

Weekly Current Affairs 29th March to 4th April 2026

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IMPORTANT ONE LINERS

NATIONAL

Indian Navy Hosts IONS Maritime Exercise (IMEX) TTX 2026 in Kochi

In the News: The Indian Navy successfully hosted the IONS Maritime Exercise (IMEX) TTX 2026 at the Maritime Warfare Centre, Southern Naval Command, Kochi, bringing together naval representatives from across the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) to address evolving non-traditional maritime security challenges.

Key Points:

- **About the Exercise:** IMEX TTX 2026 was a Tabletop Exercise (TTX) conducted in a sophisticated simulated environment, focused on non-traditional maritime threats such as piracy, smuggling, maritime terrorism, and complex operational crisis scenarios — without the logistical constraints of live deployments.
- **About IONS:** The Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) is a key multilateral platform that promotes cooperation, trust-building, and dialogue among the navies of Indian Ocean Region countries. IMEX TTX 2026 was conducted under the IONS framework to validate maritime security guidelines through practical application.
- **Participating Nations:** The exercise saw participation from 12 IONS member nations — Bangladesh, France, Indonesia, Kenya, Maldives, Mauritius, Myanmar, Seychelles, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, and Timor-Leste — reflecting a shared commitment to stability and security in the IOR.
- **India Assumes IONS Chairmanship:** As India assumes the IONS Chairmanship for the 2026–2028 cycle after a gap of 16 years, IMEX TTX 2026 marks a significant milestone in strengthening India's regional maritime leadership.
- **Strategic Importance of IOR:** The Indian Ocean Region is of critical importance to global trade, energy flows, and connectivity, making cooperative maritime security among IOR nations essential for regional and global stability.

Nitish Kumar Resigns as Legislative Council Position: Bihar To Get New CM

In the News: Bihar Chief Minister and Janata Dal (United) President Nitish Kumar resigned from his membership of the Bihar Legislative Council, complying with constitutional provisions, after being elected unopposed to the Rajya Sabha on March 16, 2026. His resignation signals the end of his nearly 20-year rule as Bihar's Chief Minister, with the state set to get a new CM.

Key Points:

- **The Resignation:** JD(U) MLC Sanjay Gandhi submitted Nitish Kumar's resignation letter to the Chairman of the Bihar Legislative Council, Awadhesh Narayan Singh. Senior Minister Vijay Kumar Chaudhary confirmed the move was part of a constitutional process.
- **Constitutional Provision:** As per constitutional rules, a sitting member of a State Legislature who is elected to Parliament must resign from the State legislature within 14 days of being elected as an MP. Nitish Kumar was elected to the Rajya Sabha on March 16, 2026, and had until March 30 to resign from the Legislative Council.
- **Rajya Sabha Election:** Nitish Kumar was elected unopposed to the Upper House of Parliament on March 16, 2026. He had filed his nomination papers on March 5, 2026, in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, confirming speculation about the end of his long tenure as Bihar CM.
- **Oath as Rajya Sabha Member:** Nitish Kumar is likely to take oath as a member of the Rajya Sabha on April 10, 2026.
- **Can He Remain CM?:** As per constitutional provisions, even after resigning from the State Legislature, Nitish Kumar could have remained Bihar's Chief Minister for up to six months. However, his resignation has set in motion the process for Bihar to get a new Chief Minister.
- **BJP's Nitin Nabin Also Resigns:** BJP National President Nitin Nabin also resigned from his Bihar Legislative Assembly membership on the same day, after being elected to the Rajya Sabha earlier this month. His resignation was accepted by Assembly Speaker Prem Kumar. Nabin had represented the Bankipur assembly seat in Bihar.



Government Plans EPFO, ESIC Inclusion for Informal Workers

In the News: The Union Government is considering a major policy shift to extend social security coverage to unorganised sector workers by bringing them under the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) and the Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC), aiming to provide pension and insurance benefits to nearly 32 crore workers currently outside formal welfare systems.

Key Points:

- **Government's Position:** Minister of State for Labour and Employment Shobha Karandlaje informed the Lok Sabha that discussions are underway within the Labour Ministry to include unorganised workers in pension schemes, in line with the broader objective of universal social security for all workers.
- **Scale of Impact:** The proposed move is expected to benefit nearly 32 crore unorganised, gig, and platform workers who currently lack access to structured pension and health insurance systems.
- **Legal Backing — Code on Social Security, 2020:** The initiative aligns with the Code on Social Security, 2020, which consolidates nine existing labour laws into a single framework. It formally recognises gig and platform workers for the first time and mandates the creation of a Social Security Fund for their welfare, funded through Central and State Government contributions, CSR funds, and collected fines.
- **About EPFO and ESIC:** EPFO provides provident fund and pension benefits to organised sector workers, while ESIC offers health insurance and medical benefits. Both are currently limited largely to the formal/organised sector.
- **Proposed Contribution Model:** Initial deliberations suggest a model based on voluntary worker contributions combined with government subsidies, aimed at making schemes affordable for low-income workers. As participation grows, insurance premiums are expected to reduce over time.
- **National Registration and Unique ID:** Under the Code on Social Security, 2020, all unorganised, gig, and platform workers are required to register on a National Portal and receive a unique Aadhaar-verified Identification Number, valid across the country. This ensures migrant workers can carry their benefits even when they relocate for work.
- **Four Labour Codes:** The proposal is in line with India's four Labour Codes, which seek to universalise social security, simplify compliance, and expand welfare coverage across all sectors of the workforce.

India Approves IBC Amendment Bill 2026 to Speed Up Insolvency Resolution

In the News: The Lok Sabha passed the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Bill, 2025, introducing major reforms to the insolvency framework — including strict timelines, out-of-court settlement mechanisms, and enabling provisions for cross-border and group insolvency processes. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman piloted the Bill, stating it would maximise value for stakeholders and improve the overall resolution process.

Key Points:

- **Background:** The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) came into force in 2016 and has been amended seven times so far. The Amendment Bill was introduced in Lok Sabha on August 12, 2025, referred to a Select Committee, and its report was submitted in December 2025. Bill has a total of 12 amendments, including 11 recommended by the Select Committee and one introduced by the government.
- **Primary Cause of Delays:** Finance Minister Sitharaman identified extensive litigation by promoters as the main reason for delays — including parallel recovery processes and attempts at last-minute settlements during admission.
- **14-Day Admission Timeline:** Applications for initiating insolvency resolution must now be admitted within 14 days once default by a company is established, especially for financial creditors, with no additional criteria required to be examined.
- **New Creditor-Initiated Resolution Process (Out-of-Court):** The Bill replaces the underutilised fast-track process with a new creditor-initiated insolvency framework featuring out-of-court initiation, a debtor-in-possession and creditor-in-control model (management continues with the existing Board of Directors/partners with safeguards), and a compressed 150-day timeline.
- **Adjudicating Authority Timelines:** The Adjudicating Authority (AA) must approve or reject a resolution plan within 30 days of receipt. Appeals before the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) must be decided within 3 months.

- **Penalty for Frivolous Proceedings:** Penalties ranging from ₹1 lakh to ₹2 crore will be imposed on persons initiating vexatious or baseless insolvency proceedings, to deter abuse and delays.
- **Prohibition on Wilful Defaulters:** Wilful defaulters, persons related to NPAs, and their connected parties are prohibited from submitting a resolution plan. This also extends to sale of liquidated assets and Pre-Packaged Insolvency Resolution Process (PIRP).

India Census 2027 Digital: Phase 1 Starting April 1, 2026

In the News: Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India, Shri Mritunjay Kumar Narayan, addressed a Press Conference in New Delhi announcing that Census 2027 — the world's largest census — will begin its Phase 1 from April 1, 2026. For the first time in India's history, the census will be conducted entirely digitally, with a Self-Enumeration option available to citizens in 16 languages.

Key Points:

- **Background:** The last Census of India was conducted in 2011. Census 2027 will be the 16th in the series and the 8th since Independence. The government's intent to conduct it was notified in the Gazette of India on June 16, 2025. The reference date of Census 2027 is 00:00 hours of March 1, 2027 (for Ladakh, snow-bound areas of J&K, Uttarakhand, and Himachal Pradesh, the reference date is October 1, 2026).
- **Two-Phase Structure:** The census will be conducted in two phases — Phase 1 is the House Listing and Housing Census (HLO) running from April to September 2026, collecting data on housing conditions, household amenities, asset ownership, and living standards. Phase 2 is the Population Enumeration (PE) scheduled for February 2027, collecting individual-level data on demographics, education, occupation, migration, fertility, socio-economic indicators, and caste enumeration as decided by CCPA.
- **First-Ever Digital Census:** Enumerators will collect and submit data directly through a Mobile App using smartphones, replacing paper forms entirely. Data will be uploaded in real time, reducing errors and improving accuracy.
- **Self-Enumeration (SE) — A First-Time Feature:** Citizens can log into the SE portal (se.census.gov.in) using their mobile number, fill household details online in 16 languages at their own convenience before the enumerator's visit, and receive a unique SE ID to share with the enumerator during the field visit.
- **Hybrid Model:** The process follows a 15-day self-enumeration window followed by a 30-day door-to-door enumeration period, ensuring both citizen convenience and verification of data by enumerators.
- **Budget Outlay:** The Union Government has approved ₹11,718.24 crore for Census 2027, covering honorarium and training for census functionaries, IT infrastructure, and logistics.
- **Training Structure:** A cascading training model has been set up — 100 National Trainers trained about 2,000 Master Trainers, who trained around 45,000 Field Trainers, who in turn are training approximately 31 lakh Enumerators and Supervisors across around 80,000 batches, with all materials prepared in regional languages.

