Bengaluru the least polluted city among those analysed,” the report states.
- It added that the seasonal mean PM2.5 concentrations in Bengaluru indicate better air quality when compared to northern cities, with clear seasonal variability across both years.
- According to the report **in 2024, the seasonal mean values were 37.4 micrograms per cubic metre in the winter, 35.7 micrograms per cubic metre in the summer, 15.7 micrograms per cubic metre during the monsoon, and 33.3 micrograms per cubic metre in the post-monsoon season.**

During colder months

- “In 2025, winter pollution increased to 42.4 micrograms per cubic metre, indicating slightly poorer air quality during colder months, while significant improvements were observed in other seasons.
- The summer mean dropped sharply to 24.7 micrograms per cubic metre, the monsoon mean declined further to 13.4 micrograms per cubic metre, and the post-monsoon mean reduced to 28.6 micrograms per cubic metre, reflecting overall seasonal improvement outside winter in 2025,” the report states.
- The monthly average PM2.5 values further illustrate these patterns.
- **In 2024**, the highest monthly mean was observed in March (46.2 micrograms per cubic metre), followed by January (39.6 micrograms per cubic metre) and February (39.4 micrograms per cubic metre), while the cleanest months were June and July (both ~11-12 micrograms per cubic metre) due to the monsoon influence.

- **In 2025**, most months recorded lower mean values compared to 2024, particularly in April (26.9 micrograms per cubic metre) and May (15.2 micrograms per cubic metre).
- However, winter months showed mixed trends, with January (40.4 micrograms per cubic metre) remaining high and a sharp increase in December (52.2 micrograms per cubic metre), the highest monthly mean across both years.
- **“Overall, the mean PM2.5** levels suggest that Bengaluru experienced cleaner air in 2025 during summer, monsoon, and post-monsoon seasons, although episodic winter pollution remains a concern,” the report stated.

Delhi highest

- The report identifies Delhi as the most severely polluted city, recording the highest annual PM2.5 levels and extended periods of severe air quality in winter. Patna emerges as the second-most polluted city, while Mumbai and Chennai saw a rise in annual pollution levels in 2025.

❖ Bill for levy and collection of fee on ads tabled

- The Karnataka Municipalities and Certain Other Law (Amendment) Bill, 2026, was tabled in the Legislative Assembly to make provisions for advertisements on a par with the provisions of the **Greater Bengaluru Governance Act, 2024, for levying and collection of fees on advertisements, regulation of unauthorised advertisements, and validation of fees and penalties in municipalities and municipal corporations.**
- Minister for Urban Development tabled the Bill in the House, and it would be taken up for discussion next week.

❖ Airports in tier-II cities are not financially viable after end of UDAN scheme: M.B. Patil

Context: Airports in tier-II cities and district headquarters have proved to be not financially viable after the end of the UDAN scheme, Industry and Infrastructure Development Minister M.B. Patil said in the Legislative Assembly.

- Replying to a question by BJP member G. Janardhana Reddy, Mr. Patil said airports in tier-II cities such as Kalaburagi, Bidar and Shivamogga are not financially sustainable after the completion of the three-year incentive period under the scheme, which provides concessional airfares to passengers.

Across country

- Noting that several airports located in district and divisional headquarters across the country are facing similar financial challenges, he said the **airport at Bidar is currently operating with financial support from the Kalyana Karnataka Region Development Board (KKRDB).** There has also been a demand to resume operations at the Kalaburagi airport with similar support from the Board, he added.
- To improve the viability of district airports, Mr. Patil said he had proposed to the Union Civil Aviation Minister that the **UDAN scheme be extended from three years to five years. For the subsequent five years, the Centre and the State governments could jointly support operations in a 50:50 ratio,** he suggested.

- He also said the State government is planning to introduce an aviation policy — on the lines of those adopted by Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh — to develop airports in tier-II cities and make them financially viable.

Ballari airport proposal

- The government intends to establish an airport **in Ballari to serve the regions of Vijayanagara and Koppal districts** as well as neighbouring areas of Andhra Pradesh.
- The airport project was **first proposed in Ballari in 2010**, but no groundwork commenced after the private firm associated with the project withdrew. In 2022, the previous BJP government decided to take up the project with State funding. However, no consensus has been reached regarding the 900 acres acquired nearly 15 years ago for the project.
- Mr. Patil said the Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board (KIADB) has now identified two alternative sites in Ballari district measuring about 800 acres and 1,200 acres for the proposed project.

Meeting with CM

- Mr. Patil said a meeting of public representatives from Ballari, Vijayanagara and Koppal districts will soon be convened under the chairmanship of the Chief Minister to discuss the merits and challenges of the project.
- However, the suitability of the proposed site will have to be assessed by the Airports Authority of India before a final decision is taken.
- Mr. Patil said airports must be planned with long-term foresight to avoid repeating the mistakes seen in places such as Hubballi, Belagavi and Vijayapura.

❖ Lokpal asks SC to clarify on procedure for grant of sanctions

Context: The Supreme Court agreed to clarify the procedure for the Lokpal to grant sanction in corruption complaints, after the top anti-graft ombudsman was criticised by the Delhi High Court for “mutilating” the law while dealing with the cash-for-query allegations against Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra.

