



DR. RAJKUMAR ACADEMY
BENGALURU

AN INITIATIVE BY DR. RAJKUMAR FAMILY

WEEKLY NEWS COMPILATION

A CRISP AND COMPREHENSIVE CURRENT AFFAIRS CAPSULE

APRIL WEEK 1

30-03-2026 TO 04-04-2026

**INS ARIDHAMAN,
NUCLEAR-
POWERED
SUBMARINE,
ENTERS INDIA'S
NAVAL FLEET**

**'AMARAVATI BILL'
GETS RAJYA SABHA
APPROVAL**

**INDIA CAN
COMFORTABLY CATER
TO PNG DEMAND**

**ARTEMIS II
MISSION**

**CENTRAL ARMED
POLICE FORCES
BILL**

❖ How delayed polls choked city's air quality

Context: The delay in holding civic body polls has not only affected local administration in Bengaluru but has also led to the stalling of a whopping ₹1,475.90 crore under the 15th Finance Commission's million-plus cities challenge, aimed at improving air quality.

- While the stalled funds themselves appear mammoth, the impact of losing them has also affected air quality and particulate matter levels in Bengaluru, which have seen a steady rise over the last five years. For example, the Air Quality Index (AQI), which earlier averaged between the 60s and 90s in the city, has now crossed the 120 mark. In March 2026, the highest recorded AQI stood at 141, according to the city AQI dashboard.

What is the programme?

- The Union government launched the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) in 2019 to improve air quality across the country. Cities receive funds to improve air quality either under NCAP or under the 15th Finance Commission's scheme called the million-plus cities challenge, a performance-based incentive for air quality improvement and solid waste management. Bengaluru was deemed eligible to receive grants from the 15th Finance Commission.
- Accordingly, documents accessed by The Hindu show that Bengaluru received funds for two consecutive financial years, FY 2021–22 and FY 2022–23. However, after that, the city received no funding.
- According to Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) sources, the criteria to receive grants were amended in 2023, making it mandatory to have an elected urban local body. For the erstwhile Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) area, civic polls were last held in 2015, and councillors' terms ended in 2020, after which elections have not been conducted.
- As a result, BBMP has missed out on securing ₹1,475.90 crore, which could have been used to address the rising levels of Particulate Matter 10 (PM10) in the city.
- Compounding the problem, BBMP also failed to utilise the funds it had earlier received. Between 2021 and 2023, the 15th Finance Commission released ₹572 crore under the Solid Waste Management (SWM) component and ₹256 crore under the air quality component.
- Although the local body had ₹828 crore at its disposal, its utilisation began only in 2023, according to the PRAANA portal set up to monitor the release and usage of funds.

Where were the funds used?

- Recently, Bangalore Central MP P.C. Mohan raised a question in the Lok Sabha regarding NCAP/15th Finance Commission funds allocated to Bengaluru and their utilisation.

- The response showed that Bengaluru has used the funds to plant green cover over 1,25,290 square metres, collect 2,72,000 tonnes of construction and demolition (C&D) waste, procure and deploy 127 new electric buses, and intervene at 20 traffic congestion points, among several other measures.
- In what comes as a welcome move, the civic authority has finally started discussions on improving air quality and greening urban spaces. According to GBA sources, Chief Commissioner M. Maheshwar Rao has been emphasising the need to green urban spaces and median lines during meetings.
- “Once GBA elections are conducted and a local governance body is elected, we will be eligible for funds and start receiving them. The action plan for intervention is ready, and we have obtained government approval,” a GBA source told The Hindu.
- Further, a city-level monitoring and implementation committee has been formed to oversee the approved city action plan. An emergency response plan has also been prepared to tackle air pollution during critical situations. The committee has identified nine hotspots (high-emission zones), and action plans have been formulated to address them.

❖ Challenging times, says PM on West Asia crisis

Context: Modi warns against politicising the issue, says the region is a major centre of India’s energy needs, and due to the ongoing war, a ‘crisis’ regarding petrol and diesel is emerging around the world.

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday noted that the situation in West Asia had created “challenging times” and called for those “politicising” the issue to refrain from doing so. He cautioned Indians against believing rumours related to the crisis.
- Speaking during his monthly Mann Ki Baat address, the Prime Minister said that following the COVID-19 pandemic, it was expected that the world would move forward on a path of renewed progress.
- “However, situations of war and conflict have continuously kept arising in different parts of the world,” he said.
- “At present, a fierce war has been going on in our neighbourhood for a month. Millions of our family members, near and dear ones, live in these countries, especially working in the Gulf countries.”

Deeply grateful

- “I am deeply grateful to the Gulf countries for providing all kinds of assistance to more than one crore Indians there,” he added.
- Mr. Modi noted that the West Asian region is a major centre of India’s energy needs, and due to the ongoing war, a “crisis” regarding petrol and diesel is emerging around the world.
- “These certainly are challenging times,” he said. “I would once again urge all my countrymen that we must unitedly overcome this challenge. Those who are politicising even this issue should refrain from doing so. This is a matter concerning the interests of 140 crore countrymen; there is no place for self-serving politics.”

- “Therefore, those who are spreading rumours are causing a major harm to the country,” Mr. Modi added. “I would also appeal to all citizens to remain vigilant and not be misled by rumours. Trust only the continuous information provided by the government and take action based only on that.”

Key initiatives

- During his address, the Prime Minister also took note of various initiatives aimed at nation-building. One such initiative was the Gyan Bharatam Survey aimed at collecting information about manuscripts across the country.
- “If you have a manuscript or information about it, do share its image on the Gyan Bharatam App,” Mr. Modi said, adding, “Information related to each entry is being verified before it is recorded. I am glad that thousands of manuscripts have been shared so far.”
- Another initiative he highlighted was MY Bharat Budget Quest. “It aims to connect the youth across the country with the Budget process and policymaking,” the Prime Minister said. “Nearly 12 lakh youth from across the country participated in the quiz.”

Sports achievements

- The Prime Minister also devoted a section of his address to India’s sporting achievements in the recent past.
- “When India achieved a historic victory in the T20 World Cup, a wave of joy swept across the country,” he said. “We are all very proud of our team’s thumping success.”
- “Late last month, a thrilling match was witnessed in Hubli, Karnataka. By winning this match, the Jammu and Kashmir cricket team secured for themselves the Ranji Trophy,” he said. He remarked that this success for Jammu and Kashmir will encourage many young people to take up sports, adding that the people of J&K have a “tremendous passion” for sports. “I am glad that it is now becoming a hub for major sporting events,” Mr. Modi said. “I hope this winning streak of J&K sports persons continues in the future.”

❖ Despite assurance from Centre, MGNREGS workers denied work

Context: From Bihar to Rajasthan, thousands of rural workers say work has been halted; as the Centre continues talks with the States on the VB-G RAM G Act, some district officials say they have been directed not to start new work under the old scheme.

- For the past 87 days, MGNREGS workers have been protesting at the Muzaffarpur district headquarters in Bihar. The Union government had assured them that until the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Act, 2025, passed by Parliament in December, is rolled out, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) will continue unchanged. But on the ground, workers say the story is very different.
- The protest in Muzaffarpur began on January 2. Nearly 12,000 workers in the district have not received work for the past three or four months — even before the new rural employment law was introduced.

Uncertainty continues

- There is no clarity on when the new scheme under the VB-G RAM G Act will be implemented on the ground, as the Centre is still holding talks with the States to establish the necessary framework.
- “Usually, no work is given during the rain. We waited for the monsoon to end, then for the waterlogged areas to drain. By December, the MGNREGA season normally begins. But despite repeated demand, no work has been provided.
- This is a blatant violation of the law,” said Sanjay Sahni of MGNREGA Watch-Bihar, an organisation working with rural workers. Facing repeated rejections, around 16,000 workers — most of them women — gathered at the district headquarters to demand work. A delegation also travelled to Delhi on March 25 to meet senior officials in the Rural Development Ministry.
- “The district officials claim they have instructions not to start any new work. But the Ministry officials insist that no such order exists,” Mr. Sahni said. He wonders whether it is lack of information or whether there is an informal signal from the Centre to stop all work under the MGNREGS.

Ground reality

- In Dungarpur district of Rajasthan, similar complaints have emerged. At Balwarha panchayat, around 40 women workers arrived on March 23 to complete paperwork for April’s work cycle. Panchayat officials asked them to return later, citing a lack of clarity. On Saturday, they were told that the MGNREGS had been discontinued and no further work would be available under the scheme.
- At Padarmarhi Mewarha panchayat, nearly 30 women workers sat for four hours last Friday, demanding work for the first week of April. Local officials initially claimed that directions had been issued not to start new MGNREGS works. After the women refused to leave, their applications were eventually accepted, but uncertainty continues whether any work will actually be assigned.
- “For each household, MGNREGA work brings in about ₹25,000 to ₹28,000 annually. In some women-led households, MGNREGA and government pensions are the only sources of income,” said Madhulika of the Rajasthan Asangathit Mazdoor Union.
- “There are no formal orders. The VB-G RAM G Act clearly states that until it is implemented, MGNREGA will continue. But on the ground, we are being told otherwise,” she said.

❖ Russia reports fire in new Ukrainian strike on major Baltic port

Context: A drone strike claimed by Ukraine triggered a fire at Russia’s Baltic port of Ust-Luga as the regional governor on Sunday reported new damage at the major exporting hub hit for a second time in days.

- Ukraine has intensified retaliatory attacks on Russian infrastructure — including refineries, oil depots and ports — saying they are justified as part of the effort to cut revenues funding Russia’s offensive.

- “There is damage to the port of Ust-Luga. There were no casualties,” Russian regional governor Alexander Drozdenko said on social media. He said that rescuers were working to extinguish a fire at the port, a key hub for Russian fertilizers, oil and coal exports.
- Ukraine’s SBU security service later on Sunday claimed the attack saying its drones “successfully struck” the Ust-Luga oil terminal.



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❖ Iranian Parliament mulls possible exit from nuclear treaty

Context: Iran's Parliament is reviewing a possible exit from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said on Monday, while insisting that Tehran has not and will not seek nuclear weapons.

- “What is the benefit of joining a treaty in which bullying parties at the international level not only do not allow us to benefit from its rights but also attack our nuclear facilities?” Mr. Baghaei said, adding that Tehran would respect the treaty as long as it is a member.
- Iran says its nuclear programme is for peaceful purpose and that as a signatory of the NPT it has the right to peaceful nuclear enrichment.
- “Regarding membership in this treaty, regardless of our clear position on the prohibition of all weapons of mass destruction, this is genuinely a debate taking place within public opinion and at the parliamentary level,” he added.
- In June 2025, the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran's key nuclear facilities. In the ongoing war, Israel targeted Iran's nuclear facilities again.

❖ Manufacturing, capital goods lift IIP growth to 5.2% in Feb.

Context: Growth in India's industrial activity accelerated marginally to 5.2% in February, driven by a quickening of growth in the manufacturing and capital goods sectors, data released on Monday showed.

- The data on the Index of Industrial Production for February, released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, shows that the final growth for January was also upgraded to 5.1% from the provisional 4.8% stated as part of last month's data release.
- Within the Index, growth in the manufacturing sector accelerated to 6% in February, from 5.3% in the previous month. This was also considerably faster than the 2.8% in growth in February last year. The mining and quarrying sector, on the other hand, saw growth slowing to a four-month low of 3.1% in February 2026, down from 4.3% in January. This was, however, faster than the 1.6% seen in February 2025.
- Growth in the electricity sector, too, slowed to 2.3% in February 2026 from 5.1% in January.
- “The growth is investment led, with basic metals, automobiles, machinery, and double digit gains in capital goods and infrastructure/construction goods pointing to a capex and infrastructure driven upcycle,” Rajeev Sharan, Head of Research at Brickwork Ratings said.
- Notably, growth in the capital goods sector accelerated to a nine-month high of 12.5% in February 2026 from 4.1% in the previous month. This performance on the back of a relatively strong performance of 8.1% in February of last year.
- Consumer demand, however, seems to have slumped, according to the data. The consumer durables sector contracted 2.1% in February 2026, the sector's worst performance in 27 months. The consumer non-durables sector, too, contracted 0.6%, the second consecutive month of contraction.

- “Overall, the data confirms that investment linked sectors are anchoring growth, while softer consumer non durables and modest mining and electricity gains highlight areas where the recovery is still incomplete,” Mr. Sharan said. “From a credit rating perspective, sustained manufacturing and investment momentum support credit strength, though uneven demand means fundamentals are still evolving.”

❖ **Uniform 50% LS seat hike to benefit North: Telangana CM**

Context: Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy has criticised the Centre’s proposal to increase the number of Lok Sabha seats by a blanket 50% across all States, asserting that the move will disproportionately benefit northern States while leaving southern States politically marginalised.

- He opposed the idea of applying a uniform 50% hike in every State as it would widen existing disparities, particularly disadvantaging the southern States. “The current difference in representation between States must be maintained,” he said.
- If the proposal is applied uniformly, the five southern States collectively will gain 66 seats, while the northern States will see an increase of roughly 142 seats, says Revanth Reddy.
- Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy has criticised the Union government’s proposal to increase the number of Lok Sabha seats by a blanket 50% across all States, asserting that the move will disproportionately benefit northern States while leaving southern States politically marginalised.

‘Existing disparities’

- In the delimitation proposals of the Centre, the total strength of the Lok Sabha is anticipated to rise from the current 543 seats to 816, an addition of 273 seats, he said in an informal chat with presspersons. Mr. Reddy has opposed the idea as it would widen existing disparities between States, particularly disadvantaging the southern States. “The current difference in representation between States must be maintained,” he said.
- Mr. Reddy said that Uttar Pradesh currently has 80 MPs and it would go up to 120 with a 50% increase. Telangana, now with 17 seats, would go up to just 26. Under the existing framework, the difference between the two States is 63 seats; under the 50% model, it would expand to 94 seats, giving undue advantage and influence to U.P. Tamil Nadu (39 seats), Karnataka (28), Andhra Pradesh (25) and Kerala (20) would see increases proportionate to their existing allocations but remain significantly behind larger northern States, he pointed out. If the 50% model is applied uniformly, the five southern States collectively would gain around 66 seats, increasing their total from 129 to 195. The relative imbalance is the core problem as the Hindi-belt and northern States would see a rise of roughly 142 seats, Mr. Reddy said.
- “There is no objection to increasing the number of Assembly seats in States but Parliament is a different ball game,” he said.

❖ Peenya, Hennur among pockets emerging as heat islands; GBA plans cooling measures

Context: While Bengaluru is not classified as a heatwave-prone city, pockets in it — such as Peenya, Nagawara, Hennur, and HBR Layout — are emerging as “urban heat islands”, with temperatures up to 4 degrees Celsius higher than other parts of the city, according to a baseline study.

- Urban heat islands occur when dense construction, asphalt roads, and reduced greenery trap heat during the day and release it at night, making these areas hotter than their surroundings.
- The baseline study by the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, in which Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) corporations had also participated, shows that land-use changes are a key driver of the heat island effect. Industrial zones like Peenya, dominated by concrete and corrugated structures, and mixed-use corridors such as Nagawara-Hennur, with heavy construction and major transit intersections, re-radiate heat and remain warmer at night.

Interventions planned

- To tackle this, city corporations — West and North, under which the mentioned areas fall — are developing a targeted heat action framework, combining immediate mitigation with a long-term “Heat and Health” protocol.
- Measures include reflective “cool roof” interventions for public buildings (such as painting hospitals and schools white), expansion of tree cover, and restoration of water bodies to reintroduce natural cooling.
- West Corporation Commissioner K.V. Rajendra said the corporation will begin with the rollout of cool roofing across all primary health centres (PHCs).
- GBA officials say that marginalised communities, like labourers and frontline workers, operating within heat hotspots face disproportionate risks
- In neighbourhoods such as Peenya, Hennur, and Nagawara, identified as Bengaluru’s emerging heat hotspots in a baseline study by the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, the impact of rising temperatures is most visible in the daily routines of those who work outdoors.
- Nearly 44% of the city’s workforce is engaged in outdoor occupations, and for them, these pockets translate into prolonged exposure to heat with no scope for relief during the day, according to surveys referenced by the Greater Bengaluru Authority’s (GBA) corporations, which are now planning targeted cooling measures in these areas.

Most vulnerable

- Field insights and reports cited by officials, including those by Hasiru Dala, an organisation working with informal labourers, show that over 73% of waste workers continue to toil during peak heat hours, with 92% reporting that the heat directly affects them. This is a trend that extends to construction labourers, traffic personnel, and street vendors. Workers report fatigue, dehydration, reduced productivity, and heat-related health stress, as daily-wage and location-dependent livelihoods leave little room to pause work or move to better conditions.

- Officials said their assessment also drew on data from the National Crime Records Bureau and the State Health Department, which show that in India, 730 deaths due to heat or sunstroke were reported in 2022, 374 in 2021, and 530 in 2020. A study by the Centre for Study of Science, Technology and Policy, which mapped a Heatwave Health Risk Index for Karnataka, categorises Bengaluru as a moderate-risk city, driven by factors such as declining green cover and high population density. However, the study's Exposure Index places the city in a "high exposure" category, highlighting the concentration of people, livelihoods, and infrastructure at risk, specifically flagging outdoor workers as particularly vulnerable to heat stress.
- Marginalised communities and frontline workers operating within heat hotspots face disproportionate risks, GBA officials said. In one documented case from a food processing unit in Nayandahalli, located near an aluminium-smelting facility, workers reported that trapped heat combined with polluted exhaust created extreme indoor conditions, leading to breathing difficulty, dehydration, and fatigue during peak summer afternoons.