Waste Segregation Made Mandatory: India's New Rules from April 1, 2026

In the News: India's Solid Waste Management (SWM) Rules, 2026 came into effect, superseding the SWM Rules of 2016. Notified by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change on January 27, 2026, under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, the new framework mandates four-stream waste segregation at source, introduces digital monitoring, and enforces stricter accountability for waste generators based on the Circular Economy and Extended Producer Responsibility principles.

Key Points:

- **Four-Stream Segregation Mandatory:** All households and institutions must now segregate waste into four categories — Wet Waste (kitchen waste, vegetables, fruit peels, meat, flowers — to be composted or bio-methanated), Dry Waste (plastic, paper, metal, glass, wood, rubber — sent to Material Recovery Facilities for recycling), Sanitary Waste (diapers, sanitary towels, tampons, condoms — to be securely wrapped and stored separately), and Special Care Waste (paint cans, bulbs, mercury thermometers, medicines — collected by authorised agencies or deposited at designated centres).
- **Extended Bulk Waste Generator Responsibility (EBWGR):** Bulk Waste Generators (BWGs) are defined as entities with a floor area of 20,000 sq. m or more, water consumption of 40,000 litres/day or more, or solid waste generation of 100



kg/day or more. BWGs — accounting for nearly 30% of total solid waste — must process wet waste on-site or obtain an EBWGR certificate if on-site processing is not feasible.

- **Stricter Landfill Restrictions:** Landfills are now strictly restricted to non-recyclable, non-energy recoverable waste and inert material. Higher landfill fees will be charged for unsegregated waste — exceeding the cost of proper segregation, transportation, and processing — to incentivise compliance. Annual audits of landfills are mandated by State Pollution Control Boards.
- **Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF) Target:** Industries using solid fuel, including cement plants and waste-to-energy units, must increase use of RDF (fuel derived from high-calorific municipal solid waste). The substitution rate will rise from the current 5% to 15% over six years.
- **Special Provisions for Hilly Areas and Islands:** Tourist user fees, regulation of tourist inflow, designated collection points for non-biodegradable waste, and mandatory decentralised wet waste processing by hotels and restaurants in hilly and island regions.
- **Governance Structure:** Central and State-level Committees for Effective Implementation will be established. A State-level committee chaired by the Chief Secretary will recommend measures to the CPCB for effective enforcement.

PM Modi Inaugurates Samrat Samprati Museum on Mahavir Jayanti

In the News: On the occasion of Mahavir Jayanti, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Samrat Samprati Sangrahalay (Jain Heritage Museum) at Koba Tirth in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. The museum is dedicated to Jain culture, the life and legacy of Emperor Samprati, and India's ancient heritage, designed to preserve and present this wisdom for future generations.

Key Points:

- **About the Museum:** The Samrat Samprati Sangrahalay is a Jain Heritage Museum conceived by Jain saints at Koba Tirth, Gandhinagar. It features seven galleries showcasing India's diversity and cultural richness, including the Navpad (Arihant, Siddha, Acharya, Upadhyaya, Sadhu) and the four principles of Samyak Darshan, Samyak Gyan, Samyak Charitra, and Samyak Tap. A dedicated gallery artistically presents the stories and teachings of the Tirthankaras.
- **About Samrat Samprati:** Emperor Samprati was a historical Maurya ruler and a devoted follower of Jainism, often called the "Jain Ashoka." PM Modi described him as a bridge between India's philosophy and governance — one who treated power as service and propagated Ahimsa (non-violence), Satya (truth), Asteya (non-stealing), and Aparigraha (non-possessiveness) from the throne.
- **Manuscript Preservation at Koba:** Acharya Bhagwant Shri Padmasagar Surishwarji Maharaj Saheb spent 60 years travelling across India to collect manuscripts. Over 3 lakh manuscripts — inscribed on palm leaves and birch bark, some hundreds of years old — are safely compiled at Koba Tirth.
- **Gyan Bharatam Mission:** PM Modi stated that the government launched the Gyan Bharatam Mission to correct the neglect of previous governments towards manuscript preservation. It leverages technology for digitisation, scientific preservation, scanning, chemical treatment, and digital archiving of ancient manuscripts. A nationwide survey also enables citizens to upload manuscripts preserved with them.
- **Cultural Renaissance Initiatives:** PM Modi referred to several ongoing heritage projects — the Maritime Museum at Lothal, the museum at Vadnagar, and the upcoming Yuge Yugeen Bharat Museum in Delhi — as part of a larger effort to present India's true history free from political bias.
- **Ten Resolves Reiterated:** PM Modi recalled his eleven resolves announced at the historic Navkar Mahamantra Divas in Delhi, which included saving water, Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam, cleanliness mission, Vocal for Local, Desh Darshan, natural farming, healthy lifestyle, yoga and sports, helping the poor, and preservation of India's heritage — calling the museum a living reflection of these resolves.

8 dead in Nalanda temple stampede

In the News: A deadly stampede occurred at the Maa Sheetla Mata Temple in Maghra village, Nalanda district, Bihar, during the weekly Tuesday fair that coincided with Mahavir Jayanti. At least 8 women lost their lives and several others were injured after barricades collapsed due to an unmanageable crowd surge, exposing serious gaps in crowd management and emergency response.

Key Points:

- **The Incident:** The stampede broke out at the Sheetla Mata Temple, which holds a fair every Tuesday and draws large crowds. The situation turned fatal when the crowd became too dense, barricades broke under pressure, and panic ensued with people pushing and falling. Eyewitnesses reported no visible police presence at the site at the time. The injured were rushed to nearby hospitals, with several reported to be in critical condition.
- **Government Response & Compensation:** PM Narendra Modi expressed grief and announced an ex-gratia of ₹2 lakh from the PM's National Relief Fund for the next of kin of each deceased and ₹50,000 for the injured. Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar called the incident "extremely tragic" and announced a total state ex-gratia of ₹6 lakh per deceased — ₹4 lakh from the Disaster Management Department and ₹2 lakh from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund. Senior officials were deployed to oversee relief and rescue efforts.
- **Stampede Statistics in India:** According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), from 2000 to 2022, 3,074 lives were lost in stampedes across India. Nearly 4,000 stampede events have been recorded over the last three decades. The NCRB has been collecting stampede data since 1996. The year 2025 alone saw around 90 deaths in crowd crushes.
- **Common Sites of Stampedes in India:** Stampedes in India typically occur at — places of worship, sporting events, railway stations, and large-scale gatherings like the Maha Kumbh. Recent examples include: Kumbh Mela (Jan 29, 2025) — 30 killed, 60+ injured at Sangam on Mauni Amavasya; Shirgaon, Goa (May 2025) — multiple deaths at Shree Lairai Devi Temple yatra; Bengaluru RCB IPL Victory Celebration (June 2025) — at least a dozen lives lost near Chinnaswamy Stadium due to lack of planning and crowd estimation failure.

INS Sanshodhak: India's Indigenous Survey Vessel Strengthens Maritime Capabilities

In the News: INS Sanshodhak — the fourth and final Survey Vessel (Large) — was delivered to the Indian Navy by Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers Limited (GRSE), Kolkata. This delivery completes the four-ship survey vessel project, originally contracted in October 2018, and marks a significant step in India's indigenous defence manufacturing under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative.

Key Points:

- **Historic Triple Delivery by GRSE:** For the first time in its history, GRSE simultaneously delivered three major naval platforms on March 30, 2026 — INS Dunagiri (Project 17A stealth frigate), INS Sanshodhak (Survey Vessel Large), and INS Agray (Anti-Submarine Warfare shallow watercraft). With this achievement, GRSE has now built a total of 118 warships, including 80 for the Indian Navy.
- **About INS Sanshodhak:** INS Sanshodhak is the fourth and final vessel in the Survey Vessel (Large) class, completing a significant naval programme. The 110-metre vessel displaces approximately 3,400 tonnes and is capable of speeds over 18 knots. It was designed by the Indian Navy's Warship Design Bureau and built to classification standards set by the Indian Register of Shipping.
- **Preceding Ships in the Class:** The four Survey Vessels (Large) delivered under this project are INS Sandhayak (commissioned February 2024), INS Nirdeshak (December 2024), INS Ikshak (November 2025), and INS Sanshodhak (March 2026).
- **Primary Capabilities:** INS Sanshodhak is designed for both coastal and deep-water hydrographic surveys, collection of oceanographic and geophysical data, seabed and underwater terrain mapping, and identification of safe navigation routes to support port and harbour development.
- **Advanced Equipment Onboard:** The vessel is equipped with Data Acquisition and Processing Systems, an Autonomous Underwater Vehicle (AUV), a Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV), a DGPS long-range positioning system, and Digital Side Scan Sonar — enabling comprehensive underwater survey operations.
- **Multi-Role Capability:** Beyond hydrographic surveys, INS Sanshodhak can also support helicopter operations, Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) missions, oceanographic research, environmental monitoring, and limited combat roles — making it a versatile dual-use platform.
- **About INS Agray (also delivered the same day):** INS Agray is an Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) shallow watercraft designed for coastal defence operations. With approximately 88% indigenous content, it is equipped with lightweight torpedoes, ASW rockets, and a 30 mm naval gun. Its shallow draught and waterjet propulsion system enhance manoeuvrability in littoral (coastal) waters.