- The Delhi High Court had set aside the Lokpal’s November 12, 2025 order sanctioning a chargesheet on the basis of a CBI probe report on the allegations.
- The Lokpal order was based on a complaint that Ms. Moitra allegedly took cash and favours for asking Parliamentary questions to further the interests of Dubai-based businessman Darshan Hiranandani.
- Ms. Moitra had argued that the sharing of Lok Sabha member portal login credentials for clerical purposes was neither prohibited nor unusual, and that she had personally finalised her own Parliamentary Questions. She had also questioned the jurisdiction of the Lokpal.
- The High Court’s judgment in December last year was peppered with scathing remarks about the ombudsman indulging in “a form of statutory ingenuity or re-engineering of the Lokpal Act” in the case. The judgment went on to “request” the Lokpal to consider the question of sanction in Ms. Moitra’s case “strictly in accordance with the provisions” of the Lokpal and Lokayukta Act, 2013.

- A Supreme Court Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, on Friday, halted the implementation of this “request”, and issued notice to Ms. Moitra on the Lokpal’s appeal.
- At the hearing in the top court, senior advocate Ranjit Kumar, for the Lokpal, said that the ombudsman wanted definite clarity on the law and procedure for accordance of sanction under Section 20 of the 2013 Act.

❖ Iran calls on BRICS to play positive role in global security

Context: Iran has urged India, the BRICS Chair, to ensure that the grouping plays a role in supporting “global stability and security”, as Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi spoke to External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar.

- The call between the two Ministers, the fourth conversation between them since the war began on February 28, came shortly after Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian to request Iran’s support for Indian ships to pass safely through the Hormuz Strait.
- Mr. Araghchi’s stress on **BRICS is significant as India is expected to host the Summit this year, where both Iran and the United Arab Emirates will be invited.** Thus far, the grouping has made no statement on the war that enters its third week on Saturday. On Friday, Mr. Jaishankar posted a short note saying he had “another conversation” with Mr. Araghchi, and had discussed “bilateral matters as also BRICS-related issues.”
- “Mr. Araghchi stressed the necessity for regional and international bodies and organizations to condemn the military aggression against Iran,” said an Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs readout of the conversation released by the Mehr News Agency. “Highlighting the importance and position of BRICS as a forum for developing multilateral cooperation, Mr. Araghchi deemed it essential for the institution to play a constructive role at the current juncture in supporting regional and global stability.”
- The request from Tehran for a BRICS statement to “condemn the military aggression against Iran” could prove awkward as India has thus far not criticised the U.S.-Israel strikes.

❖ India and Seychelles carry out joint military exercise

- The ongoing **11th edition of the India–Seychelles Joint Military Exercise LAMITIYE-2026**, being conducted at the Seychelles Defence Academy from March 10 to 22, witnessed professional exchanges and joint training aimed at strengthening defence cooperation between the two countries.
- The exercise marks the **first tri-services edition**, bringing together personnel from the Indian Army, Navy and Air Force alongside the Seychelles Defence Forces. The training focuses on enhancing interoperability in sub-conventional operations in semi-urban environments, particularly within the framework of United Nations peacekeeping missions.



Context: The Centre on Friday introduced a Bill to amend the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, amid claims it takes away transgender people's "right to self-perceived gender identity" and alters the definition of a "transgender person".

- The move drew condemnation from the community and activists told The Hindu that the proposed amendments are in variance of the landmark 2014 NALSA judgment.
- Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment, Virendra Kumar, introduced the Bill.
- The government said the "existing vague definition" of transgender persons had made it "impossible to identify the genuine oppressed persons to whom the benefits of the Act are intended to reach". It said the law was never meant to protect "each and every class of persons with various gender identities, self-perceived sex/gender identities or gender fluidities" and "was and is intended to protect only those who face severe social exclusion due to biological reasons for no fault of their own and no choice of their own."
- Under the 2019 Act, a transgender person is one "whose gender does not match with the gender assigned to that person at birth and includes trans-man or trans-woman (whether or not such person has undergone Sex Reassignment Surgery or hormone therapy or laser therapy or such other therapy), person with intersex variations, genderqueer and person having such socio-cultural identities as kinner, hijra, aravani and jogta."
- The proposed definition says transgender persons are people "having such socio-cultural identities as kinner, hijra, aravani, and jogta, or eunuch", people with intersex variations, and people who have "congenital variations" compared to the "male or female development" in their "primary sexual characteristics, external genitalia, chromosomal patterns, gonadal development, endogenous hormone production or response or such other medical conditions".
- It goes on to say that any person or child who was "compelled to assume, adopt, or outwardly present a transgender identity, by mutilation, emasculation, castration, amputation, or any surgical, chemical, or hormonal procedure or otherwise" would also be included in this definition. However, it adds that this definition shall not include "persons with different sexual orientations and self-perceived sexual identities".
- Activists said the community fought to ensure that the right to self-identification was codified into law when the Act was drafted in 2019.

- Aqsa Shaikh, a transwoman who teaches community medicine in Delhi, expressed shock. “I am wondering who I am, if I am not a transgender person as per this amendment,” she told The Hindu.
- Tamil Nadu-based trans activist Grace Banu, a key community leader, said, “Our entire fight when the 2019 Act was being drafted was to ensure that the right to self-identification of our gender was included explicitly in the law.”
- The amendments introduce a Section on crimes against transgender persons and children, and prescribe specific punishments. These offences include denial of access to public spaces to trans people, forcing transgender people to perform bonded labour, or forcing them to leave their homes or places of residence.

-----All the best-----

Why choose Dr. Rajkumar IAS/KAS Academy?