Disproportionate risk

- "After noon, it gets unbearable — especially in recent years. Though there's a park nearby, it gets closed early. Sometimes we manage by keeping cold rags over the head, but that does not help for long. We can't leave the spot because we will lose our customers," Naseer Giyas, a vegetable seller in Nagawara, said.
- Construction workers describe a similar strain, where heat combined with dust worsens physical exhaustion and health risks. Many pointed out that summer months often see higher construction activity as dry conditions make processes like cementing and curing easier, leaving them exposed to peak heat for longer hours.
- Rakesh Shenoy, a traffic personnel, said that there have been talks for a long time about providing drinking water and shade near junctions, but it has barely translated into action on the ground. "If properly implemented, it will make a big difference, because we stand for long, continuous shifts without proper breaks," he said.

Gaps in preparedness

- Officials acknowledged key gaps in the city's preparedness, noting that the Bengaluru Climate Action Plan lacks statutory enforcement powers, while funding for heat mitigation is spread across multiple departments. At the operational level, infrastructure such as cooling shelters and emergency water distribution remains sparse, and informal workers continue to lack dedicated cooling or rest spaces.
- Officials added that the plans focus on immediate measures to protect vulnerable populations, while the long-term strategy aims to build a responsive heat management system for the city.

❖ Cyber Command Unit plans dedicated wing to tackle Child Sexual Abuse Material online

Context: In a bid to crack down on the consumption and trade of Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM), the Karnataka Cyber Command Unit (CCU) is planning to set up a dedicated wing to monitor and investigate such offences. The wing will also look into online crimes against women.

- The move follows the CCU proposing a state-of-the-art integrated command centre to strengthen the unit. Earlier, the State police relied on the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC) to receive alerts on CSAM usage through the cyber tipline.
- As per data accessed by The Hindu, the police filed 877 FIRs related to CSAM use in the last five years based on tip-offs received from the ICMEC, a U.S.-based NGO. However, the total number of flaggings by the ICMEC in the last five years stood at 2,39,869. Although there were initially rampant false flaggings, over the last three years there has been a higher percentage of genuine cases.
- Data shows that 1,89,291 flaggings were sent through the tipline in 2023, of which 160 resulted in FIRs, while the rest were junked as false leads. In 2024, about 36 leads were sent, among which 11 turned out to be genuine cases. In 2025, about 60 FIRs were filed based on 252 flaggings, and 225 leads were still under preliminary scrutiny to determine whether an FIR should be filed.
- A senior Criminal Investigation Department officer who earlier oversaw the tipline told The Hindu that the system has now been streamlined and genuine cases were being sent.
- The officer said, “This is an international organisation that is flagging the content, and there are so many cases. If we investigate through the right channels locally, we will be able to book more cases and identify many accused.”
- Another CCU officer said that previous investigations have revealed the operation of an extensive market for the CSAM and that such platforms need to be curtailed. He explained that even on the general web, the CSAM was sold behind a paywall. “On the dark net, there are even more extensive options for consumers of such content. So we are planning this wing to identify and investigate channels offering the CSAM and to crack down on traders and consumers,” the officer said. He added that there could also be producers of such content, including those using AI tools.
- It can be recalled that a couple in Uttar Pradesh were recently sentenced to death for the sexual abuse of 33 young children, which included production and trade of the CSAM.
- The officer said that training for staff has already begun, with investigators being trained in investigation strategies, sources of the CSAM, monitoring its trade, and laws related to such crimes. The ICMEC has trained nearly 25 investigators so far. Those officers would train more investigators.

❖ Telangana passes Bill to protect gig workers

Context: In a decisive move to protect the rapidly expanding gig workforce, the Telangana Assembly on Monday passed The Telangana Platform Based Gig Workers (Registration, Social Security and Welfare) Bill, 2026, giving platform-based workers a clear social security framework and statutory safeguards for the first time.

- The government had crafted the legislation after extensive consultations with workers and companies, Labour and Employment Minister G. Vivek Venkataswamy said. “If gig workers are not taken care of, penalties will be imposed on aggregators,” he said, adding that the government “firmly stands with the workers”.
- The Bill establishes a Social Security and Welfare Board, with representation of women and persons with disabilities.
- In a major structural shift, aggregators — including delivery, ride-hailing, and service apps — must contribute up to 2% of their transaction value to a State-managed welfare fund. The corpus will support insurance, pension, and maternity benefits.
- The law also introduces a strong grievance redressal system to protect workers from sudden termination or payment stoppages. For the first time, companies will be required to maintain full transparency in order allocation and payment calculations.

❖ U.S.-Israel-Iran war puts India's EV gap in focus

Context: While both India and China rely on oil supplies from West Asia, China's early EV adoption has made its transport sector less exposed to the fuel crisis.

- The surge in global oil prices after the U.S.-Iran war has exposed the differing levels of energy vulnerability in Asia's two largest economies, India and China. Since the conflict began on February 28, crude and refined fuel prices have increased rapidly, with the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) basket price rising by about 67% between February 27 and March 27, pushing up petrol, diesel and LPG costs.
- The rise in fuel costs has revived interest in alternatives such as Electric Vehicles (EVs), plug-in hybrids and electric two-wheelers, especially in countries that rely heavily on imported oil.

Electric gulf

China leads across the EV ecosystem with higher adoption, manufacturing, and charging infrastructure. India shows progress with respect to electric three-wheelers but faces gaps in scale, infrastructure, and supply chains

2W: Two-wheeler
3W: Three-wheeler
4W: Four-wheeler



CHART 1: A comparison of the share of electric vehicles in new-passenger car sales (in %)

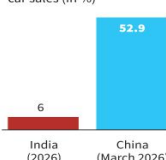


CHART 2: A comparison of absolute EV sales across the four-wheeler (4W) and two- and three-wheeler (2+3W) segments



CHART 3: A comparison of the total number of electric vehicles in use

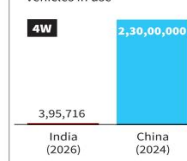


CHART 4: A comparison of the number of electric cars per public charger

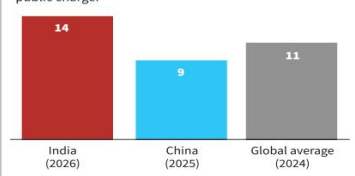
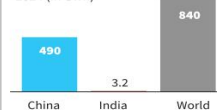
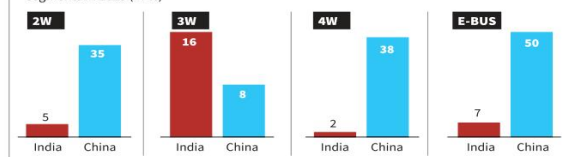


CHART 5: A comparison of electric vehicle battery demand across China, India and the world as of 2024 (in Gwh)



The data for the charts were sourced from the YAMRAN portal, National Energy Administration, China EV home, the International Energy Agency and the China Passenger Car Association

CHART 6: EV penetration rate across China, India, Europe and the U.S. in different vehicle segments in 2023 (in %)



- The war has also increased the risk of supply disruptions due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, through which about one-fifth of global oil supply normally passes. China received 5.4 million barrels of crude oil per day via the Strait in FY25Q1, the highest in volume. India followed at 2.1 million barrels per day. But while both countries depend on imported oil, China's faster adoption of EVs has reduced its transport sector's exposure to fuel shocks, whereas India's transport sector remains heavily reliant on fossil fuels.
- Data on EV penetration show the scale of the gap between the two countries. In March 2026 alone, new-energy vehicles accounted for about 52.9% of passenger car sales in China, according to estimates by the China Passenger Car Association, while in India, EVs made up only about 6% of new car registrations in 2026 (Chart 1).
- Absolute sales numbers highlight the contrast. China sold about nine lakh new-energy passenger vehicles in March 2026 alone, whereas India registered about 72,000 electric cars in the last three months. In the two- and three-wheeler segment, China sold more than 72 lakh electric vehicles in 2024, while India's sales even in 2026 were only about 4.27 lakh (Chart 2).
- Because China began electrification earlier, the total number of EVs in use is far larger. China's electric car fleet had reached about 2.3 crore by 2024, compared with about 3.96 lakh in India in 2026. China had about 6.8 crore electric two- and three-wheelers in use, while India has about 23 lakh. Overall, India's total EV stock stood at about 27.3 lakh, still far below China's levels (Chart 3).
- Infrastructure and supply chains also reflect the gap. As of February 2026, India has about 14 electric cars per public charger, compared with roughly nine in China by the end of 2025, indicating higher charging availability which has allowed China to push EV adoption faster in the passenger vehicle segment (Chart 4).
- These differences have direct implications during oil crises. Countries with high EV adoption are less exposed to sudden increases in petrol and diesel prices because a larger share of transport runs on electricity.
- The recent increases in fuel price across several Asian countries following the Iran conflict have strengthened the argument for accelerating the transition to electric mobility. The shift is already visible in the market. Bloomberg recently reported that demand for EVs has increased across Asia after the Iran oil shock, with Chinese carmakers such as BYD seeing higher showroom traffic as consumers shift away from fossil fuel-driven vehicles.
- India has made progress, especially in electric three-wheelers, but adoption in cars and buses remains low and charging infrastructure limited, compared to China. As long as petrol, diesel and LPG remain the backbone of transport, every geopolitical conflict in West Asia will continue to be felt directly in Indian households.

❖ Centre eyes new regulation to cover social media users

Context: It plans to amend IT Rules and allow I&B Ministry to send takedown notices to individual users for posts; Internet Freedom Foundation calls it 'massive expansion of unconstitutional censorship'.

- The Union government is planning to allow the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (I&B) to send takedown notices to individual users for their social media posts. Under the IT Rules, 2021, the Ministry could issue such notices only to online news platforms.
- In addition, any advisories to social media platforms by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology would, if not complied with, affect the firms' so-called "safe harbour", allowing them to be held liable in court for users' content.
- These changes have been put forth in a draft amendment on Monday to the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, which were amended as recently as February.
- In an explanatory memorandum to the proposed amendment, the IT Ministry said that the addition of individual user posts was a "[c]larification of applicability" of those rules to "news and current affairs content hosted by non-publisher users".
- In a statement, Internet Freedom Foundation (IFF), an Indian digital rights advocacy organisation, decried the proposal as a "massive expansion of unconstitutional censorship and regulatory power".
- The Ministry said these "amendments are clarificatory and procedural in nature and are intended to improve legal certainty, strengthen enforceability of Ministry directions, and ensure effective oversight of intermediary-hosted content, particularly news and current affairs."
- IFF pushed back on that claim, pointing to a key change in the proposal – an inter-departmental committee (IDC) to hear appeals against complaint outcomes, which broadened its mandate. "The original Rule 14(2) required the IDC to hear "complaints regarding violation or contravention of the Code of Ethics." "The amended version removes this requirement entirely. The IDC now hears: (a) grievances arising from decisions at Level I or II; or (b) "matters" referred to by the Ministry."
- The government uses Section 79 of the IT Act, under which the IT Rules were notified, to warn social media platforms that content under a takedown notice, if retained, would lead to the loss of their safe harbour. Since February's amendment abruptly changed takedown timelines to retain safe harbour to two-three hours from 24-36 hours, Meta has been taking down more posts and accounts under such notices. Blocking orders that are more legally binding are issued under Section 69A.
- IFF accused the Centre of trying to sidestep orders by the Madras and Bombay High Courts, which have stayed certain parts of the IT Rules. "The cumulative effect of the amendments to Rules 8 and 14 is to reconstruct the oversight machinery that the Bombay and Madras High Courts found constitutionally suspect, in a form designed to evade the interim orders," IFF said.

Several notices

- The government has been increasingly issuing broad takedown orders in the past few weeks against posts and accounts that are anti-establishment, and ones that mocked Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Asked about the recent spurt in takedowns, IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said that the Centre was targeting "AI-generated deepfakes" and "fake news".

❖ India, Russia hold consultations amid crisis in West Asia

Context: Against the backdrop of the ongoing U.S.-Israel conflict with Iran, Indian and Russian diplomats held a round of Foreign Office Consultations here on Monday. The meeting came days after Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Moscow was working on the annual India-Russia summit to be held later this year in Russia.

- During Monday's consultations, the Russian delegation was headed by Deputy Foreign Minister Andrey Rudenko, while the Indian side was led by Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri.
- "Both sides reviewed the full spectrum of Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership and shared perspectives on bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest," Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.
- A Russian Embassy readout said the two sides "discussed a wide range of issues on the bilateral agenda, including the schedule of upcoming contacts (planned interactions)".
- Later in the evening, Mr. Rudenko met External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and discussed "regional and global developments". India is the current chair of BRICS, which includes Russia and India among its founding members.
- The grouping has not come out with a statement even as the U.S.-Israel attacks on Iran have prompted the Islamic Republic to hit the U.S. military bases and energy interests in the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, increasing complications for the BRICS as Saudi Arabia, Iran and the UAE are members of the bloc.
- On March 23, Mr. Jaishankar said "evolving multipolar world" calls for closer cooperation between the two countries, "through BRICS, SCO, G20 and the United Nations".

❖ Govt. retains interest rates on small savings schemes

- The Union government on Monday left interest rates unchanged for various small savings schemes, including PPF and NSC, for the eighth straight quarter, beginning April 1, 2026.
- As per a Finance Ministry notification, the Sukanya Samriddhi Scheme will attract an interest rate of 8.2%, while the rate on a three-year term deposit remains at 7.1%.
- The interest rates for Public Provident Fund (PPF), National Savings Certificate (NSC) and post office savings deposit schemes have been retained at 7.1%, 7.7% and 4%, respectively.
- The government last changed the interest rate on some schemes in the fourth quarter of the financial year 2023-24.

❖ Earliest Census data set to be available in 2027; India has fewer villages than during Census 2011

Context: As Census 2027 is being conducted digitally, most of the data gathered during the process will be published in 2027, Mritunjay Kumar Narayan, Registrar-General and Census Commissioner of India, said.

- He said the caste enumeration methodology for the second phase was yet to be finalised, and officials were studying multiple suggestions received on the subject.
- Data shared by Census officials show that compared with Census 2011, there has been a decrease in the number of villages by over 1,000 and an increase in urban settlements — statutory towns and Census towns.
- From Census 2011, the number of States and Union Territories increased by one to 36; districts from 640 to 784, an increase of 144; sub-districts by 1,102 — from 5,990 to 7,092; statutory towns by 1,087 — from 4,041 to 5,128; and census towns by 688 — from 3,892 to 4,580. The number of villages declined by 1,030, from 6,40,932 in 2011 to 6,39,902, according to the administrative unit data presented by the Commissioner.
- Mr. Narayan said West Bengal was the only State that had not notified the Census process, and while deliberations were on with the State government, it had time till September 30 to carry out the exercise.
- This would be the first digital Census, first to enumerate caste and first to allow a self-enumeration option to respondents. The data keyed in during self-enumeration would be verified by enumerators during door-to-door visit and the option was only available for residents living in India, he said, allaying concerns of data manipulation.
- “As per the Census Act 1948, the Census data are confidential and the respondents are to answer to the best of their knowledge. Only aggregate data is released, an individual’s data cannot be shared with States or even the judiciary and do not also come under the purview of the Right to Information Act (RTI). Census data cannot be used to provide reservation benefits to any individual,” Mr. Narayan said, while addressing a press conference before the first phase of Census kicks off on April 1 in certain States. He said Census data were beyond the “scope of investigation.”

16 languages

- Mr. Narayan said the self-enumeration portal, available in 16 languages, would be live from April 1 to 15 for residents of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Goa, Karnataka, Sikkim, Odisha, Lakshadweep, Mizoram and the NDMC and Delhi Cantonment areas.
- Self-enumeration option would be available 15 days before the first phase of Census — the House Listing Operations (HLO) begins. The window for the first phase is April 1-September 30 for all States.
- The second phase — population enumeration where each individual’s information in the household, such as religion, caste etc. would be asked, would be conducted in February 2027.
- “People can use mobile phones and laptop to fill in the data,” he said.

❖ IRDAI approves India AS framework for insurers

- IRDAI has approved amendments mandating insurers to prepare and present financial statements in accordance with applicable Indian Accounting Standards effective April 1, 2026.

- The implementation of Ind AS will be applicable to all categories of insurers - life, general, stand alone health insurers and reinsurers. The amendment sets out the regulatory framework governing the recognition, measurement, presentation and disclosure of financial statements under Ind AS. Introduction of Ind AS aims to enhance consistency, transparency and comparability in financial reporting across the insurance sector, in alignment with globally accepted standards, IRDAI said, announcing approval for the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Actuarial, Finance and Investment Functions of Insurers) (Amendment) Regulations, 2026.

❖ Rupee doing fine, FM tells LS as currency crosses 95 a dollar

Context: Even as the rupee closed at ₹94.8 a dollar on Monday after depreciating to an all time low of over ₹95 earlier in the day, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that the rupee was “going fine” against the U.S. dollar compared with other emerging market currencies.