Indian Navy Inducts Indigenous Stealth Frigate 'Dunagiri' Under Project 17A

In the News: The Indian Navy received the indigenous stealth frigate *Dunagiri* from Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers Limited (GRSE), Kolkata. The warship is the fifth vessel of the Nilgiri-class frigate programme under Project 17A and marks a significant milestone in India's defence indigenisation under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat vision.

Key Points:

- **About INS Dunagiri:** Dunagiri is a next-generation multi-mission stealth frigate and the fifth ship of the Nilgiri-class under Project 17A. It is the second Project 17A vessel to be built at GRSE (the other ships are being built at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited, Mumbai). The ship is named after the earlier INS Dunagiri, a Leander-class frigate that served the Indian Navy from 1977 to 2010.
- **Project 17A — Overview:** Project 17A is the follow-on programme to the Shivalik-class frigates (Project 17) and represents a significant technological upgrade in stealth, firepower, automation, and survivability. The frigates are designed by the Indian Navy's Warship Design Bureau (WDB) and built using an Integrated Construction approach, which reduces build time and improves efficiency.
- **Construction Achievement:** Dunagiri was built in approximately 80 months, compared to 93 months for the lead ship of the class — reflecting improved efficiency in indigenous warship construction. The delivery of Dunagiri marks the fifth Project 17A induction in the last 16 months.
- **Weapons and Sensor Systems:** INS Dunagiri is equipped with BrahMos supersonic surface-to-surface cruise missiles, MF-STAR (Multi-Function Surveillance and Threat Alert Radar) for advanced surveillance, MRSAM (Medium Range Surface-to-Air Missile) system for air defence, a 76 mm Super Rapid Gun Mount (SRGM), Close-In Weapon Systems (CIWS), and Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) capabilities including rockets and torpedoes.
- **Propulsion:** The ship is powered by a CODOG (Combined Diesel or Gas) propulsion system, enabling efficient speed management and operational flexibility.
- **Indigenous Content and MSMEs:** Project 17A has an indigenous content of approximately 75%, and has involved more than 200 MSMEs, making it a landmark programme for India's defence manufacturing ecosystem and the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative.

New Solid Waste Management Rules 2026

In the News: The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change notified the Solid Waste Management (SWM) Rules, 2026, superseding the SWM Rules, 2016. The rules, issued under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, came into full effect from April 1, 2026. They integrate the principles of Circular Economy and Extended Producer Responsibility, with a focus on efficient waste segregation and management.

Key Points:

- **Background:** The SWM Rules, 2026 replace the earlier Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016. They are notified under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, and are built on three core principles — Circular Economy, Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), and the Polluter Pays Principle.
- **Mandatory Four-Stream Segregation:** Waste segregation at source has been made compulsory under the new rules, with waste to be divided into four streams — Wet Waste (kitchen waste, vegetables, fruit peels, meat, flowers — to be composted or processed via bio-methanation), Dry Waste (plastic, paper, metal, glass, wood, rubber — to be sent to Material Recovery Facilities for recycling), Sanitary Waste (used diapers, sanitary towels, tampons, condoms — to be securely wrapped and stored separately), and Special Care Waste (paint cans, bulbs, mercury thermometers, medicines — to be collected by authorised agencies or deposited at designated centres).
- **Bulk Waste Generators (BWGs):** The rules clearly define Bulk Waste Generators as entities with a floor area of 20,000 sq. m. or more, water consumption of 40,000 litres per day or more, or solid waste generation of 100 kg per day or more. These include government departments, local bodies, PSUs, institutions, commercial establishments, and residential societies. BWGs must ensure their waste is collected, transported, and processed in an environmentally sound manner. They account for nearly 30% of total solid waste generation.

- **Extended Bulk Waste Generator Responsibility (EBWGR):** A new accountability framework — EBWGR — has been introduced, requiring bulk waste generators to process wet waste on-site wherever feasible. Where on-site processing is not possible, they must obtain an EBWGR certificate. User fees may also be levied on waste generators by local bodies.
- **Environmental Compensation — Polluter Pays Principle:** The rules provide for levy of environmental compensation for non-compliance, including operating without registration, false reporting, submission of forged documents, or improper waste management practices. The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) will prepare guidelines; State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) and Pollution Control Committees (PCCs) will levy the compensation.
- **Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF):** RDF is defined as fuel produced from municipal solid waste with high calorific value, primarily comprising non-recyclable plastic, paper, and textiles. Industrial units — including cement plants and waste-to-energy plants — that currently use solid fuel are mandated to replace it with RDF. The substitution rate will increase from 5% currently to 15% over a six-year period.

FCRA Amendment Bill 2026

In the News: The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026 was introduced in the Lok Sabha by Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai, on behalf of Home Minister Amit Shah. The Bill has sparked significant controversy, particularly in Kerala, ahead of the state's April 9 Assembly elections. The Union government deferred discussion on the Bill on April 2, 2026, citing legislative priorities.

Key Points:

- **What is FCRA?** The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act was first enacted in 1976 during the Emergency to prevent foreign powers from interfering in India's affairs through independent organisations. It was re-enacted in 2010 under the UPA government to consolidate laws on foreign fund utilisation and prohibit activities detrimental to national interest. The Act has since been amended three times — in 2016, 2018, and 2020. Currently, approximately 16,000 associations are registered under the Act and receive around ₹22,000 crore annually.
- **Key Proposal — Designated Authority:** The central amendment proposes the creation of a "designated authority," appointed by the Central government, to take over, supervise, and manage the foreign contributions and assets of an association whose FCRA registration is cancelled, surrendered, or has otherwise ceased. This replaces Section 15 of the existing Act.
- **When Registration Ceases:** An FCRA registration certificate is deemed to have ceased if no renewal application was made, renewal was denied, or renewal was not obtained before expiry. The designated authority steps in to manage assets in all such cases.
- **Places of Worship:** Clause 16A(7) specifically addresses places of worship, allowing the designated authority to entrust their management to a prescribed person, with the requirement that the religious character of such places must be maintained.
- **Opposition Concerns:** Opposition parties have raised concerns that the Bill could disproportionately affect minority institutions, particularly Christian organisations. Key objections include the risk of asset takeover due to procedural delays in renewal processing, rather than genuine violations. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said it would leave charitable and community welfare organisations at the mercy of the Central government. Congress's K C Venugopal compared it to the Wakf Amendment Act.
- **Kerala Factor:** The controversy gained particular traction in Kerala, which votes on April 9, 2026. Christians constitute the second-largest minority in the state with over 61 lakh people (as per 2011 Census), making them a significant voter base. Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan wrote to PM Modi urging reconsideration, citing concerns from religious institutions. Both the ruling LDF and Opposition Congress in Kerala have opposed the Bill. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of India stated the Bill "threatens the operational survival of Minorities and civil society organizations."

Bill Deferred: BJP's Kerala state chief Rajeev Chandrasekhar stated the Bill should first be explained to those it impacts before being passed, and the government agreed to defer discussion — a decision framed as being based on legislative priorities, not politics.

Delhi Government Launches the Lakhpati Bitiya Yojana

In the News: The Delhi Government announced the launch of the Lakhpati Bitiya Yojana, a new social welfare scheme aimed at strengthening girls' education and financial empowerment. The scheme was announced by Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta and came into effect from April 1, 2026.

Key Points:

- **About the Scheme:** Lakhpati Bitiya Yojana is a structured financial support scheme for girl children in Delhi, providing phased financial assistance starting from birth and continuing through graduation or diploma courses, designed to combine social security with education-linked incentives.
- **Replacing Ladli Scheme:** The scheme replaces and upgrades the older Ladli Scheme launched in 2008, which had faced implementation challenges. Existing beneficiaries under the Ladli Scheme will continue to receive their entitlements, while new beneficiaries will be enrolled under the revamped Lakhpati Bitiya Yojana.
- **Objective:** The scheme aims to prevent girls from dropping out of school, promote educational continuity, financial security, and empowerment, particularly for girls from economically weaker households across key educational milestones.
- **Financial Structure:** Financial assistance of ₹61,000 in total will be deposited in phased instalments linked to major educational milestones — from birth through graduation. The cumulative amount, along with accrued interest, is designed to grow to over ₹1.20 lakh at maturity in the beneficiary's bank account.
- **Eligibility Criteria:** The girl child must be born in Delhi, her family must have resided in Delhi for at least three years, and the family's annual income must not exceed ₹1.20 lakh. Up to two girl children per family are eligible to be covered under the scheme.
- **Direct Benefit Transfer:** Payments will be credited directly to the beneficiary's Aadhaar-linked bank account through a fully digital application and disbursement process, ensuring transparency and eliminating the need for beneficiaries to visit government offices.
- **Digital Infrastructure:** The entire process — from application to payment — will be fully online, with data for each beneficiary updated periodically, ensuring accountability and ease of access.

Lok Sabha Passed Resolution For Amravati The New Capital of Andhra Pradesh

In the News: Parliament passed the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, 2026, with the Rajya Sabha approving it through a voice vote, following its earlier passage in the Lok Sabha. The Bill amends the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014, and accords statutory status to Amaravati as the sole and permanent capital of Andhra Pradesh.

Key Points:

- **About the Bill:** The Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, 2026 amends the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014, to provide legal and statutory recognition to Amaravati as the sole capital of Andhra Pradesh, ending over a decade of uncertainty over the state's capital following its bifurcation.
- **Background:** Under the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014, a new capital was to be established for Andhra Pradesh after its bifurcation from Telangana. The Andhra Pradesh government had issued a notification on April 23, 2016, designating Amaravati as the capital location, but it lacked formal statutory backing until now.
- **State Assembly Resolution:** The Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly passed a resolution on March 28, 2026, requesting the Union Government to amend Section 5(2) of the AP Reorganisation Act to grant constitutional recognition to Amaravati as the capital, with retrospective effect from June 2, 2024.
- **Parliamentary Support:** All major political parties supported the Bill except the YSRCP, which opposed it in its present form, citing unresolved issues of compensation for farmers who gave up their land for the capital's development.
- **Congress's Stand:** Congress MP Renuka Chowdhury backed Amaravati as the capital but sharply criticised the 12-year delay, calling it a national shame and crediting the farmers of Amaravati for sustaining protests over the years to keep the issue alive.
- **YSRCP Opposition:** YSRCP MP YV Subba Reddy opposed the Bill, raising concerns over the definition of capital under the Constitution, lack of compensation for farmers who surrendered land, and the financial burden on the state.



Jan Vishwas Amendment Bill 2026 Passed: 784 Legal Provisions Changed to Boost Ease of Doing Business

In the News: Both Houses of Parliament passed the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026, with the Lok Sabha passing it on April 2 and the Rajya Sabha approving it shortly after. Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed its passage as a major boost to Ease of Living and Ease of Doing Business in the country.

Key Points:

- **About the Bill:** The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026 seeks to decriminalise minor offences and rationalise existing legal provisions to reduce the compliance burden on individuals and businesses, fostering a trust-based governance framework.
- **Scale of Amendments:** The Bill amends 784 provisions across 79 Central Acts administered by 23 Ministries. Of these, 717 provisions have been decriminalised to promote Ease of Doing Business, while 67 provisions have been amended to facilitate Ease of Living. Overall, the Bill rationalises more than 1,000 offences by removing minor offences.
- **Key Measures:** The Bill decriminalises minor offences and revises fines and penalties to make them proportionate to the nature of the offence, replacing criminal liability with civil penalties wherever appropriate.
- **PM Modi's Statement:** PM Modi described the Bill as a strengthening of a trust-based framework that empowers citizens, marks the removal of outdated rules and regulations, ensures speedy disposal of cases, and reduces litigation burden through decriminalisation.
- **Legislative Journey:** The Bill was initially introduced in Lok Sabha on August 18, 2025 as the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2025, proposing amendments to 355 provisions across 16 Central Acts administered by 10 Ministries. It was referred to a Select Committee of the Lok Sabha chaired by Shri Tejasvi Surya.
- **Select Committee:** The Select Committee held 49 sittings and submitted its report on March 13, 2026. Through extensive stakeholder consultations, it expanded the scope of the Bill, recommending decriminalisation across 62 additional Central Acts beyond those originally considered.

NCERT Gets 'Deemed University' Status: What It Means for India's Education System

In the News: The Ministry of Education issued a notification formally declaring the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) as an Institution Deemed to be University under a distinct category, under Section 3 of the UGC Act, 1956, on the advice of the University Grants Commission (UGC). This marks a landmark structural shift in the role of India's apex school education body.

Key Points:

- **Official Notification:** The Ministry of Education declared NCERT, along with its six constituent units, as an institution deemed to be university under a distinct category under Section 3 of the UGC Act, 1956. The distinct category recognises NCERT's specialised role in educational research and policy support.
- **Six Constituent Units:** The declaration covers Regional Institutes of Education located in Ajmer, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Mysuru, and Shillong, along with the Pandit Sunderlal Sharma Central Institute of Vocational Education, Bhopal.
- **Approval Process:** NCERT applied through the UGC portal, following which a Letter of Intent was issued in August 2023. NCERT submitted a compliance report in November 2025, which was accepted by the UGC's expert committee and approved during its 595th meeting on January 30, 2026.
- **Mandatory Compliance Requirements:** NCERT must participate in annual rankings under the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), seek accreditation from bodies such as NAAC and NBA, and compulsorily create an Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) with digital locker integration.
- **About NCERT:** Established in 1961 as an autonomous organisation under the Government of India, NCERT assists both Central and State governments in formulating education policies and implementing programmes for qualitative improvement. It develops the National Curriculum Framework (NCF), model textbooks, supplementary learning materials, and disseminates resources through journals and newsletters.
- **Alignment with NEP 2020:** The development is aligned with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasises research-driven education, institutional autonomy, and bridging the gap between school education and higher academic research. Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan had in 2023 stated the move would help NCERT evolve into a research-driven institution with expanded global academic engagement.

Sand Artist Sudarshan Pattnaik Appointed Brand Ambassador for India Census 2027

In the News: The Government of India has appointed internationally acclaimed sand artist Sudarsan Pattnaik as the Brand Ambassador for Census 2027, as announced by the Ministry of Home Affairs. He will use his signature sand art to educate and mobilise citizens across India about the importance of the upcoming census — the country's first-ever digital census.

Key Points:

- **Appointment & Role:** The Ministry of Home Affairs issued the official notification appointing Sudarsan Pattnaik as Brand Ambassador for Census 2027. He will leverage his unique sand art to raise public awareness and encourage broader citizen participation in the nationwide census exercise.
- **Who is Sudarsan Pattnaik:** He is an internationally acclaimed sand artist from Odisha, widely recognised for blending art with social awareness. Sudarsan Pattnaik was awarded the Padma Shri in 2014 for his outstanding contribution to art and social awareness. Over the years, his artwork has highlighted critical issues such as climate change, COVID-19 awareness, and children's rights, making him an ideal choice to represent Census 2027.
- **Guinness World Record:** He holds a Guinness World Record for building the world's tallest sand castle — 48 feet and 8 inches — at Puri Beach, Odisha in 2017.
- **About Census 2027:** Census 2027 will be the 16th National Census of India and the 8th Census after Independence, conducted under the Census Act, 1948 by the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India. It will be India's first-ever Census by digital means. The official mascots are "Pragati" (female) and "Vikas" (male).
- **Digital Features — A Historic First:** For the first time, enumerators will use smartphone-based mobile applications instead of traditional paperwork. Citizens will also have the option to participate via a self-enumeration portal, available in 16 languages — a feature never introduced before in India's census history.
- **Phase I — Houselisting and Housing Census (HLO):** To be conducted from April to September 2026, covering housing conditions, availability of amenities, and household assets. A 15-day self-enumeration window will be provided before enumerators begin house visits.
- **Phase II — Population Enumeration:** Scheduled for February 2027, this phase will collect individual-level data on demographics, education, migration patterns, and fertility details.

Raja Ravi Varma Painting Breaks Records and Became Most Expensive Ever in India

In the News: Raja Ravi Varma's painting 'Yashoda and Krishna', created in the 1890s, sold for a record-breaking ₹167.20 crore at Saffronart's Spring Live Auction held in Mumbai on April 1, 2026, setting a new world record for the highest value ever achieved by a work of Indian art at an auction. The painting was acquired by Dr Cyrus S. Poonawalla, Managing Director of the Serum Institute of India.

Key Points:

- **The Record-Breaking Sale:** 'Yashoda and Krishna' sold for ₹167.20 crore at Saffronart's Spring Live Auction in Mumbai, more than doubling its lower pre-sale estimate of ₹80 crore. The intense bidding lasted seven minutes. The painting came from a private collection in Delhi and had a pre-sale estimate of ₹80–120 crore.
- **Previous Record:** The previous record for the most expensive work of Indian art sold at an auction was held by MF Husain's 1954 Untitled (Gram Yatra), which fetched ₹118 crore at a Christie's auction in March 2025.
- **About the Painting:** Painted in the 1890s when Raja Ravi Varma was at the height of his prominence, 'Yashoda and Krishna' is an oil on canvas depicting Yashoda milking a cow with an infant Krishna standing behind her. It is painted in Varma's recognised realist style using the chiaroscuro technique, contrasting light and dark. The work captures a scene from the eighth discourse of the tenth book of the Shrimad Bhagavatam.
- **The Buyer:** The painting was acquired by Dr Cyrus S. Poonawalla, Managing Director of the Serum Institute of India. He described it as a national treasure and expressed his commitment to preserve it carefully and make it available for public viewing periodically.

About Raja Ravi Varma: Born in 1848 in Travancore, Kerala, Raja Ravi Varma is considered one of India's greatest painters. He introduced European oil painting techniques to Indian art, blending realism with Indian mythology and transforming how Indians visualised gods and mythological figures. In 1894, he set up a lithographic press to mass-produce affordable prints of his paintings, making his iconic depictions of gods like Krishna accessible to common households across India

INTERNATIONAL

Balendra Shah Sworn In As Nepal's Youngest PM After Historic election Mandate

In the News: Balendra Shah — a 35-year-old rapper-turned-politician popularly known as "Balen" — was sworn in as Nepal's new Prime Minister, becoming the country's youngest ever prime minister. His Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) won a landslide in the March 5 general elections, the first held since the deadly 2025 Gen Z-led protests that toppled the previous government of KP Sharma Oli.