- The rupee depreciated by more than ₹3 since March 2, 2026, when the pair was trading over ₹91. The Indian currency has depreciated by 4.1% since the commencement of the West Asia conflict on February 28, 2026, crossing ₹95 for the first time.
- With oil prices remaining sticky at over \$104 a barrel and foreign institutional investors (FIIs) continuing to sell Indian stocks causing dollar outflow on Monday, the rupee's value plunged to an all time low.
- The Reserve Bank of India capped net open positions that banks can hold in the onshore currency market at \$100 million for banks at the end of the day.
- The limit was up to 25% of the bank's capital and was intended to arrest speculation in the market. While the central bank's move did yield some results with the rupee opening at ₹93 on Monday, weak equity markets leading to FII exit and still high oil prices led to further depreciation. The issue of rupee depreciation was also raised by Opposition members in the Lok Sabha but Ms. Sitharaman asserted that India's economic fundamentals remain strong.
- “India's economy is strong, our fiscal situation is strong, and the entire world is praising our fiscal deficit management. Our forex reserves are solid,” the Finance Minister said, adding, “Compared to other emerging economies, the rupee is doing fine (theek chal raha hain)..absolutely going fine”.
- Ms. Sitharaman intervened after Samajwadi Party member Dharmendra Yadav referred to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's earlier statement, made as the Chief Minister of Gujarat, in which Mr. Modi had claimed falling value of rupee eroded the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's reputation.
- “Now, I want to ask whether the Prime Minister's reputation has been affected or not,” Mr. Yadav asked. The Finance Minister then responded by saying that Mr. Modi emerged on top at a recent survey of world leaders.
- She said the BJP was worried about rupee's falling value as India was considered one of the “fragile five” economies under the UPA. She also targeted the Opposition for trying to pull down the country.

- In a written reply, Ms. Sitharaman said the depreciation was not specific to the Indian currency, noting that several major Asian currencies had also weakened against the dollar during the period.

❖ **Sitharaman defends IBC citing higher recoveries, turnarounds**

Context: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday defended the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) in Parliament, citing the high level of realisations from distressed assets, recovery for creditors, and turnaround of companies that have emerged from the resolution process.

- Replying to the debate on the Insolvency and Bankruptcy (Amendment) Bill 2026, Ms. Sitharaman said the point of the IBC was not debt recovery, but the rescue of viable businesses and addressing their financial stress.
- “The IBC is a framework for rescuing viable businesses and resolving financial stress while preserving the enterprise value,” Ms. Sitharaman said. “It was never intended to be a debt-recovery tool. Recovery values are a by-product,” she added.
- She said, the IBC process is market-driven and recoveries reflect the underlying asset quality and commercial viability of the distressed enterprise. “The IBC actually realises 94.95% of the fair value of the company at the time of admission,” she said.
- The Lok Sabha passed the Bill to amend the insolvency law to provide for strict timelines, an out-of-court settlement option and enable the framework for cross-border insolvency processes.

❖ **April-February fiscal deficit at 80% of FY26 target**

Context: India’s fiscal deficit in April-February was ₹12.5 trillion (\$132 billion) or 80.4% of the estimate for the financial year ending March 31, government data showed.

- Net tax receipts stood at ₹21.5 trillion, an increase from ₹20.2 trillion collected in the same period a year ago.

❖ **NHAI on track to secure asset monetisation of ₹30,000 cr.**

Context: The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) said it is on track to meet the Centre’s budgeted target of ₹30,000 crore for asset monetisation in the current financial year.

- In a press statement, the NHAI said it has already mobilised ₹28,307 crore through a mix of Public and Private Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT) and the Toll-Operate-Transfer (TOT) model.
- Bids for TOT Bundle-19 have been received and are currently under technical evaluation, NHAI said.
- Last financial year, NHAI monetised assets for a total of ₹28,724 crore.

❖ On the implications of euthanasia

Context: The Supreme Court reaffirmed the right to die with dignity under Article 21, allowing withdrawal of life support and emphasising patient autonomy; it shows a shift towards dignity and relief from suffering, while raising concerns about misuse and social inequality.

- The recent judgment by the Supreme Court in the Harish Rana v. Union of India (2026) case has raised questions regarding the ethical, legal, and social implications (ELSI) of passive euthanasia.
- Euthanasia is related to the right to die with dignity, which was recognised by the Supreme Court in Common Cause v. Union of India (2018). The court held that the right to die with dignity is inseparable from the right to receive quality palliative care. Hence, in the Harish Rana case, the court, for the first time, allowed the withdrawal of the applicant's Clinically Assisted Nutrition and Hydration (CANH).
- The court had held in the Common Cause case that the right to die with dignity is an integral part of the right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution. Allowing passive euthanasia and recognising the Advance Medical Directives (living wills) for terminally ill patients to refuse life-prolonging treatment was laid down in Aruna Shanbaug v. Union of India (2011). Following this, in Common Cause v. Union of India (2023), the court streamlined the process of passive euthanasia, making its implementation easier.
- In the new guidelines, the court changed the requirement for two medical boards, a hospital board and a district-level board, refining it to make the process smoother, and mandatory immediate judicial oversight in every case was removed. While addressing advance directives (living wills), the court emphasised patient autonomy, allowing individuals to refuse life-sustaining treatment and die naturally with dignity.
- Considering the above, a few questions arise regarding euthanasia and its relevance in India. First, whether granting passive euthanasia is ethical. It is logically perceived that birth and death are natural processes; hence, nature should decide when a person dies and how the body responds to illness. In this context, any interference with the rules of nature may be considered unethical.
- However, it is also a fact that life is the period between birth and death, and it is spent in a society where dignity is of utmost importance. Life, therefore, can be viewed as more sociological than biological. Both the birth and the death should be dignified. In this context, the right to die with dignity assumes greater significance.

Ethical aspects of euthanasia

- The ethical principles enshrined in this act of granting passive euthanasia further clarify this issue. The primary and probably the most significant aspect is the principle of autonomy, which grants the patient — or, in cases of terminal illness, their next of kin — the right to make decisions. Second is the principle of beneficence, which is related to the patient's benefit, which the doctors treating the patient should consider. Third is the principle of non-maleficence, which suggests that the decision to allow passive euthanasia should not cause harm. Finally, the principle of justice must be protected to ensure that no injustice is done to the patient.

- Apart from these principles, we may look at the decision from the viewpoint of the Theory of Double Effect proposed by St. Thomas Aquinas. According to this theory, every action creates two effects, and the one that is less harmful or beneficial should be considered ethical. In the case of passive euthanasia, the action — withdrawal of life support, or CANH in the Harish Rana case — leads to two effects. First, the death of the patient, and second, relief from suffering. If the decision is taken without malice, the act can be considered ethical as the patient was relieved of his pain.

Social implications

- The right to die with dignity or passive euthanasia in India reflects a progressive but cautious approach, mainly due to a transition in societal values. This transition is from rigid moral traditions to a more compassionate, rights-based approach. While it promotes dignity, autonomy, and relief from suffering, it also raises concerns about misuse, ethical conflicts, and social inequality. There has also been a transition from the social attitude of protecting life at any cost to the quality of life being more important than its length.
- Another major implication is economic in nature, as long-term life-support treatment without any hope of recovery would put the family under severe economic stress, especially in the middle- and lower-income groups. In this context, the right to die with dignity appears to be justified.
- Further, social implications may include its possible misuse and especially vulnerable people like the elderly, disabled and poor may face coercion. This may create a situation where the decision may be driven by financial constraints, social neglect, and family pressure. Hence, critics may point out that it would amount to disguised abandonment.
- The court has taken utmost care while delivering the judgment and stated that “passive euthanasia is an obsolete and incorrect term, and should not be used either in common usage or legal writing and discussions”. It unnecessarily confuses the legal position on the issue, as the debate cannot be neatly divided into ‘acts’ and ‘omissions’. Further, the court also held that the patient is not abandoned by withdrawing or withholding medical treatment. Palliative and end-of-life care must continue for these patients.

❖ India can comfortably cater to PNG demand: govt.

Context: India can comfortably cater to the demand of as many as 30 crore domestic piped natural gas (PNG) connections even if it were to solely rely on its domestic production of liquefied natural gas (LNG), according to Anjan Kumar Mishra, Secretary at the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board.

- He also said that the government was trying to scale up number of connections added every day.
- With escalating tensions in West Asia, the government has sought to institute mechanisms for an accelerated and incentivised transition to piped gas.
- **The objective is to ease some pressure off the liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), supplies of which have been affected.**
- India had approximately 1.1-1.2 crore active domestic PNG connections. These connections consumed 3 million metric standard cubic meters of natural gas per day.
- **India's current production of natural gas was 90 million metric standard cubic meters per day. Therefore, India could comfortably cater to about 30 crore connections solely with its domestic production of natural gas itself, he said.**
- "Even if we are just reserving the [domestic natural gas] production for domestic PNG, we should be able to make provisions for 30 crore connections," Mr. Mishra said. "So, even if you scale up to say two crore, or five crore, we are totally sufficient with respect to our domestic consumption."
- "We are trying to achieve 20,000 connections every day," he said. "At present, we are hovering around 8,000-9,000 connections per day; we are definitely trying to scale the level."
- He further noted that, with permissions being accorded on a "war footing" by the government, municipal corporations, among other entities concerned, had played an active role in the attempt to reach the target.
- The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, in a gazette notification dated March 24, had introduced norms to help accelerate the uptake of and transition to PNG.
- Addressing concerns about the requirement of additional capital expenditure amid the expedited push for PNG and pipeline expansion, Mr. Mishra said the accelerated push would provide the city gas distributors (CGDs) an opportunity to infuse their available capital more rapidly.

❖ 'Strictly follow CRZ norms while executing Netravati project'

Context: The Southern Bench of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) at Chennai disposed of applications challenging the execution of Netravati Waterfront Promenade Project by Mangaluru Smart City Limited (MSCL), directing the agency to strictly adhere to the Coastal Regulation Zone Notification, 2011, the conditions imposed in the CRZ clearance, and all other applicable statutory provisions, to ensure seamless execution of the project.

- Passing the order on March 24, Judicial Member Pushpa Sathyanarayana and Expert Member Prashant Gargava cautioned MSCL, "The Project is already under the radar of not only this tribunal, but also environmental activists."

- MSCL is executing the project between Netravati railway bridge and Bolara seaface over a length of 2.1 km.

Landward side

- Castigating MSCL for dumping debris on the river bank, the Tribunal said MSCL ought to have been aware that the project area falls within both prohibited and permitted coastal zones. “Hence all the proposed structures, such as the toilet block, food kiosk, and ticket counter, are directed to be aligned on the landward side of the old structure constructed prior to 1991.”

Non-compliance to NOC

- National Environment Care Foundation (NECF), Mangaluru, through its General Secretary Shashidhar Shetty, had petitioned the tribunal, alleging non-compliance of conditions in the No Objection Certificate granted by the Karnataka State Coastal Zone Management Authority on October 7, 2022. Two suo motu applications registered by the NGT Principal Bench on the basis of news reports, that were transferred to the Southern Bench, too were disposed off.
- NECF had said the stretch of the riverfront was not suitable for a recreational project as floods could affect visitors during the monsoon. Boat-building yards and fishing activities were affected by the project. MSCL excavated the riverbank up to a depth of one metre, and filled it with black stone and concrete to construct a revetment. Mangroves located on the 2.1-km stretch were destroyed during the process, the NECF had argued.

Joint committee report

- A joint committee comprising representatives of Central Pollution Control Board, the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, the Dakshina Kannada District Magistrate, and the National Centre for Coastal Research visited the site on June 11, 2024. The committee filed a report on June 20, 2024. It said the debris dumped in the river bank was removed and used for back-filling, while MSCL admitted it was done by mistake.
- The committee stated that mangroves existed only in patches, as per approved Coastal Zone Management plan and local CRZ map prepared by the Institute of Remote Sensing, Anna University. No significant mangrove damage was observed during the inspection.
- The tribunal closed two interlocutory applications filed by NECF on which the tribunal had earlier said MSCL could execute work only on the landward side.

❖ HC upholds amendments to Kerala Lok Ayukta Act

Context: The Kerala High Court upheld the amendments made in 2024 to the Kerala Lok Ayukta Act, 1999.

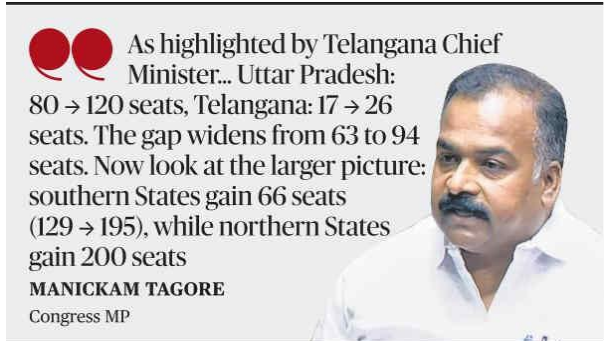
- Division Bench of Chief Justice Soumen Sen and Justice V.M. Syam Kumar delivered the judgment after hearing a batch of petitions, including by Haripad MLA and Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala, challenging the amendments.

- The Act was enacted for the purpose of improving the standards of public administration, including cases of corruption, favouritism, and official indiscipline in the administrative machinery. But the amendments are against its aims and objectives, the petitioners contended.

❖ Bill on A.P. capital likely to be tabled in Lok Sabha

Context: Move follows a resolution passed by A.P. Assembly on March 28 urging Centre to amend the law and declare Amaravati the State's sole capital; former CM had favoured a three-capital formula.

- The Union government is likely to introduce the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, 2026, in the current Lok Sabha session to officially recognise Amaravati as the sole capital of Andhra Pradesh.
- Government sources said the move follows a resolution passed by the Andhra Pradesh Assembly on March 28, 2026, urging the Centre to amend the law to incorporate Amaravati as the State's capital.
- The Bill proposes to amend Section 5 of the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014, which had designated Hyderabad as the common capital for both Telangana and Andhra Pradesh for a period not exceeding 10 years.
- It comes after a long process of settling a capital city for Andhra Pradesh after the bifurcation of the erstwhile State in 2014 into Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. At that time, the Union government had set up a committee of experts to explore the question of a new capital.
- The committee had submitted a report in August that year. Though it had opposed the idea of a 'super capital' apprehending ecological damage among other issues, the Chandrababu Naidu-led Telugu Desam Party government began land acquisition in the State's Guntur district to establish the capital.
- When the government changed in 2019, work stalled as the new Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy was not in favour of a shift of the State's capital to Amaravati. Alleging that too much money was being spent on it, he proposed instead a "three-capital" formula, suggesting Visakhapatnam as the executive capital, Kurnool as the judicial capital, and Amaravati as the legislative capital.
- When the TDP returned to power in 2024, Mr. Naidu revived the Amaravati plan.
- 'Regional imbalance' bothers Cong. as govt. plans delimitation to roll out women's quota
- The Union government's proposal to carry out the delimitation exercise on the basis of the 2011 Census in order to implement the women's reservation law by the 2029 Lok Sabha election has not only reversed its earlier position but has also prompted the Congress to nuance its stance.
- Until recently, the government had maintained that the law could be implemented only after the completion of the delimitation exercise linked to the first Census conducted after 2026.



- The Congress, which had earlier pressed for the immediate implementation of the women's reservation law, is now demanding an all-party meeting to discuss the potential impact of such a move. Party leaders argue that if the strength of the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies is increased uniformly by around 50%, States with larger populations would automatically gain more seats, widening the existing representation gap.
- The issue was first publicly flagged by Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, who pointed to the implications of a population-based increase in seats for southern States. Except for Andhra Pradesh, where the Telugu Desam Party, a member of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), is in power, the other southern States are ruled by non-NDA parties that could potentially take a common stance on the issue.
- The Centre, however, has already rejected the Congress's demand for an all-party consultation.
- "As highlighted by Telangana Chief Minister @revanth_anumula garu — Uttar Pradesh: 80 120 seats, Telangana: 17 26 seats. The gap widens from 63 to 94 seats. Now look at the larger picture: Southern States gain 66 seats (129 195), while northern States gain 200 seats," Congress MP Manickam Tagore said in a post on X.
- Though no official proposal has been placed in the public domain, government sources are said to be examining the possibility of increasing the strength of the Lok Sabha from 543 to around 816 seats, with 33% reserved for women in line with the provisions of the women's reservation law.
- Mr. Tagore said that while a uniform 50% increase in seats might appear fair, the underlying population disparities between regions would inevitably tilt parliamentary representation towards States with higher population growth in the Hindi belt. "Southern States risk being pushed to the political margins," he said.
- Beyond the emerging north-south debate, the Congress is also seeking clarity on how the government proposes to address demands for representation of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes within the women's reservation framework. Congress Parliamentary Party Chairperson Sonia Gandhi had raised this issue during a Lok Sabha debate in 2023.

❖ Most parts of India to see more heatwave days: IMD

Context: East, central and northwest India may experience above-normal temperatures, while North India is likely to see a cooler-than-normal summer; country likely to get 12% more rainfall in April.

- North India is likely to experience a cooler-than-normal summer this time, while other parts of the country may see more number of heatwave days, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.
- From April to June, above-normal maximum temperatures are expected over most parts of east and northeast India, as well as eastern parts of central India, and adjoining peninsular regions. Maximum temperatures are likely to be "normal to below normal" over the remaining parts.

- There will likely be more than the usual number of heatwave days over parts of east, central and northwest India, and southeast peninsula during this period. Many parts of coastal Odisha, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Andhra Pradesh, and some regions of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnataka are likely to see heatwaves in April.