Key Points:

- **Historic Election Result:** Total Seats Won: 182 out of 275. Direct Seats (FPTP), the RSP won 125 of the 165 first-past-the-post seats in parliament, with a near two-thirds majority — a result that even the party itself described as "beyond expectations." Shah personally defeated former PM KP Sharma Oli in Jhapa 5, a constituency that had been Oli's stronghold for decades. It was the first time in decades that a single party garnered a majority in Nepal, which has an electoral format that makes dominance by one party extremely difficult.
- **Who is Balendra Shah?** Born in 27 April 1990 in Naradevi, Kathmandu, Shah graduated with engineering degrees from Kathmandu and later from Karnataka, India. In 2013, he gained fame after winning a popular rap battle in Nepal with verses that carried the frustration of a suppressed generation. His songs criticised corruption, social inequality and political nepotism and became cultural touchstones for Nepal's youth. In 2022, he won Kathmandu's mayoral race as an independent candidate in a landslide, triumphing over parties that had dominated elections for decades.
- **Rise to Power:** Shah's message resonated deeply during the September 2025 Gen Z protests, in which 77 people died. His song "Nepal Haseko" (Smiling Nepal) became one of the protest anthems. He joined the RSP just weeks before the 2026 election as its prime ministerial candidate, bringing enormous popular appeal to the young party.
- **Key Priorities — First 100 Days:** The RSP has planned to prioritise anti-corruption measures, including investigations into the wealth of senior officials and politicians since 1990, forming a commission to investigate assets of high-level officials, and reopening high-profile corruption cases that were previously paused. Shah has also pledged judiciary reforms and the creation of 1.2 million new jobs.
- **Karki Commission Report:** One of Shah's immediate tests is implementing the findings of the Karki Commission, set up to investigate the killings and property damage during the 2025 Gen Z movement. The commission submitted its report on March 8, 2026, and there is strong public demand that it be made public and implemented quickly.
- **India Relations:** Indian PM Narendra Modi congratulated Shah after the election and expressed hopes for stronger bilateral ties. Shah responded by emphasising the importance of "historical, close and multifaceted relations" between Nepal and India.

K.P. Oli arrested

In the News: Nepal's former Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli, 74, was arrested from his Bhaktapur residence over his alleged involvement in the deadly crackdown on the September 2025 Gen-Z protests, in which more than 70 people were killed. Former Home Minister Ramesh Lekhak was also arrested on the same day, following recommendations by a government-appointed inquiry commission.

Key Points:

- **The Arrests:** Oli was arrested early Saturday morning and subsequently admitted to a clinic in Kathmandu as part of routine police procedure, given his age and medical history of two kidney transplants. Former Home Minister Ramesh Lekhak, 62, was also arrested in Kathmandu. Neither has been formally charged so far, with officials stating the process will move forward "according to the law."
- **Background — The 2025 Gen-Z Protests:** The protests erupted on September 8, 2025, when youth took to the streets over a government-imposed social media ban. Fuelled by anger over high unemployment, a stagnant economy, corruption and nepotism in politics, the crackdown triggered broader nationwide rallies in which more than 70 people died, and parliament, police stations and shops were set on fire. Families of 76 people who died have been calling for accountability in the months since.

- **Inquiry Commission Findings:** A government-appointed panel investigated the unrest and recommended that Oli, Lekhak and former police chief Chandra Kuber Khapung be prosecuted for criminal negligence. While the commission could not establish a direct order to use lethal force, it noted a significant failure to prevent or control the violence.
- **Oli's Response:** Oli has rejected the commission's findings, calling them "character assassination and hate politics." His lawyers argued that the detention was "illegal and improper" as there was no risk of him fleeing or avoiding questioning, and no formal charges had been presented.
- **New Government's Action:** The arrests came just one day after Nepal's new Prime Minister Balendra Shah — a 35-year-old rapper-turned-politician popularly known as "Balen" — was sworn in. His party, the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP), won in a landslide in elections held on March 5, the first time in decades a single party garnered a majority in Nepal. New Home Minister Sudan Gurung, himself a key figure in the protests, stated "No one is above the law... This is not revenge against anyone, just the beginning of justice."

Earth Hour 2026

In the News: The world celebrated the 20th ever Earth Hour — a landmark milestone for WWF's iconic global environmental movement. Millions of people around the world were invited to switch off their lights and "Give an Hour for Earth" by dedicating 60 minutes to doing something positive for the planet.

Key Points:

- **What is Earth Hour?** Earth Hour is WWF's annual global event where individuals, communities, businesses and organizations switch off their lights for one hour as a symbolic act of concern for the planet. It has grown into the world's largest grassroots environmental movement.
- **Origin:** Earth Hour began on March 31, 2007, when WWF-Australia and co-founders organized a symbolic light switch-off over Sydney's Harbour Bridge. On that first night, 2.2 million people and over 2,000 businesses participated, making headlines around the world.
- **Global Spread:** Just one year after its launch, the movement had spread to 35 countries and major cities including Bangkok, Chicago, Copenhagen and Toronto. It has since grown into a truly global tradition celebrated across all continents.
- **Earth Hour 2026 Significance:** Saturday, March 28, 2026, marked the 20th ever Earth Hour — a historic milestone celebrating two decades of global environmental impact.
- **'Give an Hour for Earth' Campaign:** Since 2023, Earth Hour introduced a new campaign called "The Biggest Hour for Earth," encouraging people not only to switch off lights but also to dedicate 60 minutes to positive action for the planet — such as reconnecting with nature, restoring the environment, learning about the planet, or inspiring others to care for it.
- **Record-Breaking 2025:** Earth Hour 2025 saw a record-breaking three million hours pledged by participants worldwide under the "Give an Hour for Earth" initiative.
- **Key Conservation Achievements:** In 2009, Earth Hour helped encourage over one million pledges for climate action. In 2013 in Argentina, Earth Hour support helped secure a 3.4-million-hectare marine protected area. In 2018, Earth Hour drove public momentum in French Polynesia, leading to the creation of a 5 million km² Managed Marine Area — a major win for ocean conservation.

Pakistan to host talks on West Asia War

In the News: Pakistan announced it is ready to "host and facilitate meaningful talks" between the United States and Iran to bring an end to the month-long US-Israel war on Iran. Pakistani Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar held talks with the Foreign Ministers of Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Turkiye in Islamabad, marking a significant diplomatic push to de-escalate the rapidly widening conflict in West Asia.

Key Points:

- **Islamabad Talks:** Two-day talks began on Sunday, March 29, 2026, in Islamabad, led by Pakistani Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar, with diplomats from Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Turkiye. The talks covered possible ways to bring an early and permanent end to the war and explored potential US-Iran direct negotiations in Islamabad.



- **Pakistan's Role as Mediator:** Pakistan has been acting as a key interlocutor between the US and Iran, passing messages between the two sides. Islamabad has longstanding links with Tehran and close contacts in the Gulf, while Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Pakistan's army chief, Field Marshal Asim Munir, have struck up a personal rapport with US President Donald Trump.
- **Broad International Support:** Pakistan's peace efforts have received growing support from the United Nations, China, and its Middle Eastern allies. The visiting foreign ministers "expressed their full support" for potential US-Iran talks in Islamabad. Both Iran and the US have "expressed their confidence" in Islamabad to facilitate the talks.
- **Iran-Pakistan Engagement:** Pakistan's PM Shehbaz Sharif held a detailed telephone conversation of over one hour with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian as part of preparations for the talks. Pezeshkian "thanked Pakistan for its mediation efforts to stop the aggression against the Islamic Republic."
- **Hormuz Breakthrough:** Ahead of the talks, Pakistan secured a deal allowing 20 Pakistani-flagged vessels to transit the Strait of Hormuz, which Iran had closed — a meaningful step towards easing one of the worst energy crises in modern history.
- **Germany's Signal:** Germany's Foreign Minister Johann Wadepful said he expected a direct US-Iran meeting in Pakistan "very soon," adding international credibility to Pakistan's mediation push.

Yemen's Houthis join Iran war

In the News: Yemen's Houthis attacked Israel for the first time, a month after US and Israeli forces began striking Iran, opening a new front in the conflict. The Houthis, who control much of northern Yemen, entered the fray with two missile and drone attacks on Israel in the space of fewer than 24 hours. This development has raised fresh fears over global energy supplies and maritime trade disruptions.

Key Points:

- **Entry into the Conflict:** Yemen's Iran-backed Houthis launched ballistic missiles at Israel — their first such attack since the US-Israeli war on Iran began on February 28. The group said it targeted "sensitive Israeli military sites" after Israel said it had intercepted a missile from Yemen.
- **Who are the Houthis?** The Houthis are an armed political and religious group which champions Yemen's Shia Muslim minority, the Zaidis. They are part of Iran's network of allies across West Asia — also called the "axis of resistance" — along with groups such as Gaza's Hamas and Lebanon's Hezbollah. In 2014, the Houthis seized Sana'a, the capital of the civil war-torn Yemen, and overthrew new president Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi.
- **Focus on Bab el-Mandeb Strait:** Their involvement comes just as Iran has throttled traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, raising fears that the Yemeni group will again disrupt Red Sea traffic by blocking the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. Yemen is located close to the narrow Bab el-Mandeb strait, which leads into the Red Sea. At the other end of the 2,000-km Red Sea are the Suez Canal and the SUMED pipeline.
- **Previous Red Sea Disruption (2023–25):** In just the first two months after the Houthis began attacking ships in December 2023, trade volume going through the Suez Canal decreased by more than 40%. The attacks forced vessels to go all the way around the Cape of Good Hope, driving up insurance premiums. In 2025, US President Trump launched a bombing campaign alongside the UK to prevent these attacks, striking thousands of targets, but it ultimately ended in a negotiated ceasefire.
- **Impact on Global Trade:** A disruption in maritime transport is a crucial concern for the world economy, as more than 80% of global goods trade volume is carried by sea. The share of trade via sea is much higher for developing countries such as India.
- **Impact on India:** While the Strait of Hormuz is critical for India's energy imports, the Red Sea route is vital for its exports, particularly to Europe. Nearly 80% of India's merchandise trade with Europe passes through this corridor, with the EU alone accounting for India's total goods exports, valued at around \$437 billion annually during FY 2024-25 (April-March).
- **Freight Cost Concerns:** The threat of fresh attacks will push global shipping lines to reroute via the Cape of Good Hope — a detour adding 4,000 to 6,000 nautical miles and delaying journeys by 14 to 20 days, sharply raising freight costs and disproportionately affecting developing economies like India.