El Nino fears

- The country will likely receive 12% more rain than usual in April.
- In July, however, forecasts suggest the emergence of an El Nino, a 1+ degree Celsius warming of regions of the Central Pacific Ocean that frequently links to reduced rain in India.
- Experts said it is still early to link cooler summers to diminished monsoon rainfall though it is a pattern that has held in the past. The IMD is expected to provide an initial forecast on the expected performance of monsoon 2026 on April 15. India experienced surplus monsoon in 2024 and 2025. Save for 2023, India has received 'normal' or excess rainfall in all years since 2020. With fertilizer output expected to be hit this year on account of the Iran-U.S. war, weak rainfall could impact kharif sowing. "Cooler than normal summer means less heating of the landmass, which typically acts as a natural pull for moisture and monsoon. This could affect the onset of the monsoon and its initial progress [over Kerala in June]," said Madhavan Rajeevan, climatologist and former Secretary, the Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- "However a clearer picture could emerge only around end May. There is also a forecast for a 'super' El Nino. We shouldn't worry now but if these signals persist in May, the government should prioritise drought management."

Historical temperatures

- At a press briefing, IMD Director-General M. Mohapatra said that while there were "textbook" relationships between landmass temperature and rainfall, the relationship was not simple and there were several meteorological factors that influenced the monsoon. IMD historical records suggest that 2004 and 2014 were years that saw relatively cooler summers over northwestern India followed by weak monsoon rainfall.
- March this year has seen several rain episodes bringing 12% more rain than is usual for the month. There were eight western disturbances that brought rain to northern India as opposed to six.

❖ SC wants practical SOP to combat human trafficking

Context: The Supreme Court has called for framing a practical, time-sensitive, and uniform Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to combat human trafficking cases.

- "The court is not interested in any hypothetical or academic formula, but rather a practical strategy/approach which can be implemented/put into place right away, at the local police station level under whose jurisdiction the incident occurs," a Bench headed by Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah observed in a recent order.

Running against time

- The nine-page court order said time was of the "greatest importance" from the moment the police get a complaint of a missing person.

- The guidelines must help in creating a procedural framework for the police to act on as soon as the complaint is received, it stated.
- The court directed the Union Home Secretary, the Home Secretaries and the Directors-General of Police of the States and the Union Territories to hold a discussion with stakeholders who were specifically dealing with issues of human trafficking within their jurisdictions to come up with specific proposals/suggestions for the perusal of the top court.
- The Bench scheduled the next hearing on April 21.
- “The exercise initially shall be limited to the very basic issue of investigation not only being initiated but seriously pursued immediately upon a report received relating to any missing person, more so in the background that till the person is not finally located, the case shall be kept alive not just on paper, but actually on the ground also,” the top court reiterated in the order.
- Besides seeking the aid of senior advocate H.S. Phoolka, who had assisted the Delhi High Court in crafting an SOP for dealing with trafficking cases in the national capital, the top court constituted a committee of P.M. Nair, former Director-General, NDRF; Veerendra Kumar Mishra, Director, Home Ministry; and S.D. Sanjay, Additional Solicitor General.

❖ **Sanand ‘bridge’ to Silicon Valley: PM on rise in semiconductor ecosystem**

Context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday positioned Gujarat’s Sanand as an emerging link in the global semiconductor network as he inaugurated a semiconductor assembly and test facility of Kaynes Semicon in Sanand, declaring that a “bridge” now connects the industrial town with Silicon Valley.

- Addressing the gathering, the Prime Minister described the current period as the “decade of India” and underscored the rapid expansion of the country’s electronics sector. He projected that India’s semiconductor market could exceed \$100 billion by the end of the decade.
- The plant, built at an estimated cost of ₹3,300 crore, will serve as a significant milestone under India’s semiconductor mission.

Global market

- Stating that India is emerging as a reliable semiconductor supplier in the global market, Mr. Modi added that chips manufactured in Sanand will reach the United States and illuminate the world. “India’s current global semiconductor market stands at ₹4.5 lakh crore, with a target of reaching ₹9 lakh crore by 2030,” he said.
- “As a result, the Semiconductor Mission was launched in India in 2021. This is not merely an industrial policy, but a declaration of India’s confidence on the global stage. He added that today’s New India is not just witnessing change but is moving forward to lead it,” he said.

India's position

- Referring to India's recent participation in the Pax Silica initiative, a U.S.-led coalition focused on securing supply chains for semiconductors, artificial intelligence and rare earth elements, Mr. Modi said such collaborations will enhance resilience in critical technology sectors.

'Techade'

- Describing the current period as India's 'Techade', Mr. Modi noted that India is among the leading adopters of artificial intelligence and pointed to the success of Digital India and fintech as evidence of growing public trust in technology.

❖ War can cut 1% point off India's FY27 GDP growth projection: EY

Context: India's real GDP growth for the next fiscal could erode by around 1 percentage point, while retail inflation could rise by about 1.5 percentage points from their baseline estimates if the Middle East conflict persists through the next fiscal, an EY report said.

- The EY Economy Watch report said several sectors, including employment-intensive sectors like textiles, paints, chemicals, fertilizers, cement and tires, could be directly impacted. Any reduction in employment or incomes in these sectors may further dampen aggregate demand. As a result, supply and demand conditions may be affected by global oil market disturbances.
- It said the Indian economy, which imports nearly 90% of its crude oil requirements, is also highly dependent on imports of natural gas and fertilizers, and is particularly vulnerable to such external shocks, with the adverse effects likely to cascade across multiple sectors through strong forward and backward linkages with crude oil and energy.
- The conflict significantly disrupted global crude oil and energy markets by affecting supply, storage, transportation and prices. Even if the conflict is resolved in the near term, some of the disruptions may take considerable time to normalise, it said.

❖ Government says 30 mineral blocks made operational in FY2025-26

Context: In a first for India, the Ministry of Mines informed that 30 mineral blocks have been made operational in a single financial year viz. FY2025-26.

- Essential to note, most of the blocks made operational are those of limestone followed by iron ore.
- Majority of these standalone limestone blocks are located in Gujarat, that is, four blocks, followed by Madhya Pradesh with three blocks, Rajasthan with two, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh and Assam one block each.
- Iron ore blocks made operational originate in Goa (four blocks) whilst Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Karnataka house two blocks each. For example, Odisha has three mines where iron ore and manganese co-exist, while limestone co-exists with marl in two blocks, and with marl and bauxite in one such block— both in Gujarat.
- The two minerals, other than the standalone mines, also exist alongside other minerals as marl and bauxite in other mines that have been made operational.

- For example, Odisha has three mines where iron ore and manganese co-exist, while limestone co-exists with marl in two blocks, and with marl and bauxite in one such block— both in Gujarat. Overall, majority of the blocks made operational belong to Gujarat (8 blocks).

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❖ GST collection grew by 11.6%

Context: In a year where the GST rate rationalisation threw up a huge challenge, data shared by the Commercial Taxes Department shows that a total of ₹1.58 lakh crore was collected as GST in the State, a growth of 11.6% from 2024-2025.

- In a year where the GST rate rationalisation threw up a huge challenge for the State to mop up resources, Karnataka received ₹87,256 crore as part of the SGST, and the SGST portion of the IGST settlement during 2025-2026, about 5% more than 2024-2025 when the settlement was ₹82,808 crore.
- Data shared by the Commercial Taxes Department shows that a total of ₹1.58 lakh crore was collected as GST in the State, a growth of 11.6% over the collection in 2024-2025. Collection in Karnataka is the second highest in the country after Maharashtra where the GST collection stood at ₹3.61 lakh crore during 2025-2026.
- Of the total collection of ₹1.58 lakh crore, ₹40,621 crore was CGST, ₹50,245 crore was SGST, and ₹67,351 crore was IGST.
- The State government had estimated the revenue loss at about ₹10,000 crore owing to GST rate rationalisation in 2025-2026, and is estimating a revenue loss of about ₹15,000 crore in 2026-27.

❖ Exclusion from rolls doesn't repeal voting rights forever, says SC

Context: The rights of West Bengal voters purged from the electoral rolls during the special intensive revision (SIR), and unable to make it to any of the supplementary lists ahead of the Assembly election, cannot be “washed away forever”, the Supreme Court said.

- A three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant made the observation in the context of 19 tribunals constituted by the Election Commission of India (EC) to hear appeals of persons excluded from the electoral roll. Justice Joymalya Bagchi, on the Bench, said the adjudication and appellate processes of the SIR exercise must be taken to its logical conclusion, and anything less would lead to an “extremely oppressive” situation.
- The Bench also highlighted a Calcutta High Court communication saying nearly 47 lakh of a total 60 lakh claims under adjudication had already been disposed of and the remaining would be cleared by April 7. The appellate hearings would ensure justice for those excluded incorrectly, CJI Kant said.
- The Bench directed that the poll body should provide the tribunals complete access to the reasons and remarks recorded by adjudicating officers on why “logical discrepancy was justified and deletion of a person from the electoral roll was warranted”.
- The appellate tribunals, notified by the EC on March 20, are presided over by former Chief Justices and judges of High Courts. Chief Justice Kant said the appellate hearings before seasoned judges in the tribunals would ensure that justice would be done to those excluded incorrectly.
- The hearing on Wednesday commenced with the Bench reading out a communication from the Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court that judicial officers, deployed as Election Registration Officers and Assistant Election Registration Officers

(EROs/AEROs) for the SIR exercise, had already disposed of nearly 47 lakh of a total 60 lakh claims under adjudication.

- The Bench conveyed the High Court Chief Justice's assurance that the remaining claims would be disposed of by April 7.
- "If somebody has a right [to vote] we cannot thwart, if somebody does not have a right to vote, we can stop the person. It is as simple as that," senior advocate Dama Seshadhiri Naidu, for the EC, submitted.
- Senior advocate Shyam Divan, for the State government, submitted that out of the approximately over 40 lakh claims disposed of, there was a "very high exclusion rate" of 45%. "And these are all mapped individuals," Mr. Divan said.

❖ Karnataka seeks public feedback on draft policy for students' digital use

Context: The Karnataka Health Department has opened its draft policy on responsible digital use among students for public feedback, inviting objections and suggestions until April 15. The draft policy was released last week.

- Prepared in collaboration with the NIMHANS and other stakeholders, the draft policy is aimed at tackling growing concerns over excessive and unsafe use of digital devices among schoolchildren. Students, parents, and the general public can submit their responses via email to dd6mhkar@gmail.com and ddehospital-hfws@karnataka.gov.in.
- Addressing presspersons on Wednesday, Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao said, "The public is increasingly aware of the negative effects of mobile phones on health and education, including anxiety, cyberbullying, sleeplessness and social isolation. You may also notice that family members are speaking less with each other because of mobile phone use.
- It is disturbing our social structure." "While we have learnt how to use technology, we have not adequately understood its adverse effects, including digital addiction and its impact on the mind," the Minister said, emphasising that the policy stresses training parents and teachers to help reduce excessive mobile phone use among children.

One in four

- The draft highlights that nearly one in four adolescents shows signs of problematic internet use, linking excessive screen time to mental health concerns such as anxiety, sleep disturbances, poor academic performance, and social isolation, along with risks like cyberbullying and online exploitation.
- The framework promotes digital well-being, emotional resilience, and responsible technology use.

Training of teachers

- "Schools will be required to frame their own digital use guidelines, including setting limits on recreational screen time - recommended at no more than one hour a day - addressing cyber misconduct, and ensuring access to counselling support.
- Teachers will be trained to identify early signs of digital distress and guide students to appropriate services," the Minister said.

- The policy urges them to enforce screen-time rules, create device-free spaces at home, and model responsible digital behaviour, while schools are expected to strengthen engagement with families, he said.

❖ FCRA Bill triggers political storm in Kerala

Context: With Assembly polls round the corner, BJP goes into firefighting mode; party's Kerala president says Centre will factor in Church's reservations before tabling the proposed law in Parliament; Chief Minister terms BJP a political 'shapeshifting apparition', while Congress's Venugopal flags 'conspiracy'.

- The Catholic Church's strident opposition to the Centre's bid to table the contentious Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act Amendment Bill, 2026 (FCRA) in Parliament has roiled Kerala politics in the run-up to the Assembly election and put the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the State on the defensive.
- The BJP, which has zealously sought to make inroads into the Christian community, a significant electoral bloc in Kerala, went into firefighting mode. The party's Kerala president, Rajiv Chandrasekhar, told a hastily convened press conference in Thiruvananthapuram that the Union government would factor in the Church's reservations about the Bill before tabling the proposed law in Parliament.
- The Kerala Catholic Bishops' Council (KCBC) demand that the Union government refer the contentious Bill to the Parliamentary Subject Committee on Home Affairs also appeared to have caused the BJP to backpedal.
- The apex Church body has also petitioned Prime Minister Narendra Modi not to pass the controversial Bill without detailed discussions in the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament and in the public domain.
- The KCBC deputy secretary general, Father Thomas Tharayil, termed the amendment to the original law unconstitutional, superfluous, and draconian.
- He said the Bill sought to grant the bureaucracy untrammelled authority to take over and administer charitable institutions, citing the slightest contravention of the law as a pretext.
- Father Tharayil noted that the Centre was not renewing the FCRA accounts of voluntary and charitable organisations, including those run by the Catholic Church.

Muslim organisations

- Various Muslim social and educational organisations in Kerala have shared the same concern and protested against the cancellation of their FCRA licences, raising the spectre of the shutdown of hospitals, schools, and orphanages that cater to society. Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) leader E.T. Muhammad Basheer, MP, termed the Bill patently anti-minority and unwarranted.
- Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan noted that a Union Minister of State from Kerala, who is contesting the Assembly election (George Kurien), had "obsequiously" defended the Sangh Parivar-inspired Bill that seeks to strike at the root of Christian and Muslim charitable institutions, which provide affordable medical care and education to common folk, cutting across caste and communal lines in the State. He termed the BJP a political "shapeshifting apparition", whose "cake and flower diplomacy" towards Church leaders smacked of duplicity.

- AICC general secretary K.C. Venugopal flagged a conspiracy in the BJP's bid to muscle the Bill through Parliament without discussion at a time when most Opposition members were occupied with elections in their respective States.
- Amendment Bill is not aimed at any religion but at curbing misuse of foreign contributions, says Kiren Rijiju, counters narrative that it could target minority institutions that receive foreign funds.
- Amid strong protests from Opposition benches, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju on Wednesday informed the Lok Sabha that the government did not intend to bring a Bill to amend the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) in the ongoing Budget Session.
- Mr. Rijiju accused the Opposition of misleading people in Kerala and across the country ahead of the Assembly election in the State. "I had told the Congress yesterday [Tuesday] that since the Bill has been introduced, it has been listed for consideration and passage for Wednesday. But today [Wednesday], the FCRA (amendment) Bill is not being taken up for discussion," he said.
- Protests erupted in the House as soon as the Question Hour began at 11 a.m., with Opposition members, mainly from Kerala, raising slogans against the provisions of the FCRA (Amendment) Bill.
- Mr. Rijiju said the Bill, introduced last month, seeks to protect national security and interest and asserted that it is not aimed at any religion or organisation. It is intended to prevent misuse of foreign contributions, he said.
- "Since there are elections in Kerala, the Congress and the Communists are spreading wrong things about the Bill," he said.
- As Opposition members trooped into the Well of the House, Speaker Om Birla adjourned the proceedings till 12 noon. Even before the House met, Opposition members protested outside the main entrance of Parliament.
- It is not only the Opposition protests but also pressure from the Kerala unit of the BJP that seems to have forced the government to rethink pushing the FCRA (Amendment) Bill in the Budget session.

Key proposal

- One of the key proposals of the Bill is to establish a "Designated Authority" to manage and dispose of foreign funds and assets of NGOs whose registration is suspended, cancelled, or not renewed. In poll-bound Kerala, a narrative has emerged that these provisions can be misused to crack down on minority institutions such as churches, which may receive foreign funds.
- Such a concern could not have come up at a worse time for the BJP as the party, after it won one out of the 20 seats in Kerala in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, has been reaching out to the Christian community in the State to build a dedicated vote base.
- Senior CPI(M) leader and Rajya Sabha member John Brittas accused the Union government of blocking attempts to seek elementary information on the government's policy decisions regarding FCRA, saying routine parliamentary questions on the issue are now treated as "secret in nature".

- In a detailed post on X, Mr. Brittas said that since 2024 he has submitted eight questions seeking clarity on FCRA suspensions, cancellations, non-renewals, fresh registrations, and the removal of public access to NGO-wise data from the FCRA dashboard. “Yet, none of those questions elicited any response,” he wrote.

❖ Bill to establish Amaravati as sole capital of A.P. gets Lok Sabha nod

Context: The Lok Sabha passed a Bill to recognise Amaravati as the sole and permanent capital of Andhra Pradesh, with the principal Opposition party Congress extending support to the legislation. The YSR Congress Party – which had earlier proposed a three-capital plan for the State – walked out in protest.

- The Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, 2026, was passed by a voice vote after a nearly two-hour debate. It will now be sent to the Rajya Sabha, and then to the President for assent.
- Once enacted, it will give statutory backing to Amaravati as the State’s capital with effect from June 2, 2024, effectively foreclosing any future attempt to alter the decision.
- Initiating the discussion, Congress member Manickam Tagore said his party supported the Bill but reiterated the demand for special category status for the State.
- Supporting the legislation, BJP member C.M. Ramesh said it was perhaps the first instance of Parliament enacting a law to formally declare a specific location as a State capital.
- The YSRCP, however, opposed the measure, arguing that the interests of farmers who had parted with land for the project remained unaddressed.

❖ Kerala may see 20% drop in remittances amid West Asia war

Context: The West Asia crisis is expected to have a significant impact on Kerala’s economy.

- The State receives annual remittances of around ₹2.16 lakh crore from expatriates. Although the depreciation of the currency against the dollar is expected to cushion short-term impact, the State is expected to see at least a 20% decline in remittances this year, especially if the war continues.
- The latest Kerala Migration Survey, conducted by the Gulati Institute of Finance and Taxation with technical support from the International Institute of Migration and Development, has put the total remittances from expatriates at a record ₹2,16,893 crore in 2023, up from ₹85,092 crore in 2018.
- “If the situation in West Asia persists, the immediate drop in remittances would be around 20%. This could increase further if the war escalates and continues for an extended period,” said S. Irudaya Rajan, Chair of the IIMAD.
- Around 80% of Kerala’s expatriate population resides in Gulf Cooperation Council countries, contributing the lion’s share of inward remittances.

❖ CAPF Bill passed by Rajya Sabha after Opposition walkout

Context: The Central Armed Police Forces (General Administration) Bill, which was passed in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday, will further strengthen the security system of the country, Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai said, while replying to the debate on the legislation.

- The Opposition walked out after Mr. Rai's speech, alleging that the government had not addressed any concerns about the Bill raised by their MPs and senior officers of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF).
- Mr. Rai maintained that the Bill was an important step in resolving several inconsistencies in CAPF service rules, cadre management, and appointment-related issues, among others, to boost the efficiency and morale of the forces.
- "The Bill aims to create an umbrella structure for resolving several such anomalies and streamlining its structure for better coordination and implementation," Mr. Rai said, while maintaining that the Bill is not against the federal structure.
- Soon after Mr. Rai's speech, Opposition Leader Mallikarjun Kharge reiterated the demand that the Bill should be referred to a select committee of Parliament. He alleged that Mr. Rai had not addressed the core issues raised by the Opposition on the institutionalisation of deputation, adverse impact on morale and career progression, lack of consultation and representation, and lack of concern for judicial direction.
- Nationalist Congress Party (Sharad Pawar) MP Fauzia Khan said the Bill was judicial invasion wearing the clothes of law.
- "Imagine joining one of these forces as an Assistant Commandant, young, ready to serve, 16 years have passed, you have fought insurgents, you have earned your promotion, and yet you have not received it," Ms. Khan said.

❖ NSCN-K seeks 'religious conversion', Arunachal govt. tells UAPA tribunal

Context: The Arunachal Pradesh government told an Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) tribunal recently that the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang (NSCN-K), a banned outfit which seeks the merger of Naga-dominated areas in India and Myanmar, wants to "convert people to Christianity" in order to have a "homogenous society for a common cause".

- A UAPA tribunal on March 19 upheld a Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) notification of September 22, 2025 to declare the NSCN-K an unlawful association under the UAPA, 1967 for another five years. The group was involved in the June 4, 2015 ambush of an Army convoy in Manipur in which 18 Army personnel were killed.
- In its deposition, the Arunachal Pradesh government said other than the forceful conversion of locals to Christianity, the group intends to "bring all the sub-tribes under one banner Tangsang-Naga" and "this is indicative of a deeper conspiracy to create homogenous demographic structure".
- The outfit is active in the Tirap, Changlang and Longding (TCL) districts of Arunachal Pradesh. The State government did not depose on these lines before the tribunal that was set up in 2015, when the outfit was banned first.

- It added that the group indulges in unlawful interference in electoral process, drug trafficking and has established hideouts/camps in the three districts to attack/ambush security force personnel.
- Named after its leader S.S. Khaplang, who died in Myanmar in 2017, the NSCN-K was formed in January 1990 after a split from the parent group, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland, in 1988. The latter is now known as the NSCN (Isak-Muivah) and has been in peace talks with the government since 1997. The National Investigation Agency had declared a reward of ₹17 lakh for Khaplang's arrest for executing the ambush on the Army convoy. The NSCN-K was initially banned for five years in 2020, extended for another five years in 2025.
- The Ministry informed the tribunal that in the past five years, NSCN-K factions were involved in 29 incidents of violence, in which 18 deaths and injuries to 16 security personnel and civilians occurred; 71 cases were registered with chargesheets filed in 56 cases and 35 cadres were prosecuted or convicted. Eighty-five cadres were arrested, 69 cadres surrendered and 51 other criminal activities, including kidnappings, were reported.
- The Ministry submitted that the group reportedly has an approximate strength of 400-500 cadres in Myanmar, including 50-75 Indian Naga cadres.

❖ LS passes Jan Vishwas Amendment Bill 2026

Context: The Lok Sabha on Wednesday passed the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026, by voice vote, aiming to decriminalise minor offences across various laws and further promote ease of doing business and living.

- The Bill proposes to amend 784 provisions of 79 Central Acts administered by 23 Ministries. It seeks to decriminalise 717 provisions and amend 67 provisions to facilitate ease of living.
- It also seeks to rationalise more than 1,000 offences, removing outdated and redundant provisions, thereby improving the overall regulatory environment. Replying to the debate on the Bill, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said it will help people and MSMEs. Amendments moved by Congress member K. Kavya were rejected by voice vote.

❖ SEZ export units cancell locally at lower tax rate

Context: Amid weakening external demand and constrained supply routes, the Centre allowed India's export-oriented units in Special Economic Zones (SEZs) to sell products in India at concessional tax rates. The move follows announcement in the Budget 2026.

- Krishan Arora, Partner and Leader of Indirect Tax and India Investment Advisory, Grant Thornton Bharat said, "This policy change guarantees our cutting edge SEZ infrastructure does not lie idle as Indian exporters navigate the dual challenges of rising international tariff barriers, geopolitical uncertainties and supply chain disruptions in the face of the war, blocking much of the trade routes."

- “At the same time, domestic industry benefits by exploiting available capacity of SEZ and shall have reduced reliance on imports, which are getting both delayed and expensive owing to the war.”

❖ NMDC logs record iron ore output in FY26

Context: India’s largest iron ore producer NMDC reported record 53.15 million tonne output of the key raw material for steel in FY26. Sales touched 50.23 MT.

- Production was 21% higher compared with previous fiscal’s 44.07 MT, while sales rose 13% from 44.40 MT in 2024-25. Major iron ore mines - Kirandul and Bacheli in Chhattisgarh and Donimalai in Karnataka – contributed to the record output on best-ever performance.
- NMDC has become the first firm in India’s mining history to surpass the 50 MT annual output mark. The achievement symbolises growing strength and momentum of India’s mineral sector, NMDC said.
- “Crossing 50 million tonne is not just a production milestone for NMDC, it is a moment of pride for us and India’s mining sector,” CMD Amitava Mukherjee said.
- For March, NMDC clocked 5.35 MT (3.55 MT) iron ore production and 5.90 MT (4.21 MT) sales.
- NMDC said it is augmenting capacities to meet rising steel demand.

❖ NASA begins fuelling rocket for first lunar trip in 50 years

Context: NASA began fuelling its moon rocket for humanity’s first lunar trip in more than half a century, aiming for an evening lift-off with four astronauts.

- Tensions were high as hydrogen fuel started flowing into the rocket hours ahead of the planned launch. Dangerous hydrogen leaks erupted during a countdown test earlier this year, forcing a lengthy flight delay.
- The launch team needs to load more than 2.6 million litres into the 32-story Space Launch System rocket on the pad before the Artemis II crew can board.
- “It is time to fly,” commander Reid Wiseman said on the eve of launch via X. Favourable weather was forecast.
- Three Americans and one Canadian will fly around the moon without stopping or even orbiting — then head straight back for a Pacific splashdown. They will set a new distance record for the farthest humans have travelled from Earth as they zoom some 6,400 km beyond the moon and then hang a U-turn.
- Astronauts last flew to the moon during Apollo 17 in 1972.

❖ Governor bound by Cabinet's advice on remission: Madras HC

Context: A Full Bench of the Madras High Court on Thursday held that the Governor, whether he/she likes it or not, is bound by the advice of the Council of Ministers while exercising powers under Article 161 of the Constitution in matters relating to remission and premature release of convicts.

- The Bench comprising Justices A.D. Jagadish Chandira, G.K. Ilanthiraiyan and Sunder Mohan ruled that the Governor, under no circumstance, could exercise any discretion whatsoever to take a different view from the one taken by the Council of Ministers. The Bench was answering a reference made to it by a Division Bench.
- The Division Bench consisting of Justices M.S. Ramesh (since retired) and V. Lakshminarayanan had referred the matter to the larger Bench, for an authoritative pronouncement, in September 2025 after coming across two conflicting decisions delivered in 2024 by two other Division Benches of the High Court on the issue.
- While answering the reference, the Full Bench agreed with State Public Prosecutor Hasan Mohamed Jinnah and advocate M. Radhakrishnan that the issue had been settled by a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court as early as 1980.
- The Constitution Bench in 1980 decision comprised Justices V.R. Krishna Iyer, Y.V. Chandrachud, P.N. Bhagwati, Syed Murtaza Fazalali and A.D. Koshal.
- Mr. Jinnah also said, the 1980 judgment delivered in Maru Ramu's case was followed by the Supreme Court in 2022 too while ordering the release of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi assassination case convict A.G. Perarivalan. He also relied upon Supreme Court's 1974 verdict in Shamsheer Singh versus State of Punjab.
- After concurring with his submission, the Full Bench said, the top court had consistently held the Governor could not exercise any discretion while exercising powers under Article 161 of the Constitution and it had been reflected even in its recent decision on the Governor's power to withhold Bills passed by the State legislature.
- One of the Division Benches of the High Court had rightly followed the law, while the other Bench had wrongly relied upon the Supreme Court's judgment in the 2003 M.P. Special Police Establishment case which was related to the Governor's statutory function of granting sanction to prosecute Ministers in corruption cases.
- The Full Bench further pointed out the Supreme Court had delivered its verdict in A.G. Perarivalan's case only after considering the M.P. Special Police Establishment case.
- "Therefore, it is clear that the ruling (by one of the Division Benches of the High Court) in Murugan alias Thirumalai Murugan is per incuriam (a judgement passed without taking the correct position of law into consideration) to the limited extent that it holds that the ruling in M.P. Special Police Establishment permits the Governor to act in his own discretion in exercise of powers under Article 161 of the Constitution," the Bench led by Justice Chandira concluded.

❖ GBA floats tender for setting up 'Guarantee Seva Kendras'

Context: The GBA has floated a tender to establish and operate 10 comprehensive citizen service centres called GBA Guarantee Seva Kendras (GSKs) across the city, aimed at streamlining access to a wide range of civic services under a single roof.

- With this, citizens will be able to apply for services, track their applications, and receive final approvals or documents at the same location, essentially eliminating the need to visit multiple offices, and they are guided through the entire process until completion. Each zone will have one GSK (two per corporation) for smooth operations.
- Once done, these centres will offer nearly 24 citizen services, including e-Khata issuance, trade licences, building plan approvals, property tax payments, birth and death certificates, new khata issuance, B khata to A khata conversions, among others. The GSKs will operate all days of the week and 12 hours per day, which is 8 am to 8 pm.
- The development comes after D.K. Shivakumar announced that the GBA will establish seva centres modelled around passport seva kendras.
- A key feature of the GBA Guarantee Seva Kendras (GSK) is doorstep service delivery, in which the citizens will have the option to avail themselves of services from home. When requested, trained personnel called 'Seva Mitras' will visit residences to assist with applications, verification, and documentation.
- Seva Mitras will be equipped with tablets, identification, and connectivity tools and will operate between 8 a.m. and 7 p.m. Further, they will also extend services that require field verifications, such as property-related applications, and will carry out on-ground inspections. These verifications are expected to be completed within 48 hours of receiving an application.
- Each GSK office will span at least 5,000 sq. ft, designed as a full-service public interface for services offered by the GBA and the five city corporations. They will be fully equipped with digital infrastructure, high-speed internet, dedicated spaces for help desks, service counters, waiting areas, and offices for officials to handle large volumes of applications efficiently. At all the centres, government officials, including officers from the GBA and city corporations, will work within these facilities to scrutinise and approve applications, allowing many services to be processed and decided "then and there".
- The infrastructure and staffing at the centres are also expected to scale up based on demand, allowing the system to handle increasing volumes of citizen requests. The centres will integrate multiple civic platforms currently used for services such as e-Khata, new Khata registration, property tax payments, building plan approvals, and trade licences. All services will be accessible through a unified interface at the centres.
- Beyond physical visits, a helpline and online system will support citizens by providing information, guidance, and real-time updates on application status. This is aimed at addressing a common pain point where applicants are often left in the dark about the progress of their requests.
- The model allows for expansion of services beyond core government offerings. Additional services from other government departments or even private entities may be added over time.

❖ State government to expand Sneha Centres, establish integrated counselling units

Context: These centres are set up under Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram, a Government of India programme, to provide counselling and health services to adolescents.

- Karnataka has approved the expansion of adolescent-friendly Sneha Centres and the establishment of integrated counselling units across government health facilities to strengthen services under the Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK).
- RKSK, a Government of India programme implemented in the State under the National Health Mission (NHM) since 2015-16, focuses on improving the health and well-being of adolescents. Under the programme, Adolescent Friendly Health Centres (AFHCs), known as Sneha Centres in Karnataka, provide counselling and basic health services.
- At present, gaps remain in implementation, with 14 districts lacking Sneha clinics. While some districts have infrastructure, counsellor positions are vacant, affecting service delivery.
- The government has now decided to operationalise counselling services at all health facilities — from district hospitals to sub-centres — by utilising counsellors available under various NHM programmes. A Government Order (GO) in this regard has been issued on April 1.
- Where counsellors are not available, medical officers, staff nurses, and sub-centre staff will be trained in adolescent counselling.
- Outpatient services under Sneha Centres will continue through existing medical and paramedical staff, the order stated.

Integrated counselling

- A key component of the GO is the creation of Samagra Samalochana Kendra (SSK), an integrated counselling model to be set up at district hospitals, taluk hospitals and community health centres.
- Under this model, counsellors working in different programmes, such as mental health, NCD, TB, adolescent health, and others, will function as integrated counsellors, offering services across programmes instead of being limited to specific beneficiary groups.

Infrastructure, training

- Health facilities have been directed to designate private spaces for counselling, with basic infrastructure such as tables and chairs. Multiple counselling units can be created within a facility for better access.
- Counsellors will receive additional training to handle cross-programme responsibilities, supported by digital tools and learning resources developed under NHM. Monitoring and reporting will be streamlined under a single supervisory structure at the district and State levels. Field outreach activities will also be integrated. For instance, school visits under RKSK can be combined with community outreach under other programmes to improve efficiency, the GO stated.

School linkage

- The government plans to develop a consolidated resource module by combining existing RKSK materials, School Health and Wellness Programme content and modules developed by NIMHANS.
- The initiative will also be aligned with the Education Department's systems. School health ambassadors may be designated as nodal teachers for RKSK activities, and awareness content will be integrated into the curriculum.

Special OPD services

- A system will be developed to identify high-need children through screening programmes. Specialist consultations — such as paediatric, psychiatric and orthopaedic services — will be organised on the 13th of every month for such cases.

❖ AI-based monitoring system to improve quality in government-run dialysis units

Context: To enhance clinical oversight and improve the quality of care across dialysis centres under the State's public-private partnership (PPP) model, an AI-based smart monitoring system has been introduced in seven centres across the State. Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao launched the system at K.C. General Hospital.

- The AI-enabled platform, introduced by NephroPlus, integrates advanced monitoring and surveillance technology into dialysis centres under the government's PPP programme, with a focus on strengthening patient safety, clinical oversight and standardised care.

Real-time tracking

- The system enables real-time tracking of critical dialysis parameters, including blood pressure, fluid removal and electrolyte balance, allowing healthcare teams to closely monitor patients during treatment and respond quickly to any variations.
- The platform monitors 28 key indicators such as adherence to dialysis protocols, clinical care, patient safety, bed availability, staff alertness, emergency preparedness, infection control, hygiene, security compliance and overall operational efficiency.

Digital governance

- Officials said the system creates a digital governance layer by replacing periodic audits with continuous, AI-driven monitoring. It also supports automated Key Performance Indicator (KPI) tracking and data-driven clinical and operational decision-making, improving transparency and consistency in care delivery.
- The platform operates at an accuracy level of 85% to 95%, with further refinements expected to enhance its performance and predictive capabilities.
- "Karnataka has been committed to expanding access to dialysis services through the PPP model. The introduction of AI-enabled monitoring systems further strengthens this effort by improving clinical oversight and enhancing patient safety," the Minister said.
- "It is encouraging to see how innovation and partnerships can work together to ensure that dialysis services delivered under the PPP programme match, and even exceed, private sector standards," he added.

- A live demonstration of AI-powered dashboards was held during the launch, showcasing real-time monitoring of dialysis procedures and quality indicators.

❖ GPs met 89% of tax collection target

Context: As many as 5,943 gram panchayats across Karnataka have achieved a higher tax collection and revenue realisation in 2025–26 compared to the previous financial year.