No Social Media for Kids Under 16: Indonesia Starts Enforcing New Law

In the News: Indonesia became the first country in South-east Asia to enforce nationwide restrictions on social media access for children under 16, targeting platforms deemed "high-risk" such as YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, Threads, Facebook, X, Bigo Live and Roblox, amid growing concerns over cyberbullying, harmful content, and digital addiction affecting nearly 70 million children.

Key Points:

- **The Policy:** Indonesia began enforcing a regulation requiring "high-risk" social media platforms — including YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, X, and Roblox — to prevent access by users under 16, including by removing or deactivating their accounts. Lower-risk platforms may still be used by younger children subject to stricter safeguards such as default high-privacy settings, parental controls, and limits on location tracking.
- **First in South-east Asia:** Indonesia is the first South-east Asian nation to adopt such nationwide curbs, making it one of the most aggressive efforts globally to regulate how minors use digital platforms. The policy was influenced by Australia's landmark restrictions, which took effect in December 2025.
- **Why This Step:** A UN-backed study (2023) found that about half of Indonesian minors had encountered sexual images on social media, and nearly half reported experiencing online bullying. Officials cited widespread exposure to harmful content, cyberbullying, online fraud, and compulsive screen use as key reasons for the policy.
- **Scale of Impact:** Indonesia is the world's fourth-most-populous nation, with approximately 70 million people under the age of 16, making this one of the largest child-focused digital regulations in the world.
- **Tech Companies' Response:** X raised its minimum user age to 16 in Indonesia. TikTok announced gradual disabling of under-16 accounts, and both X and TikTok received letters of caution for non-compliance. Roblox is adjusting features for under-13s, YouTube/Google expressed support for the risk-based approach, and Meta has already placed tens of millions of Indonesian youth in "teen accounts" on Facebook and Instagram.
- **Compliance Deadline & Penalties:** All platforms must conduct child safety self-assessments by June 2026. Non-compliance could lead to sanctions including potential restrictions on access within Indonesia.

Amid West Asia war, why Spain has banned US military aircraft from its airspace

In the News: Spain announced a ban on US military aircraft involved in the Iran war from using its airspace and military bases, escalating tensions between Madrid and Washington. Defence Minister Margarita Robles described the war in Iran as "profoundly illegal and unjust," while Foreign Minister José Manuel Albares confirmed the expanded ban applies across the entire country.

Key Points:

- **The Ban:** Spain has barred all US military aircraft operating under Operation 'Epic Fury' (the US-led war in Iran) from its airspace and jointly operated military bases. The ban extends a previous restriction that only covered two American installations — the naval base at Rota (Cádiz) and the air base at Morón de la Frontera (Seville). Emergency situations are exempt from the ban.
- **Justification:** Spanish officials described the US-led military action as a unilateral war violating international law and UN principles. Foreign Minister Albares stated the decision reflects the "majority sentiment" of Spaniards who oppose the war.
- **Strategic & Logistical Impact:** Spain sits along key flight routes between the US and the Middle East. The ban forced the US to relocate multiple aircraft and at least 15 KC-135 refuel tankers, with tankers repositioning towards France and Germany. The US has since turned to Fairford air base in the UK (permitted only for "defensive missions") and Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean as alternatives.
- **Complications for US Operations:** Bombers departing Fairford must cross most of France and immediately refuel upon reaching the Mediterranean. Alternatively, they must enter via the Strait of Gibraltar and refuel through KC-46 Pegasus tankers at Laiges air base in the Azores — both options being significantly more complex logistically.
- **US-Spain Tensions:** US President Donald Trump threatened Spain with a full trade embargo and heightened tariffs, calling Spain "terrible" and accusing it of wanting to "travel for free" on defence spending. Spain had also previously rejected Trump's demand for NATO members to pledge 5% of their budgets for defence.

- **Spain–US Defence Ties:** Despite the ban, Spain maintains a bilateral defence agreement with the US granting Washington access to military facilities on Spanish soil. The Rota naval base hosts a permanent US Navy presence and is a key logistics hub for American operations in Europe and the Mediterranean.

NASA's Artemis II Mission Explained: How Humans Will Return to the Moon in 2026

In the News: NASA is set to launch the Artemis II mission — carrying four astronauts on a flyby mission to the Moon. This will be the first time humans have travelled to the Moon's neighbourhood since the last Apollo mission in 1972, marking a historic milestone in human space exploration. The mission will not land on the Moon but will circle it and return to Earth after a 10-day journey.

Key Points:

- **Mission Overview:** Artemis II is a crewed lunar flyby mission — a test-ride mission designed to test and validate all systems before astronauts finally make a Moon landing in 2028 (Artemis IV). The spacecraft will carry four astronauts and travel to the Moon's neighbourhood over a 10-day journey before returning safely to Earth.
- **The Route — Two Phases:** The Artemis II spacecraft will first make two rounds of the Earth before embarking on its journey toward the Moon. Once near the Moon, it will orbit around it, reaching a distance of approximately 6,500 km from the far side of the Moon — the farthest any human has ever ventured into space. It will then begin the return journey to Earth.
- **Travel Time:** The mission will take 3 to 4 days to reach the Moon's neighbourhood — roughly the same time Apollo missions took to reach the lunar surface. In contrast, many recent uncrewed lunar missions like India's Chandrayaan-3 took several weeks to months, as they use longer but more fuel-efficient and economical routes. Faster routes require more powerful rockets.
- **Rockets & Spacecraft — SLS and Orion:** NASA is using the SLS (Space Launch System) rocket — currently the most powerful launch vehicle available to NASA — and the Orion spacecraft. Both debuted on the Artemis I mission in 2022, which was uncrewed and stayed in space for about 25 days to conduct tests. Artemis II marks the first time SLS and Orion are being used to carry astronauts.
- **Comparison with Apollo Missions:** The Apollo missions used Saturn V rockets, which remain the most powerful rockets ever built. Apollo missions that landed on the Moon reached an altitude of just about 110 km from the far side of the lunar surface while orbiting it — far closer than Artemis II's 6,500 km reach, making Artemis II a deeper space journey than any Apollo mission.

India Leads Globally in Nagoya Protocol Compliance Certificates

In the News: India has emerged as the global leader in issuing Internationally Recognised Certificates of Compliance (IRCCs) under the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing (ABS). With 3,561 certificates issued out of a global total of 6,311, India accounts for over 56% of all IRCCs worldwide, demonstrating its strong commitment to biodiversity governance and equitable resource sharing.

Key Points:

- **India's Global Standing:** According to data from the ABS Clearing-House, India stands far ahead of all other nations in IRCC issuance. Among 142 registered countries, only 34 have issued IRCCs so far. India is followed by France, Spain, Argentina, Panama, and Kenya, highlighting a significant gap in implementation levels between India and the rest of the world.
- **What are IRCCs?** Internationally Recognised Certificates of Compliance are official records issued under the Nagoya Protocol when a country grants access to its genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge. They confirm that: Prior Informed Consent (PIC) has been obtained from the provider country, and Mutually Agreed Terms (MAT) have been established between the user and provider. They ensure transparency and accountability in the utilisation of biological resources.
- **Role in Biodiversity Governance:** IRCCs are critical tools for tracking the use of genetic resources — from research stages all the way to commercial applications. They ensure that benefits arising from such use are shared fairly with the provider country, supporting conservation efforts and promoting the sustainable use of biodiversity at a global level.

- **About the Nagoya Protocol:** The Nagoya Protocol is a supplementary agreement to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). It provides a transparent legal framework for the equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilisation of genetic resources. ABS (Access and Benefit-Sharing) is its core principle — ensuring that countries providing genetic resources receive a fair share of the benefits derived from their use.
- **ABS Clearing-House:** It is an international platform established under the Nagoya Protocol to promote transparency in biodiversity use. It serves as a global repository where countries register IRCCs, national legislation, and other ABS-related information, making information accessible to all parties.
- **India's Institutional Framework:** India's dominant position is attributed to its robust three-tier institutional framework under the Biological Diversity Act, 2002: the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) at the central level; State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs) at the state level; and Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs) at the local level — with over 2.76 lakh local BMCs powering benefit-sharing implementation across the country.

WTO 14th Ministerial Conference Concludes: India Focuses on Reforms, Fisheries and Agriculture

In the News: The 14th Ministerial Conference (MC-14) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) concluded in Yaoundé, Cameroon. India's delegation was led by Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Shri Piyush Goyal, who actively shaped discussions on WTO reforms, fisheries subsidies, e-commerce, and agriculture, advocating for a fair, inclusive, and development-oriented global trading system.