- The Department of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj reported a total tax collection of ₹1,382.57 crore in 2025–26, marking an increase of ₹110.04 crore over the ₹1,272.54 crore collected in 2024–25. This turns out to a record 89% realisation of the current demand, the highest in recent years.
- Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Minister Priyank Kharge said Karnataka had previously secured the top position at the national level in tax collection and revenue mobilisation with respect to village panchayats, and the continued upward trend highlights the impact of “efficient administration, strict enforcement of regulations, and strengthened tax collection mechanisms.”
- In 2024–25, gram panchayats, for the first time in the department’s history, collected ₹1,272.54 crore, achieving 80% of the demand.
- Building on this momentum, the State has further improved performance in 2025–26, reaching a record 89%, stated an official release.

Raichur performance

- Referring to performance by different districts, the Minister noted that Raichur district recorded an exceptional 129% tax collection, while 11 districts achieved over 100% collection.
- This achievement has been driven by awareness campaigns, targeted tax collection drives, and efforts of officials at all levels, Mr. Kharge said.

❖ ‘Amaravati Bill’ gets Rajya Sabha approval

Context: With the Rajya Sabha passing the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill on Thursday, the decks are cleared for incorporating Amaravati as the capital of Andhra Pradesh in the original Act, with effect from June 2, 2024.

- Almost all political parties supported the Bill in the Upper House, except for YSR Congress Party MPs, who maintained that the Bill cannot be accepted as it ignores the demands of farmers in the area. In his intervention, Civil Aviation Minister and Telugu Desam Party leader K. Rammohan Naidu said: “This redefines the pride, the faith... the consciousness of the country it has on its democracy, on the leadership and the whole political system also.”

❖ Nilgiri-class INS Taragiri to be commissioned today

- INS Taragiri, a Nilgiri-class multi-mission stealth guided-missile frigate under Project 17 Alpha, will be commissioned into the Indian Navy on Friday (at the Eastern Naval Command dockyard in Visakhapatnam, in a ceremony presided over by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. The Commanding Officer of the ship, Capt. Hemanth, said that this cutting-edge platform is a class of its own. “Not only can they serve as a screen for a ‘Carrier Battle Group’ or protect the carrier from threats, but they can also undertake special operations on their own,” he said.

❖ ISRO seeks proposals to analyse data from Aditya-L1 mission

Context: The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has released the second Announcement of Opportunity (AO) inviting proposals from the Indian solar physics community for observation time on the Aditya-L1 mission.

- The Aditya-L1 is India’s first dedicated space-based solar mission and has been making continuous and comprehensive observations of the sun from the sun-earth L1 point.
- The proposals must be submitted electronically through the Aditya-L1 Proposal Processing System (ALPPS) hosted at the Indian Space Science Data Centre (ISSDC). The deadline for submission of proposals is April 30, 2026.

❖ Telangana rolls out Bhu Bharati portal to ease land registrations

Context: The Telangana government has decided to introduce the integrated Bhu Bharti, land record management information systems, portal in one mandal of each district in the next 45 days.

- The government has launched the portal in five mandals - Amangal (Rangareddy), Kosgi (Narayanpet), Vatpalli (Sangareddy), Kusumanchi (Khammam) and Aswaraopet (Bhadrachari-Kothagudem) - on a pilot basis. Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy formally launched the project in Amangal this afternoon. Operations of the integrated portal would be scaled up to one mandal in each district after testing the efficacy of the portal in the next 45 days.
- The integrated portal was designed to bring Revenue, Registration and Land Survey wings under one umbrella. It forms part of the reforms ushered in by the State government in the Revenue department - eliminating the scope for middlemen interfering in land transactions. The portal replaces Dharani introduced by the previous BRS government.
- The new portal, would eliminate the need for the people to frequently visit the registration offices as they could log on to the portal through their smartphones. He criticised the previous government for its failure to address the issue of sada bainamas (transactions on plain paper) resulting in pendency of 9.52 lakh applications for regularisation of the transactions.
- The Congress government focussed its attention on the complaints pertaining to Dharani and took steps to ensure that land under cultivation registered through sada bainamas was registered in the name of the occupant, after due verification.

- The government took a policy decision to regularise sada bainamas in villages that were subsequently merged into municipal areas. This apart, efforts were underway to allot unique identification numbers to all land parcels on the lines of Aadhaar.

❖ Govt. confirms extra sittings to debate amendments to women's reservation Act

Context: The Budget Session of Parliament went into a short recess to be reconvened on April 16, instead of the original schedule of ending on Thursday. It will now end on April 18. In the two extended sitting of two days, Parliament will take up amendments to the Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act, popularly known as the women's reservation Act, 2023.

'Promise to women'

- "The government will propose that the House be adjourned, and we will meet very soon, for a specific period, for purposes already known to members," Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said.
- Though he did not spell out that the session is being extended to debate the amendments to the women's reservation Act, 2023, which seeks to provide 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and Assemblies, he said, "The Parliament of India has made a promise to the women of this country. We have a bounden duty to fulfil that commitment."

Repeated demands

- The Minister's clarification came amid repeated demands from the Congress for clarity on whether the Budget Session would formally end on April 2, 2026. Soon after the House met for the day, Congress Chief Whip Jairam Ramesh sought an explanation on media reports suggesting that the session would be extended. Leader of the House J.P. Nadda said the government would "get back" to him.
- Mr. Ramesh raised the issue again shortly before the Rajya Sabha took up discussion on the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Bill at 1 p.m.
- He argued that uncertainty over the House's schedule was detrimental to parliamentary functioning and transparency. He also said Congress president and Leader of the Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge had written to Mr. Rijiju seeking an all-party meeting after the election campaign or polling concluded on April 29. Accusing the government of pushing legislation during the operation of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) for electoral gain, Mr. Ramesh said the move was "wholly objectionable" and reiterated that all Opposition parties were seeking wider consultation.
- Responding, Mr. Rijiju said the government had already shared its proposed legislative agenda with Opposition members and that extensive consultations had been held.
- He said an important sitting was planned in the next two to three weeks and that nearly 80% of political parties had participated in consultations.
- The Congress, he added, was the only party that had not engaged with the government.

❖ India leads 16-nation maritime initiative

Context: With the West Asia conflict entering its fifth week and disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz triggering economic and energy instability, the Indian Navy on Thursday flagged off INS Sunayna as the Indian Ocean Ship (IOS) SAGAR, reinforcing its commitment to regional maritime security and cooperation.

- The offshore patrol vessel, carrying Indian Navy personnel along with representatives from 16 foreign countries, was flagged off by Minister of State for Defence Sanjay Seth in the presence of Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi at Naval Dockyard in Mumbai.
- Admiral Tripathi said maritime competition was no longer limited to oil and energy but was expanding to critical domains such as rare earth elements, minerals, fishing grounds and data. He noted that the global order was witnessing increasing friction, with the maritime domain emerging as a primary arena of contestation.
- He flagged rising challenges including illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, deep-sea research activities encroaching on sovereign rights, and growing threats from piracy, armed robbery and narco-trafficking.
- During the deployment, the IOS SAGAR will undertake port calls at Colombo, Phuket, Jakarta, Singapore, Chittagong, Yangon and Male before concluding at Kochi.

❖ CAPF Bill passed in LS amid Opposition walkout

Context: The Central Armed Police Force (General Administration) Bill, 2026 was passed by a voice vote in the Lok Sabha as the Opposition walked out due to the absence of Home Minister Amit Shah in the Lower House.

- Mr. Shah is campaigning for the Assembly election in West Bengal.
- Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, who was in Assam for election campaigning, said that he and his party firmly stood behind the officers of the paramilitary forces. “When our government comes, we will ensure justice for you 100%,” Mr. Gandhi said on X.
- Mr. Gandhi alleged it was unfair that officers of the paramilitary force never got to head their own organisation. “I wanted to speak on the CAPF Bill in the House but the government brought it in a day when I was touring election-bound Assam,” he said.
- Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai said the legislation would bring administrative clarity and was not against the interests of the Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) officers and would ensure promotion and financial benefits for the cadre.
- He said that Group A officers of CAPFs get minimum four promotions in their career and the promotions were delayed due to court cases.
- Opposition MPs, including those from the Congress, Samajwadi Party and Trinamool Congress, asked the government to refer the Bill to a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) for deliberations.
- Trinamool Congress member Mahua Moitra moved an amendment to the Bill, and sought that it be sent to the select committee for greater scrutiny.

- Congress MP Manickam Tagore questioned the absence of Mr. Shah even though the Bill “directly impacts the future, promotions, and dignity” of CAPF personnel. “When it comes to taking credit for controlling left-wing extremism, he is front and centre — quick to claim success and pat his own back. But when it comes to defending a controversial law affecting the very forces who fought that battle, he is missing from the Lok Sabha,” he said on X.
- Through the Bill, in CAPFs, 50% of the total posts in the rank of Inspector-General, at least 67% in the rank of Additional Director-General and all in the ranks of Special Director-General and Director-General shall be filled by Indian Police Service officers on deputation.

❖ Education Ministry notifies NCERT as deemed university

Context: The Ministry’s notification enables the NCERT to offer courses and grant degrees; it directs the education body to begin doctoral programmes.

- The Education Ministry has issued a notification declaring the National Council for Educational Research and Training, or NCERT, an institution deemed to be a university, enabling it to offer courses or programmes and grant degrees.
- In the notification dated March 30, the Ministry said that the University Grants Commission (UGC) had approved the expert panel’s recommendations to grant deemed university status to the NCERT — a nodal school curriculum body — in January, following which the Ministry notified the grant of status to the council.
- The notification confers the status on the NCERT, along with its six regional institutes, provided that a list of conditions is met.
- These conditions prevent the NCERT from indulging in any activities that are “commercial” and “profit-making” in nature, and mandate that all academic courses or programmes must conform to the norms and standards prescribed by the UGC and the concerned statutory bodies or councils. The notification mandates the NCERT to start programmes and off-campus or on offshore campuses “only in accordance with the norms and guidelines issued by the UGC, from time to time, on the subject.”
- The Ministry has said the NCERT “shall take appropriate steps” to begin research and doctoral programmes, and “innovative academic programmes” and the institute must not confine itself to the new emerging areas, but also “endeavour” to expand into other domains that are in accordance with UGC regulations and the National Education Policy of 2020. The Ministry said the NCERT must take all the measures required to get its academic programmes and courses rated for accreditation by the National Board of Accreditation, and for the institute itself by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council.

❖ 'Must get preferential access under U.S. trade deal as agreed'

Context: April 2 marks 1 year since Trump announced 'Liberation Day' tariffs and sparked off a year of trade volatility for India and several other countries.

- As one year lapses of U.S. President Donald Trump's 'Liberation Day' tariff announcement, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said India and the U.S. continue to have a "very robust and deep" strategic partnership and India's current stance was it should receive preferential market access to the U.S. compared with its competitors as was agreed to in the joint statement between the two countries.
- The 'Liberation Day' tariffs were announced on April 2, 2025. Under these, Indian exports to the U.S. would have attracted a tariff of 26%. Over the last year, however, a lot had changed: the tariffs were paused, reinstated, hiked to 50%, reduced again to 25%, promised to be reduced to 18% post a trade deal, invalidated by the U.S. Supreme Court, and then temporarily set at 10% for all countries.
- "India's approach is that we should get preferential market access, as was agreed to in the joint statement [in February 2026] as compared to our competitors," he told reporters here.

Trade deal in limbo

- Former Director General of Foreign Trade and founder of the think-tank Global Trade Research Institute Ajay Srivastava said the U.S. Supreme Court's decision should encourage India to revisit the deal.
- Sources in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry said that the ball was currently in the U.S.' court.
- "They are the ones under the deadline, not us," an official explained.
- "We are clear. If they finally arrive at a tariff system where we get preferential access, then we are ready to talk again regarding the trade deal."

❖ Govt. axes duty on 40 petchem items

Context: The Union government has provided full Customs Duty exemption for about 40 petrochemical products till June 30 in view of the ongoing conflict in West Asia.

- An April 1 notification listed 40 items, including polypropylene, polystyrene, polyols, polybutadiene, styrene butadiene and anhydrous ammonia.
- "This measure has been taken as a temporary and targeted relief to ensure continued availability of critical petrochemical inputs for domestic industry, reduce cost pressures on downstream sectors, and safeguard supply stability in the country," as per an official statement.
- The measure will benefit a wide range of sectors, including plastics and pharmaceuticals.
- Sanjay Mangal, Member at the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), said the revenue loss would be about ₹1,800 crore for the next three months. Cautioning the dynamics were constantly evolving and estimates based on past trends, he said, "While we are looking at the losses, we must note this is on the basis of past trends and considering the present dynamics of crude, exact revenue [foregone] impact cannot be calculated in that manner."

- According to Anil Reddy Vennam, SVP, All India Plastic Manufacturers Association, almost 25% of input for the plastic industry was imported, mainly from West Asia. With the exemption of the 8.5% import duty, the industry should see some relief.

❖ 'West Asia crisis hits Helium supplies'

Context: The supply of Helium, a critical gas used to save lives and power technology seems suddenly at risk on account of geopolitics, observed industry experts.

- Helium, a colourless, odourless, non-toxic, and inert gas and primarily used to cool superconducting magnets, MRI scanners, spectrometers and semiconductor fabs, has no or a few substitutes.

- Over 50% of India's Helium imports traditionally come from Qatar, which accounts for some 34% of global helium exports. Missile strikes and force majeure at Qatar's Ras Laffan complex in March significantly reduced Qatar's Helium export capacity.

- According to Ralf Gubler, research director for industrial gases and fertilizers at S&P Global Energy, India is 100% import-dependent for helium, making many industries, such as healthcare (MRI), semiconductors & electronics, fibre optics & display manufacturing etc. in the country acutely vulnerable to global disruptions.

- Mr Gubler said liquid Helium was indispensable for cooling superconducting magnets (MRI scanners). If Helium levels fell below critical thresholds, superconductivity would be lost, the Helium rapidly quenches (vaporises) which even lead to damaging superconducting magnets resulting in long and costly repairs.

- Most MRI scanners in India India rely on periodic refilling and failure risks magnet quench and multi-week downtime. Supply disruptions force hospitals to ration refills, delay installations and prioritise emergency scans.

- On India's helium demand and supply scenario, Mr. Gubler, said, the country's helium demand in 2025 was estimated at 3.4 million cubic tonne with zero domestic production.

'Eye other suppliers'

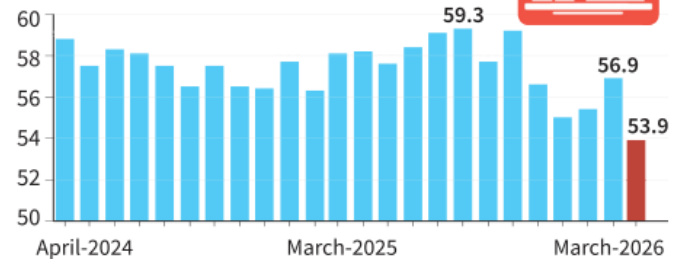
- Mr. Gubler said India should benefit from multi-origin contracts, including Russia, the U.S. and emerging suppliers like South Africa and Tanzania.

- In India, traces of Helium exist in natural gas fields in West Bengal and Jharkhand but concentrations are below the 0.2% economic threshold. Commercial viability is at least 5–10 years away, as per S&P Global Energy data.

- Ashok Chandak, President, India Electronics & Semiconductor Association said, critical materials such as helium must be treated as strategic inputs as India scales its semiconductor ecosystem.

War impact

The manufacturing PMI for March 2026 slipped to a 45-month low



Source: HSBC India Manufacturing PMI

Sharp price increase

- Typical inventories in India are for 7–10 days.
- “Helium prices have seen a sharp surge of about 35–50% in recent weeks, with spot prices in some cases rising even higher. The impact is more in the form of cost pressures than production disruptions,” Mr. Chandak said.

❖ NASA launches 4 astronauts on a crewed lunar mission

Context: Four astronauts blasted off aboard a massive NASA rocket on Wednesday on a long-anticipated journey around the Moon, the first crewed lunar flyby in more than 50 years.

- NASA teams and spectators alike were ecstatic as the spacecraft ascended into a radiant sky atop a cascade of flames. The team, who donned bright orange suits with blue trim as the mission began, includes Americans Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover and Christina Koch along with Canadian Jeremy Hansen. “We have a beautiful moonrise. We’re headed right at it,” said Mr. Wiseman, the mission commander.
- U.S. President Donald Trump praised “our brave astronauts,” calling the successful launch “quite something” at the top of his televised address on the war against Iran.
- The astronauts are now in orbit around the Earth. They successfully completed “proximity operations” demonstrations, which tested how their Orion capsule can move.

❖ Hit by West Asia crisis, manufacturing activity slows to 45-month low in March

Context: Manufacturing sector activity slowed to its lowest level in nearly four years in March 2026, dragged down by the impact of the war in West Asia on costs, demand, and new order levels, according to a survey of private sector companies.

- The HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers’ Index (PMI) — a measure of overall conditions based on new orders, output, employment, supplier delivery times and stocks of purchases — fell sharply from 56.9 in February to 53.9 in March, marking the lowest reading since June 2022. A reading above 50 denotes expansion, while a reading below that level indicates contraction.
- “Growth in India’s manufacturing industry took a step back in March as cost pressures, fierce competition, heightened market uncertainty, and the war in the Middle East all contributed to softer increases in new orders and output,” the report stated. “Firms also faced an intensification of cost pressures, the steepest since August 2022.”
- The report went on to say that the two largest sub-components of the PMI — new orders and output — rose at their slowest rates since mid-2022.
- “Anecdotal evidence showed that growth was curbed by challenging market conditions, cost pressures, and the war in the Middle East,” it added. “March data saw input prices increase to the greatest extent in over three and a half years. Aluminium, chemicals, fuel, jute, leather, fabric, oil, rubber, and steel were some of the items reported to have increased in price.”

- According to Pranjul Bhandari, Chief India Economist at HSBC, firms seem to currently be absorbing a large part of the increase in input costs, keeping output prices “relatively contained”.
- On a positive note, the report said that Indian manufacturers in March 2026 saw the strongest expansion in external sales since last September, with gains seen from customers in Australia, Brazil, Canada, mainland China, Europe, Japan, West Asia, Türkiye and Vietnam.

❖ Artemis II: what is at stake for U.S.?

Context: The Artemis II mission sent a crew of four astronauts beyond low-earth orbit for the first time since 1972; it aims to prove the whole system works as designed and accelerate plans to land U.S. astronauts on the moon amid increasing competition from China

- The NASA Artemis II mission launched in the early hours of April 2 (IST). The giant rocket ascended en route to sending a crew of four astronauts to near the moon for the first time in more than half a century. In so doing, it marked a milestone for the U.S. space programme. Its crew — commander Reid Wiseman, pilot Victor Glover, mission specialist Christina Koch, and Canadian Space Agency astronaut Jeremy Hansen — are also the first humans to travel beyond low-earth orbit since Apollo 17 in 1972. Glover also became the first person of colour, Koch the first woman, and Hansen the first non-U.S. citizen to embark on a lunar trajectory.
- The Artemis II mission uses the Space Launch System (SLS) rocket and the crew capsule is called Orion. The SLS will propel Orion into a free-return trajectory around the far side of the moon, reaching around 7,500 km from the moon’s surface before the earth’s gravity pulls them back to splash down in the Pacific Ocean in a little over a week.
- The mission does not plan to land on the moon. Instead, NASA is flying it to prove that the whole system — from the ground teams to the rocket and its crew — works as designed and the processes to land humans on the moon are ready.

Mission profile

- After the SLS core stage is separated, the crew will spend 24 hours in a high orbit around the earth as it checks the capsule’s life-support and environment systems. If they’re all in order, they will fire Orion’s trans-lunar injection burn. The crew will also test manual piloting and proximity operations, communications and navigation systems, and a high-speed data relay and collect data about physiological and biological responses of the human body to deep-space travel.
- Once Orion has finished going around the moon, it will be pulled towards the earth by gravity. NASA engineers expect the capsule will enter the earth’s atmosphere at a speed of around 40,000 km/hr. Its 5-metre-wide heat shield will endure temperatures as high as 5,000° C.

- NASA will be collecting important data at this time because during the Artemis I mission in 2022, engineers found that Orion's heat shield was eroded during re-entry as gases trapped in the shield's material cracked it. In response, NASA used the same material but this time modified the re-entry trajectory so that Orion spends less time in the atmosphere as it descends.

Artemis overhaul

- Artemis II will be the first test flight in the programme since NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman overhauled the programme's milestones earlier this year. In the older plan, the Artemis III mission was to land humans on the moon for the first time in the 21st century. In the new plan, however, Artemis III will launch a crewed Orion capsule to earth orbit to dock with prototype lunar landers designed by SpaceX and Blue Origin to ensure the technology works. Mr. Isaacman has said this mission is currently planned for 2027. NASA will actually land American astronauts on the moon in the Artemis IV mission, currently planned for 2028.
- This is why SpaceX and Blue Origin recently announced that they would focus on their plans to help U.S. astronauts reach the moon in the near future.
- The restructure also addressed a deeper operational problem. NASA flew the Artemis I test flight in late 2022 and Artemis II has now flown in 2026. This three-year gap included workforce attrition that could have resulted in loss of institutional memory, forcing parts of the mission to start afresh. So instead, NASA abandoned a plan to upgrade SLS for the Artemis II mission; instead, it flew with the same configuration that flew on Artemis I. NASA also said it will increase the launch frequency, with the additional mission in 2027, followed by at least one mission landing on the moon's surface from 2028 onwards.
- NASA also cancelled the Lunar Gateway project to build a space station orbiting the moon, and reallocated its components to infrastructure that will eventually be installed on the moon's south pole.

The Chinese pressure

- Mr. Isaacman wasn't only responding to technical challenges. A big reason for NASA to change its plans to return to the moon so drastically is China. As he put it: "... with credible competition from our greatest geopolitical adversary increasing by the day, we need to move faster, eliminate delays, and achieve our objectives."
- China is set to conduct a test flight of its new Mengzhou crewed spacecraft this year. Its new and powerful Long March-10 rocket made its first low-altitude flight on February 11. The Lanyue lunar lander, which will carry astronauts from orbit to the surface, is expected to make its maiden flight between 2028 and 2029. As for robotic missions: the Chang'e 7 moon mission is also expected this year. It will explore the moon's south pole region for resources like water. The Chang'e 8 mission is expected around 2029: it will have technologies to use resources on the moon itself, like a 3D printer that will try to build structures using lunar soil.
- Importantly, China also plans to land humans on the moon by 2030 and subsequently unfurl its 'International Lunar Research Station' in the 2030s.

- As the U.S.-China rivalry continues to dig in on the earth, with the entrenched hegemon reluctant to cede dominance and the rising power determined to reshape the international order, the space race they're leading wouldn't be what it is if it weren't for a particular limited resource: water on the moon.
- There are craters in the moon's south pole region that have been permanently shadowed. These areas have escaped the drastic temperature swings on the parts of the moon that are exposed to the sun (from 127° C during the day to -173° C at night). As a result, they are expected to contain water ice. The thinking goes: whichever country establishes infrastructure first in this area could corner these water ice deposits and shape the scientific and geopolitical rules for everything that follows.
- But in 2025, former NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine told a Senate Commerce Committee hearing that without significant changes, it is highly unlikely the U.S. will beat China's projected timeline to land people on the moon.
- If Artemis II and III go as planned and Artemis IV is able to lift off on time, U.S. astronauts could reach the moon's surface at least two years before China's mission. However, that depends on many things happening right on schedule — perhaps too many. Artemis I was delayed four times before it launched; Artemis II was delayed at least thrice. More broadly, whereas China has followed an incremental approach driven by the state, the U.S. has been following a commercial model with a large coalition: more than 50 countries (through the Artemis Accords) plus private companies like SpaceX and Blue Origin.

Success versus failure

- The Artemis II mission will last 10 days. Assuming it succeeds on all counts (since it is a test flight), it will prove the SLS rocket and the Orion crew capsule work, encourage NASA's partners to focus on Artemis III, potentially galvanise political commitment to land U.S. astronauts on the moon before China does.
- Delaying launches, especially those including a human crew, is par for the course in spaceflight because safety comes first. But that doesn't mean these decisions exist in a vacuum. If Artemis II had been delayed again, for example, public as well as institutional confidence in SLS and Orion could have eroded further. There could have been cascading complications for NASA's partners, including the European and Japanese space agencies.
- A delay could also have prompted the U.S. government to revisit the question of whether the programme is too expensive. It has so far cost at least \$93 billion and each new launch costs at least \$2 billion. SpaceX also still has to demonstrate the in-orbit refuelling technology that lunar missions require.
- If, however, Artemis II had failed (or fails in the latter part of the mission), the time-wise consequences range from a small but important delay if the failure is non-catastrophic to a delay of several years as the programme is halted altogether if the failure is catastrophic. It will also give reason for NASA's partners to consider whether they should suspend or possibly exit their involvement and for the U.S. government to consider a more panicked programme just to beat China to the moon.

- So as Artemis II launched, it did more than just send four people farther from the earth than any mission has in 54 years. It signalled that the U.S. is still in the race, against a China that has kept the U.S. anxious by almost always sticking to its schedule even as it thunders towards a crewed landing on the moon by 2030.

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❖ State rolls out free reading glasses scheme

Context: The government has partnered with Restoring Vision to roll out a programme aimed at providing free vision screening and reading glasses to citizens aged 40 years and above across the State, beginning with Yadgir district.

- State rolls out free reading glasses scheme, starting with Yadgir.
- The State government has partnered with RestoringVision to roll out a programme aimed at providing free vision screening and reading glasses to citizens aged 40 years and above across the State, beginning with Yadgir district.
- The initiative, implemented through Ayushman Arogya Mandir Sub Centres, marks the first such collaboration in India to address presbyopia at scale at the sub-centre level. In the first phase, about one lakh reading glasses will be distributed free of cost across 216 government health facilities in Yadgir, covering hospitals, Community Health Centres, Primary Health Centres and sub-centres.
- The programme is expected to benefit nearly 3.28 lakh residents aged 40 and above in the district. Officials said Yadgir was chosen for the pilot as the initial supply is sufficient to meet the district's near-vision correction needs.
- Presbyopia, an age-related decline in the ability to focus on nearby objects, is a leading cause of vision impairment. Health officials estimate that nearly 28% of Yadgir's population is affected by the condition, which can be corrected with reading glasses.

❖ GBA, five corporations unveil logos

Context: The GBA has unveiled official logos for the authority and the five city corporations on its website. The GBA logo features the image of Kempe Gowda along with the iconic Kempe Gowda tower.

- GBA logo with image of Kempe Gowda and logos of five corporations unveiled
- The Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) has unveiled official logos for both the authority and the five city corporations on its website.
- While the GBA logo features the image of Kempe Gowda along with the iconic Kempe Gowda tower, the logos of the five corporations retain only the tower, each distinguished by a different colour.



The logos of Greater Bengaluru Authority and the five corporations. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

English and Kannada

- All the logos carry the respective corporation names in both Kannada and English.
- According to a GBA official, the designs were approved during an executive meeting chaired by Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar in March.
- The logos have been released on the corporations' websites and were said to have been developed as part of their maiden budgets.
- Until now, all five corporations continued to function under the erstwhile Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) website, even seven months after their formation. During their maiden budget announcements, all corporations except the

East City Corporation had indicated plans to launch independent websites to bring “transparency”, the GBA official said.

- The East City Corporation, however, had only proposed setting up a “public dashboard”.

❖ **Russia assures steady oil and LNG supply to India**

Context: Russian Deputy Prime Minister Manturov discusses trade, fertilizers, people-to-people ties and connectivity with Modi; Russia cites ‘particular attention’ paid to cooperation in sectors like oil, gas.

- Amid the oil shock and supply chain disruptions triggered by the U.S.-Israel war on Iran, Russia has assured that its energy companies have the capacity to “steadily increase” the supply of oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) to India, and also “continue” to address India’s fertilizer needs.
- Russian Deputy Prime Minister Denis Manturov, on a two-day visit, called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday and discussed the supply of fertilizers.
- “We discussed our mutually beneficial cooperation in trade, fertilizers, connectivity and people-to-people ties,” said Mr. Modi, who “welcomed sustained efforts from both sides” to realise the agreements of the 23rd India-Russia Annual Summit hosted here in December 2025.
- The visit is being seen as part of the preparations by the two sides ahead of the upcoming BRICS summit to be hosted by India and the India-Russia annual summit scheduled in Russia this year. According to the Russian embassy, Mr. Manturov said that Russia has increased supplies of “in-demand mineral fertilizers to India by 40% and is ready to continue meeting India’s needs for this product”.
- He also mentioned that a joint project for the production of carbamide (urea) is “under development”. “Particular attention was paid to cooperation in the oil and gas sector. Manturov confirmed that Russian companies have the capacity to steadily increase supplies of oil and liquefied natural gas to the Indian market,” said the embassy readout.
- Mr. Manturov also met with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, and the leaders discussed continued energy supply to India.
- In a press note, the External Affairs Ministry said Mr. Jaishankar and Mr. Manturov “exchanged views on regional and global developments, including the conflict in West Asia.”
- Mr. Manturov said Russia will deepen nuclear cooperation with India. Other topics such as industrial cooperation, space and educational projects were discussed in the meetings.
- Mr. Manturov’s Delhi visit, which ended on Friday, took place days after Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Mr. Jaishankar addressed a conference on bilateral relations through a video link on March 23, during which Mr. Lavrov indicated Russia’s preparations for the annual summit.

- Mr. Lavrov had expressed Russia's support for the BRICS where India is the current Chair. The group has attracted attention in recent weeks as it has not made a statement on the evolving situation in West Asia, though Russia, India and China, who form a trilateral sub-group called RIC, have indicated that they will work closely within BRICS, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the UN on issues that affect common interests of the Global South.
- This was followed by the March 30 Foreign Office Consultations between India and Russia led by Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri and Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Andrey Rudenko. This week, the Indian side hosted Vladimir Yakushev, First Deputy Chairman of the Federation Council (upper house) of the Federal Assembly of Russia. On Thursday, Mr. Yakushev met Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha Harivansh Narayan Singh and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla.
- The flurry of conversations between India and Russia has coincided with the growing energy insecurity in India and the rest of South Asia as the war in West Asia continued in the second month. The U.S. had imposed penalty tariffs on India in August 2025 and made India cut down on Russian energy imports with the aim to force Russia make concessions in the war in Ukraine.

❖ Great Nicobar plan stirs fresh concerns

Context: A draft plan outlining the "relocation" of Nicobarese tribal communities affected by the Union government's Great Nicobar Island (GNI) mega-infrastructure project "to their ancestral lands" has created confusion and is exacerbating existing apprehensions among locals. They have been, for four years, protesting the clearance for the ₹92,000-crore project after withdrawing their consent in 2022, alleging that their forest rights had not been settled.

- This draft "Comprehensive Tribal Welfare Plan", prepared by the Andaman and Nicobar Islands administration and circulated on March 13 for consultation with line departments and the Tribal Council of Great Nicobar, proposes a ₹42.52-crore outlay over 24 months for the "relocation of Nicobarese tribal communities from tsunami-affected or project-impacted areas", which involves housing, land development and basic infrastructure.
- However, details of where the proposed relocation will take place and who will be relocated have left members of the Tribal Council of Great and Little Nicobar confused, according to Nicobarese community leaders who spoke to The Hindu.
- They said they were handed a copy of the draft plan on March 28 and have since been called for two meetings by the district administration in Campbell Bay to sign off on it. This comes as the Union government told a Calcutta High Court Bench on March 30 that it needed 15 days to "demonstrate that consent has been taken from the tribal people" for its project. At a meeting on April 1, the Tribal Council submitted a letter pointing out that some aspects of the draft were unclear and requested a Hindi translation of it. They said they would need at least a month to review the translated document.
- Notably, while the draft plan states the GNI project "involves relocation", the Centre has repeatedly said the project would not "disturb or displace tribes".

Unclear relocation plans

- According to a letter attached to the draft, the plan was prepared after Tribal Council leaders demanded a return to ancestral villages on the west coast of GNI that were destroyed in the 2004 tsunami, after which communities were shifted to encampments in Rajiv Nagar and New Chingenh near Campbell Bay. However, the draft plan states, “The project involves relocation to Rajiv Nagar (32 households, 101 persons) and New Chingenh (30 households, 117 persons).”
- In a section, the plan proposes Pulobhabi for “community purposes” of residents in Rajiv Nagar, to “facilitate periodic visits to ancestral lands”, while adding, “an option shall remain open” for families to return to ancestral villages outside the project area. For New Chingenh residents, the plan records their desire to return to Old Chingenh and Pulo Baha, but notes a final decision will be taken after assessing land availability and consultations, while their existing accommodations will be upgraded.
- Further, the plan lists all enumerated families in Rajiv Nagar and New Chingenh (62 families in total) and then states: “Proposed relocation site: Pulobhabi, western coast of GNI”.
- The tables in the draft also add to the ambiguity: allocations are made for upgrading 62 homes and building only 30 new homes, while another section states permanent shelters “will be built for all 62 households” — neither part explicitly mentions where these homes would come up. District authorities have not yet responded to The Hindu’s queries on what exactly the plan proposes.
- A leader of the Tribal Council said Pulobhabi is just one among several ancestral village sites, and the proposal lists only about 13 pre-tsunami Nicobarese villages when there are many more.
- In New Delhi on March 20, Great and Little Nicobar Tribal Council chief Barnabas Manju had said the community has long demanded a return to all ancestral villages along the west coast since displacement in 2004.
- Soon after the project was granted Stage-I clearance in 2022, the community withdrew their consent, fearing that it would encroach on their forest lands, including ancestral villages, preventing their return. Council leaders say the apprehension has been exacerbated as the administration has not clearly explained project boundaries.

❖ Third language grading row: Governor asks State government to re-examine decision

Context: Following a representation by the Association for Preservation of Local Languages, Bengaluru, the Karnataka Governor’s office has written to the Chief Secretary to examine the recent decision to award grading to third languages, including Hindi, instead of marking, in SSLC examination.

- In his letter to Chief Secretary Shalini Rajneesh, R. Prabhu Shankar, special secretary to Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot, said that the representation submitted recently highlighted “the significant role played by the third language in fostering linguistic diversity, awareness, and intellectual development among students.”