Key Points:

- **Conference Overview:** MC-14 brought together Trade Ministers and senior representatives from across WTO membership. Key agenda items included WTO Reform, Fisheries Subsidies, Investment Facilitation for Development (IFD) Agreement, E-Commerce, Agriculture, and LDC (Least Developed Countries) issues. Unresolved discussions on WTO Reform, E-Commerce, TRIPS Non-Violation and Situation Complaints, and the LDC package will continue in Geneva.
- **Key Outcomes:** Ministers agreed to continue negotiations on fisheries subsidies, with recommendations expected at MC-15. Two decisions were adopted: one on integrating small economies into the multilateral trading system, and another on strengthening SPS (Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures) and TBT (Technical Barriers to Trade) agreement implementation.
- **India on WTO Reforms:** India emphasized that consensus-based decision-making is the bedrock of WTO's legitimacy and that no member should be bound by rules it has not agreed to. India called for a transparent, inclusive, and member-driven reform process, prioritizing long-pending issues like food security, Public Stockholding (PSH), Special Safeguard Mechanism (SSM), and Cotton, while also highlighting the dysfunction of the WTO dispute settlement system.
- **Investment Facilitation for Development (IFD) Agreement:** India opposed the incorporation of the IFD Agreement into the WTO framework as an Annex 4 agreement, arguing it risks eroding WTO's foundational principles and functional limits. India called for comprehensive discussions under the WTO Reform Agenda before any such integration.
- **Development & LDC Issues:** India supported the extension of the moratorium on Non-Violation and Situation Complaints (NVSC) under the TRIPS Agreement. India also called for technology transfer to help developing and LDC members enhance their participation in international trade, and emphasized that Special & Differential Treatment (S&DT) must not be diluted or reconceived in the name of reform.
- **About WTO Ministerial Conference:** The WTO Ministerial Conference is the highest decision-making body of the World Trade Organization, held every two years. It sets global trade rules, negotiates international agreements, and addresses disputes and policy issues.

India Hosts 1st BRICS Youth Coordination Meeting 2026

In the News: India organised the first BRICS Youth Coordination Meeting in virtual format under its BRICS Chairship for 2026. The meeting was held by the Department of Youth Affairs, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, formally initiating youth engagements under the theme "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability."

Key Points:

- **Organiser:** The meeting was organised by the Department of Youth Affairs under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India, and was held virtually from 4:30 PM to 6:00 PM (IST).

- **Participation:** Representatives from all BRICS member countries attended the meeting, which served as a platform to align member nations on key thematic areas of youth cooperation.
- **Theme:** The meeting was held under the theme "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability," setting the overall direction for youth cooperation during India's BRICS Chairship year.
- **Objective:** To strengthen youth cooperation, promote collaboration among BRICS nations, and lay the foundation for upcoming engagements under the BRICS Youth Track 2026.
- **Key Initiatives:** India presented an overview of the BRICS Youth Track 2026 roadmap, outlining key upcoming activities including Working Group Meetings, Thematic Engagements, Serve BRICS Volunteering Activities, Youth Development Forum, Youth Council Meeting, Youth Summit, and the Youth Ministerial Meeting.
- **Priority Areas:** Discussions highlighted focus areas for collaboration including education and skills, youth entrepreneurship, science and innovation, social participation, inclusion, health and sports, environment and sustainability, interfaith dialogue, and youth exchange.
- **India's BRICS Chairship:** The meeting marked the formal beginning of the BRICS Youth Track 2026 under India's leadership, setting the foundation for all upcoming youth-related engagements during the Chairship year.

US calls India's online censorship mechanism 'politically motivated', cites 'increasing' takedown requests

In the News: The US Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) released its 2026 National Trade Estimate Report on Foreign Trade Barriers, flagging India's online content takedown mechanism as politically motivated and citing an increasing number of censorship-related requests directed at American tech companies since 2021.

Key Points:

- **USTR Report:** The 2026 National Trade Estimate Report on Foreign Trade Barriers outlines significant foreign trade barriers facing US exports globally. For India, it flagged digital laws like IT Rules 2021, data protection law, UPI, and agriculture among key concerns.
- **Politically Motivated Takedowns:** Since 2021, US firms — including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and X — have faced an increasing number of takedown requests for content and user accounts related to issues that appear politically motivated, according to the report.
- **IT Rules, 2021:** In February 2021, India published the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, governing social media platforms, messaging services, and news/entertainment content providers. These apply to significant social media intermediaries — platforms with 5 million or more registered users.
- **Expanding Censorship Regime:** India is planning to decentralise its content takedown framework, empowering multiple ministries and regulators to directly issue blocking orders to social media companies, raising concerns over a broadening censorship regime.
- **News Creators Under Radar:** Draft amendments propose that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) can recommend direct blocking orders against independent news creators and citizen journalists, and require them to apologise or edit content if found guilty by an inter-departmental committee.
- **Sahyog Portal:** Over 2,300 blocking orders were sent to 19 online platforms — including WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram — between October 2024 and October 2025 through the Union Home Ministry's Sahyog portal, as revealed by an RTI request.

Myanmar Military Chief Min Aung Hlaing Becomes President After Parliament Vote

In the News: Myanmar's coup leader and military chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing was elected president by the country's pro-military parliament, receiving 429 out of 584 votes cast. This formally consolidated his grip on political power, five years after he orchestrated the February 1, 2021 coup that ousted Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi's elected government.

Key Points:

- **Parliamentary Vote & Result:** Min Aung Hlaing won 429 out of the 584 votes cast by MPs in Myanmar's pro-military parliament. The result was confirmed by Aung Lin Dwe, the speaker of the combined upper and lower house of parliament. He was among three candidates nominated for the post, and the two runners-up became vice presidents.

- **Background — The 2021 Coup:** Min Aung Hlaing seized power on February 1, 2021, after accusing Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD party of widespread voter fraud — without evidence — following their landslide victory in the 2020 election. The coup triggered mass protests that spiralled into a civil war.
- **The 'Sham' Elections:** The transition to the presidency followed a lopsided election in December and January, won in a landslide by the army-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), which secured more than 80 percent of parliamentary seats contested. Critics and Western governments derided the elections as a sham to perpetuate military rule behind a veneer of democracy.
- **Who is Min Aung Hlaing:** The 69-year-old was born in Dawei in south-east Myanmar, studied law at university in Yangon, and on his third attempt was admitted to the Defence Services Academy. He was appointed Commander-in-Chief in 2011, and has led Myanmar's armed forces ever since.
- **ICC & Human Rights Accusations:** Min Aung Hlaing is wanted by the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity against the Rohingya Muslim minority. Since the coup, UN investigators have accused his regime of indiscriminate airstrikes killing civilians, mass killings of detainees, rape, and the deliberate burning of entire villages.
- **Aung San Suu Kyi's Status:** The 80-year-old former de facto leader has been detained since the 2021 coup, and her party was banned from contesting the recent elections.

India Ranks 3rd Globally in Renewable Energy Capacity, Says IRENA

In the News: According to IRENA's annual Renewable Capacity Statistics 2026 report, India emerged as the third-largest renewable energy market globally in 2025, after China and the United States, driven by rapid expansion in solar and wind capacity. India's installed renewable energy capacity in 2025 reached 250.5 GW, up from 175.9 GW in 2023.

Key Points:

- **IRENA Report & India's Ranking:** The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), in its Renewable Capacity Statistics 2026 report, placed India as the 3rd largest renewable energy market globally — behind only China and the United States. This marks a significant milestone in India's clean energy journey.
- **Overall Capacity Addition:** India sustained strong momentum even amid global energy market turbulence, adding around 45 GW of renewable capacity in 2025. This growth reflects India's sustained commitment to reducing dependence on fossil fuels.
- **Solar Energy — Biggest Driver:** The capacity increase was driven by about 37 GW of solar energy addition in 2025. While China contributed the most to global solar capacity addition, India was the second-highest contributor, followed by South Korea.
- **Asia's Solar Surge:** Asia more than doubled its installed solar power capacity since 2022, adding 317 GW in 2024 and 371 GW in 2025 — with India being a key driver of this regional growth.
- **Wind Energy Growth:** Wind energy additions globally reached a record high of over 158 GW in 2025, 14% more than the previous year. China led the expansion, while India recorded an increase of 6.3 GW — its highest-ever annual wind energy addition.
- **Hydropower & Pumped Hydro Expansion:** Hydropower installed capacity in India grew from 52 GW in 2024 to 56 GW in 2025, and pumped hydro storage increased from 4.7 GW to 7.2 GW in 2025.
- **IRENA's Statement on Resilience:** IRENA Director-General Francesco La Camera noted that renewable energy remains consistent in its expansion even amid uncertain times, adding that countries investing in the energy transition are weathering economic crises with less damage while boosting energy security and competitiveness.

Newcastle Disease Spread in Europe 2026

In the News: Newcastle Disease has spread rapidly across several European countries in 2026, pushing poultry authorities into emergency mode and raising serious concerns about poultry supplies and food chains. The virus has spread from Eastern to Central and Southern Europe since early 2026, with Poland emerging as the worst-affected country. According to the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), Spain, Poland, Germany, Czechia, Lithuania, and Slovakia have all reported fresh cases.