Academic importance

- “It has been pointed out that the proposed system of awarding only grades, in place of marks, may inadvertently diminish the academic importance of the subject and affect students’ motivation to engage seriously with it. The concerns raised also reflect apprehensions among teachers, parents, and educationists regarding the long-term implications of such a policy decision on the overall quality and inclusiveness of school education in the State,” the letter said.
- Further the letter stated that the Governor had taken note of the issues raised in the representation and desired that the matter be examined comprehensively, keeping in view its academic and administrative aspects across the education sector.
- “Therefore, examine the matter in consultation with the Department of School Education and other authorities concerned, and take such action as deemed appropriate in the larger interest of students and the State’s educational objectives,” he requested.
- Recently School Education Minister Madhu Bangarappa announced shifting from marks to grading system for third language in the State.
- The decision has received mixed reaction, with some welcoming the move and some others raising objections. The announcement had come even as the SSLC examinations were under way, creating confusion among students. Over 7.5 lakh students have Hindi as their third language, followed by English (32,000) and Kannada (11,400). Urdu, Sanskrit, Tulu, Konkani and Marathi are the other third languages.

❖ Major hurdle for Yettinahole project cleared: MoEFCC gives in-principle approval for diversion of forestland

Context: The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), Government of India, has accorded in-principle (stage-1) approval for diversion of 111.02 hectares of forestland in Hassan and Tumakuru districts for the Yettinahole Drinking Water Project, targeted to provide water to drought-prone areas in Karnataka.

- In a letter dated April 1, 2026, the Forest Conservation Division of the MoEFCC informed the Additional Chief Secretary (Forest, Ecology and Environment) in Karnataka that the Centre accorded the stage-1 approval under the Van (Samrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Abdhiniyam, 1980, for diverting the land to construct a gravity canal passing through the two districts.
- Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, who holds the portfolio of Water Resources, had met Minister for Environment and Forests Bhupendra Yadav several times to request approval for the proposal.
- The MoEFCC has placed certain conditions with regard to compensatory afforestation, online transfer of the Net Present Value (NPV) of the forestland being diverted, settlement of the rights with respect to Scheduled Tribes and traditional forest-dwellers in the forestland, among others.

- The Visvesvaraya Jala Nigama Ltd., the project proponent, has to fulfil the conditions and take the working permit to begin the canal work in the forest. A senior official stated that, with the approval, a major hurdle for the project had been cleared. Earlier, the proposal was for the diversion of 173.31 hectares. However, it was revised to 111.02 hectares, due to which the estimation cost of the project went up by ₹425 crore.
- “Now, we have to show compliance for the condition and make necessary payments to get the permission to begin the work on the ground. The technical procedures will follow,” the official said.
- Of the 252-km-long canal, about 208 km has been completed. The work on the 25 km-long is under progress and the work of another 16 kms is yet to begin. “We are seeking cooperation from the departments of Revenue, Home, Forest to continue the civil work,” said the official.
- The first phase of the work, which includes constructing eight weirs at different locations in Sakleshpur, has been completed. The second phase was stuck due to the delay in getting forest clearance.
- As a result, the project implementation agency was forced to divert water to Vani Vilas Sagar in Hiriyur in Chitradurga district. The officials are now hopeful of directing the water to Tumakuru district by October this year.
- The project has been designed to ease drinking water woes of nearly 75 lakh people in drought-prone Kolar, Chickballapur, Ramanagara, Tumakuru, Bengaluru Rural, Chikkamagaluru, and Hassan districts.

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❖ VJNL hopeful of supplying water to Tumakuru by October

Context: Rainfall data collected since 2017 shows average availability of 18 tmcft of water from the streams in the Western Ghats; VJNL claims the water available is more than sufficient for drinking purposes.

- With the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) according in-principle (stage-1) approval for diversion of 111.02 hectares of forest land in Hassan and Tumakuru districts for the Yettinahole Drinking Water Project, officials of Visvesvaraya Jala Nigam Limited are hopeful of supplying water from the Western Ghats to Tumakuru district by October 2026, and completing the project by October 2027, provided funds are made available.
- The project aims to provide drinking water and fill the tanks in the drought-prone districts with a total population over 75 lakhs.
- As per the design, 24.01 tmcft of water will be diverted during the monsoon from four streams — Yettinahole, Kadumane Hole, Keri Hole and Hongadahalla. Of this, 14.056 tmcft is earmarked for drinking water supply, while the remaining water will be used to fill 527 tanks up to 50% of their capacity.

Approved in 2012

- The project was approved by the Karnataka government in July 2012 at an estimated cost of ₹8,323.5 crore. The cost was revised in February 2014 to ₹12,912.36 crore and again in January 2023 to ₹23,251.66 crore. As of the end of February 2026, the cumulative expenditure stood at ₹18,205.55 crore.

- The project is being executed in two stages. The first stage, lift component, has been completed. Eight weirs were constructed to tap water from the streams. The stage that has been completed was commissioned in September 2024. In the absence of the gravity canal, the lifted water was temporarily diverted to Vani Vilas Sagar in Chitradurga district. Over the last two years, 3.283 tmcft of water has been diverted to the reservoir.
- Sannachittaiah, Managing Director of VJNL, told The Hindu on Friday that in the second stage, the construction of gravity canal was going on. “Of the 252-km-long canal, work on 208 km has been completed. The work on 25 km is under progress. We could not tackle the remaining 16 km due to the forest issue. Now it has been resolved,” said the officer.
- The crucial 16-km stretch passes through Belur, Arsikere taluks of Hassan and Gubbi of Tumakuru. The officials are hopeful of completing the stretch with the cooperation of other departments and flow water up to Tumakuru by October 31, 2026.
- “The feeder canals of Madhugiri, Pavagada and Gowribidanur have been completed and the T.G. Halli feeder is 90% complete. We are confident of taking water to Tumakuru district by October,” the MD said. Similarly, if the government provided the remaining funds in two years, the project would be completed and people of Chikkaballapur and Kolar would get drinking water by October 2027.

Water availability

- Since the start of the project, many have questioned the availability of 24.01 tmcft of water from the streams in the Western Ghats. The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) also questioned the VJNL’s calculation of water availability.
- The rainfall data collected from the rain gauges at the weirs in Sakaleshpur since 2017 projected average availability of 18 tmcft, which is 6 tmcft less than the designed quantity.
- Mr. Sannachittaiah, however, claimed that there was no shortage of water for drinking water purposes. “This is primarily a drinking water project. Whenever there is excess availability of water, tanks will be filled up. Anyhow, there is no shortage to provide drinking water for people of 6,657 villages in 29 taluks of seven districts, besides 38 urban local bodies, covering over 75 lakh people,” said the MD.
- He added that VJNL has engaged consultants to conduct a pre-feasibility study to explore additional water availability at the Netravathi and Kumaradhara river junction to make up the shortfall of 6 tmcft.

❖ Karnataka tops under ‘Namo Drone Didi Yojana’

Context: Karnataka, which is one of the leading aviation hubs in the country, also has the most number of women self-help groups (SHGs) to have undergone training as drone pilots under the ‘Namo Drone Didi Yojana’ (NDDY).

- Under the initiative, 145 members of SHGs from the State have been given drone pilot training which is the highest in the country followed by Uttar Pradesh (128) and Andhra Pradesh (108).

- In Karnataka, Koppal district topped the list, with 13 members of SHGs followed by Kalaburagi (12) and Mandya (11).
- One of the main objectives of this scheme, apart from empowering the SHGs, is to improve efficiency in agricultural practices and enhance crop yield. The programme's success breaks the stereotype of SHGs being mostly engaged in the making of home-based products such as papads and pickles.
- Asha Rani C.S., from Churchugundi village in Shikaripur taluk of Shivamogga district, is among those who underwent this training in Mysuru in January, 2024. For the last two years, she has been operating drone to spray medicines in maize and paddy farms.
- "The training is helping me financially too. Under the scheme I got drone as well. In a year for about four to five months, I get work to spray medicine in the farm fields. Sometimes, my earnings go up to ₹1 lakh a month," she said.
- As per information by Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol to a question in the Lok Sabha during the ongoing Budget session of Parliament a total of 1,094 SHG members have been trained as drone pilots in the country.
- Across India, Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh was ranked first, with 16 members of SHGs. The NDDY was launched by the Central government for providing 15,000 drones to the Women SHGs with an outlay of ₹1,261 crore for the period from 2023-24 to 2025-26. "The NDDY was approved by the government as a Central Sector Scheme with an outlay of ₹1,261 crore for the period from the financial year 2023-24 to FY 2025-26. The scheme aims to provide 15,000 agricultural drones to select women SHGs," the Minister said in his reply.
- He added that in 2023, 1,094 drones were distributed to SHGs by lead fertilizer companies using their internal resources. Out of these 1,094 drones, 500 were distributed under the NDDY scheme.
- According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, 15 days drone pilot training for one of the members of SHGs and five days drone assistant training for other member/family members of SHGs is provided as a part of the drone package.

❖ 'Private hospitals should mandatorily report minor pregnancy cases under POCSO Act'

Context: The Health Department has directed private hospitals to mandatorily report cases of minor pregnancies under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, warning that failure to do so would invite legal action against both doctors and hospital managements.

- As per the provisions of the Act, all cases involving pregnant girls below 18 years must be reported to the authorities.
- Guidelines issued by the Health Commissioner on April 1, 2026 stated that if a minor is admitted to a private hospital, the treating doctor must immediately inform the nearest Special Juvenile Police Unit or the local police station.
- Officials have also instructed that such cases should be promptly reported to the Child Helpline by dialling Childline 1098, to facilitate timely protection and rehabilitation measures.

Documentation

- Private hospitals have been asked to maintain proper documentation of POCSO cases and ensure that medical records are preserved in accordance with legal requirements.
- They must also safeguard patient confidentiality while extending necessary cooperation to investigating authorities.
- Further, the Department has emphasised the need for all private hospitals to sensitise their doctors and staff about the provisions and responsibilities under the POCSO Act.

❖ Gaganyaan: ISRO's Mission MITRA commences in Leh

Context: As part of the Gaganyaan mission, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is undertaking Mission MITRA (Mapping of Interoperable Traits and Response Assessment) in Leh.

- Mission MITRA, a first-of-its-kind team behavioral study designed by ISRO and the India Air Force's (IAF) Institute of Aerospace Medicine, commenced on April 2 and will go on till April 9.
- ISRO said that the crew safety and performance are the most critical elements of all human space flight missions.
- "The ability of crew to communicate effectively, adapt to stress, maintain psychological resilience and support one another determines the success and safety of any mission. Analog missions conducted under controlled yet realistic conditions are utilised to understand how crew perform under challenging conditions," ISRO said.
- Towards this ISRO has undertaken mission MITRA in Leh where the altitude is approximately 3,500 metres. Besides Leh also has the environmental conditions of hypoxia, low temperature, and isolation as a natural analog for spaceflight operations.

❖ Home Ministry revises classification of districts affected by left-wing extremism

Context: The Union Home Ministry has re-categorised the total number of districts affected by left-wing extremism (LWE) in the country replacing the earlier classification of "most affected" with "LWE affected," "districts of concern" and "legacy and thrust districts".

- While the number of districts in the LWE category remains unchanged at 38 compared to 2024-25, the classification now reflects shifts in the severity of violence reported in these areas.
- The red corridor has significantly contracted — from over 200 districts in 2005 to just two in 2026 — and its definition has also been revised.
- On March 27, three days before Home Minister Amit Shah declared in Lok Sabha that the country is now "Naxal-free," the Ministry reviewed the "categorisation of districts affected by LWE" and sent the fresh list to the Home Secretaries and Directors-General of Police (DGP) of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Telangana, and West Bengal. While Bijapur in Chhattisgarh and West Singhbhum in Jharkhand are the only two districts that have been characterised

as “LWE affected”, Kanker in Chhattisgarh is a “district of concern”, and there are 35 other “legacy and thrust districts” across nine States.

- These districts are Alluri Sitaramraju in Andhra Pradesh; Aurangabad, Gaya, Jamui, Lakhisarai in Bihar; Bastar, Narayanpur, Kondagaon, Bijapur, Dhamtari, Kabirdham, Khairagarh-Chhuikhadan-Gandai, Mohla-Manpur-Ambagarh Chowki, Gariyaband, Sukma and Dantewada in Chattisgarh; Bokaro, Chatra and Latehar in Jharkhand; Balaghat and Mandla in Madhya Pradesh; Gadchiroli and Gondia in Maharashtra; Boudh, Sundargarh, Kalahandi, Koraput, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur, Nuapada, Rayagada, Kandhamal in Odisha; Bhadradi-Kothagudem, Mulugu in Telangana and Jhargram in West Bengal.
- Till November 2025, Bijapur, Sukma and Narayanpur, in Chhattisgarh were included in the category of “most affected”.
- “The categorisation of districts provides the basis for deployment of resources under various schemes. The evolving LWE situation necessitates a periodic review of the districts in order to ensure that the focus of anti-LWE efforts remains aligned to the ground realities,” the Ministry said.
- It added that the districts covered under the Security Related Expenditure (SRE) Scheme have been comprehensively revised again.

❖ Indigenous stealth frigate INS Taragiri commissioned

- In a significant boost to India’s maritime security and the ‘Aatmanirbharta’ initiative, the guided-missile stealth frigate INS Taragiri was commissioned into the Indian Navy at the Eastern Naval Command base in Visakhapatnam on Friday. The ceremony, attended by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan, and Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi, marked the induction of a vessel that represents a generational leap in naval engineering. Powered by a combined diesel or gas propulsion engine and equipped with supersonic surface-to-surface missiles and advanced anti-submarine suites, the frigate is now a cornerstone of the Eastern Fleet.

❖ Rajasthan High Court expunges remarks on Transgender Act

Context: The Rajasthan High Court has modified its March 30 verdict to expunge certain portions criticising the recently enacted Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Act, 2026. In a clarificatory order issued on Thursday, the court said that its observations that the amendment diluted constitutional guarantees had been included “by mistake” and were “neither intended nor necessary.”

- The March 30 ruling on a petition filed by a transgender woman included an epilogue authored by Justice Arun Monga, which observed that the new law, by curtailing the right to gender self-identification, departs from the “constitutional baseline” set by the Supreme Court’s 2014 ruling in National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India. It noted that the amendment risked reducing what the top court had recognised as an “inviolable aspect of personhood” to a “contingent, State-mediated entitlement”.
- The amendment Bill was passed in Parliament last week and became law with the President’s assent late on Monday.

- In its Thursday order, the High Court Bench observed that certain portions had been inadvertently included in the epilogue of the earlier judgment and directed the deletion of paragraphs which stated that the rights of transgender persons must not be “rendered illusory by procedural constraints” and which criticised the amendment for making legal recognition of gender identity contingent upon “certification, scrutiny, or other forms of administrative endorsement”.
- “Upon our re-reading of the epilogue, it appears that by mistake the following text was included therein, although it was neither intended nor necessary,” said the Bench, which included Justice Yogendra Kumar Purohit. However, the judges declined a request that the epilogue be excluded from the judgment or disregarded for precedential purposes.
- In the revised epilogue, the Bench retained its position that the right to self-identify one’s gender is an “intrinsic facet of dignity, autonomy, and personal liberty under Articles 14, 15, 16 and 21” and “not a matter of concession, but a matter of right”. It, however, added that the epilogue is to be treated as a “statement of facts in the process of a changing legal landscape”.

❖ **INS Aridhaman, nuclear-powered submarine, enters India’s naval fleet**

Context: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh presided over a brief ceremony to formally commission the country’s third nuclear submarine, INS Aridhaman (S4), which is the third in the Arihant-class of SSBNs (Submersible Ship Ballistic Nuclear), on Friday at Visakhapatnam.

- The vessel, being part of the strategic weapons programme, falls under the domain of the Strategic Forces and is part of the country’s nuclear triad. As per sources in the Navy, the commissioning was not made public and was carried out quietly, but Mr. Singh dropped enough hints to acknowledge the commissioning of the vessel.
- While the event was kept under wraps, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh posted a cryptic message on X, describing the submarine as: “It’s not words but power, ‘Aridhaman!’”
- Sources in the Navy said that the commissioning of INS Aridhaman was on the cards, as the submarine had already undergone extensive sea trials, and it coincided with Mr. Singh’s visit to Visakhapatnam for the commissioning of the stealth guided-missile frigate INS Taragiri.
- The closely guarded SSBN project, initially launched as the Advanced Technology Vessel (ATV) project, is being executed by the Ship Building Centre (SBC) in Visakhapatnam. The first vessel was launched in July 2009 and was quietly commissioned in 2016. The second indigenously built SSBN, INS Arighaat, was commissioned in August 2024.
- While Arihant and Arighaat are smaller vessels of about 6,000 tonnes, Aridhaman (S4) and S4* are bigger vessels of about 7,000 tonnes. The S4* (which may be named Arisudan) is currently undergoing sea trials.
- Compared to its predecessors, Aridhaman and its successor S4* will have more firepower.

- India is already one of the nations, along with the U.S., Russia, China, and France, to possess a nuclear triad capability, which means it has the ability to launch nuclear-tipped missiles from air, land, and sea.

❖ **Patented drug tariffs: 'India more or less shielded'**

Context: India is unlikely to be significantly impacted by U.S. President Donald Trump's announcement of 100% tariffs on certain patented drugs, as the country primarily exports low-cost generic medicines to America, think tank GTRI said.

- Mr. Trump signed an executive order on April 2, announcing the imposition of a 100% ad valorem duty on the import of certain patented pharmaceuticals and associated pharmaceutical ingredients.
- The order builds on a Section 232 investigation launched on May 1, 2025, which cited national security risks from dependence on foreign drug supplies.
- The Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said the move has left "India largely protected, given its dominance in low-cost generic drug exports to the U.S." In 2025, India exported \$9.7 billion pharmaceuticals to the U.S.

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