Key Points:



- **About Newcastle Disease:** Newcastle Disease (ND) is a highly contagious viral infection that primarily affects poultry and wild birds worldwide. It is caused by virulent strains of Avian Paramyxovirus Type 1 (APMV-1) and poses significant economic threats to the poultry industry due to high mortality rates and disruption of food supply chains.
- **Forms of the Disease:** The infection manifests in three forms based on strain virulence — Lentogenic (mild), Mesogenic (moderate), and Velogenic (highly virulent). Velogenic strains cause the most severe outbreaks, attacking the respiratory, nervous, and digestive systems, with mortality rates up to 100% in unvaccinated flocks.
- **Current Outbreak in Europe:** Poland is the worst-affected country, with dozens of outbreaks on commercial and backyard farms and over half a million birds culled. Germany has also reported outbreaks, including a large farm in Brandenburg where around 3,26,000 laying hens were slaughtered. Many affected farms were vaccinated, highlighting that the virus can still enter through wild birds, contaminated equipment, vehicles, or farm workers' clothing.
- **Symptoms in Infected Birds:** Infected birds display respiratory signs such as coughing, sneezing, and gasping; nervous signs such as tremors, twisted necks (torticollis), and paralysis; digestive issues such as greenish diarrhoea; a sudden drop in egg production of up to 100%; and in severe cases, sudden death without prior symptoms.
- **Transmission:** The Newcastle Disease Virus (NDV) spreads primarily through direct bird-to-bird contact via faeces, respiratory secretions, saliva, and urine. It also spreads indirectly through contaminated shoes, clothing, equipment, vehicles, feed, and water. The virus can survive for weeks in cool environments and remain active in carcasses for nearly a year, though it is destroyed by direct sunlight and disinfectants.
- **Human Risk:** Newcastle Disease is not a major human health risk if poultry is properly cooked. In rare cases, it may cause mild conjunctivitis in handlers who are not wearing protective gear.

India Surpasses Kenya and Russia in Track & Field Doping Cases

In the News: India has surpassed Kenya to top the Athletics Integrity Unit's (AIU) list of ineligible persons due to doping violations, with 148 suspended track and field athletes — two more than Kenya. The latest updated list covers the period up to April 1, 2026. Russia took the third spot with 66 suspended athletes.

Key Points:

- **About the Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU):** The AIU is an independent anti-doping watchdog established by World Athletics. It has jurisdiction over international-level athletes and their support persons. The AIU list includes persons serving a period of ineligibility as a result of national-level cases and decisions, as well as those who have committed non-doping violations such as tampering, evading testing, trafficking, or missing whereabouts — all of which carry the same penalties as a doping offence.
- **India's Doping Crisis:** India now leads the AIU list with 148 suspended track and field athletes, surpassing Kenya (146) and Russia (66). This follows a December 2024 WADA annual report in which India topped the global list with 260 athletes testing positive for prohibited performance-enhancing drugs — the only country in triple digits. India's positivity ratio stood at 3.6%, among the highest in the world, with NADA collecting 7,113 urine and blood samples of which 260 returned positive.
- **Prominent Indian Athletes on the List:** Dutee Chand, women's 100m national record holder, has been serving a four-year suspension since December 2022. Middle distance runner Parvej Khan is serving a six-year ban running until July 2030. Tamil Nadu sprinter Dhanalakshmi Sekar received an eight-year suspension in 2025 after being caught for the second time during the Inter-State National Championships.
- **AFI's Measures to Tackle Doping:** The Athletics Federation of India (AFI) has taken strict measures to combat doping, including tracking centres linked to the menace. Recognising the role of trainers in doping, the AFI has made it mandatory for all coaches to register with it. Unregistered coaches will be blacklisted and their trainees will be deemed ineligible for national awards.
- **Decentralisation of National Camps:** Following the 2024 Paris Olympics, the AFI decentralised its national camps and currently conducts camps only for relay teams. All other elite athletes have moved to private organisations such as Reliance, JSW, and Tata, or government departments like the Army and Navy for training.



ENVIRONMENT

Union Cabinet Approved India's Updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)

In the News: The Union Cabinet, under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved India's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) for the period 2031 to 2035. The updated NDC enhances India's climate ambition under the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, while reinforcing its commitment to sustainable development, climate justice, and the vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047.

Key Points:

- **What is an NDC?** A Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) is a country's climate action plan submitted to the UNFCCC under the Paris Agreement, outlining its targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change. India is required to update and communicate its NDC every five years.
- **Key Quantitative Targets for 2031–35:** India has committed to reduce Emissions Intensity of its GDP by 47% by 2035 from 2005 levels; achieve 60% cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2035; and create a carbon sink of 3.5 to 4.0 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent through forest and tree cover by 2035 from 2005 levels.
- **Track Record of Early Achievement:** India's original 2015 NDC targets of 33–35% reduction in emissions intensity and 40% non-fossil power capacity were both met well ahead of schedule — 11 years and 9 years early respectively. India's emissions intensity has already reduced by 36% during 2005–2020, and the country achieved 52.57% non-fossil capacity as of February 2026, five years ahead of the 2030 target.
- **Forest and Carbon Sink Progress:** India has already created 2.29 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent carbon sink by 2021. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has ranked India third in terms of net gain in forest area and ninth in terms of area under forest, acknowledging India's afforestation efforts globally.
- **Clean Energy and Green Growth Measures:** India's climate strategy is being implemented through large-scale renewable energy expansion, battery storage systems, green energy corridors, and cleaner manufacturing. Key schemes include the Green Hydrogen Mission, PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana, PM-KUSUM, Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes, Carbon Capture Utilization and Storage (CCUS), and nuclear energy.
- **People-Centric Approach:** India's climate efforts are centred around the principle of "Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE)," transforming sustainable living into a mass movement. Initiatives like 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' have been used to convert tree plantation into people-driven climate action.
- **International Partnerships:** India is pursuing climate action globally through initiatives such as the International Solar Alliance (ISA), Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), Global Bio-fuel Alliance (GBA) and Leadership Group for Industry Transition (LeadIT).
- **Long-Term Vision:** India's NDC for 2031–35 is guided by the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047 and India's long-term goal of achieving net-zero emissions by 2070.

1st Inter-State Initiative for Great Indian Bustard (GIB)

In the News: Union Environment Minister Shri Bhupender Yadav announced a landmark conservation milestone — a Great Indian Bustard (GIB) chick was born in Gujarat's Kutch after a decade, through India's first-ever inter-state "Jumpstart Approach," with a fertile egg transported 770 km from Rajasthan.

Key Points:

- **The Jumpstart Approach:** A novel conservation technique where a captive-bred GIB egg from Rajasthan's breeding programme was transported over 770 km by road in a handheld portable incubator for over 19 hours, in a halt-free corridor from Sam (Rajasthan) to Naliya (Gujarat), and successfully placed in the nest of a wild female GIB on March 22, 2026.
- **Successful Hatching:** The foster female GIB — tagged in August 2025 — completed incubation of the fertile egg, and the chick successfully hatched on March 26, 2026. The field monitoring team is observing the chick being reared by its foster mother in its natural habitat.

- **Why Gujarat?:** Only three female GIBs survive in the grasslands of Kutch, with no males remaining, making natural fertile eggs impossible. The infertile egg laid by the tagged female was replaced with the captive-bred fertile egg from Rajasthan.
- **Coordinating Agencies:** The initiative was planned a year in advance and coordinated by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), along with the State Forest Departments of Rajasthan and Gujarat, and the Wildlife Institute of India (WII).
- **Project GIB:** Envisioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2011 to conserve the Great Indian Bustard in its natural habitats, Project GIB was formally launched in 2016 and has been making steady progress in conservation and recovery efforts.
- **Conservation Breeding Centres:** The number of GIBs at conservation breeding centres at Sam and Ramdevra in Rajasthan has reached **73**, with five new chicks added during the current breeding season.
- **About GIB:** The Great Indian Bustard is a **critically endangered** species, once found across large parts of the Indian subcontinent, now largely confined to Rajasthan and parts of Gujarat, facing threats from habitat loss, power lines, and hunting.

Earthquake Lights Phenomenon Observed Near Turkey-Greece Tremors

In the News: Glowing vertical beams and luminous pillars were observed in the skies over the Aegean Sea region near Turkey and Greece, coinciding with a series of minor earthquakes that lasted until April 1, 2026. Experts identified these striking visuals as Earthquake Lights — a rare but scientifically documented natural phenomenon — sparking widespread interest and research attention globally.

Key Points:

- **What Are Earthquake Lights:** Earthquake lights are rare luminous phenomena — appearing as flashes, glowing orbs, streaks, or vertical pillars of light — observed in the sky before, during, or shortly after an earthquake. They are not caused by fire or heat but are linked to electrical processes triggered within the Earth's crust. Documentation of such lights dates back centuries.
- **Trigger Mechanism — Tectonic Stress:** The phenomenon originates deep within the Earth's crust. As tectonic plates collide and grind, immense stress builds up in subsurface rocks — particularly those rich in quartz and similar minerals — causing them to generate electric charges, similar to activating a large natural battery.
- **How the Lights Form — Ionisation & Plasma:** The electric charges generated travel upward through fractures and fault lines in the crust until they reach the surface. There, they interact with air molecules, causing ionisation (stripping electrons from air molecules). This produces glowing plasma — visible as luminous lights in the sky — similar to the illumination seen in neon signs, but without heat or flames.
- **Role of Geological Structures:** Earthquake lights are more commonly observed in regions with straight, vertical fault lines, such as rift zones. These geological structures act as efficient channels, allowing electric charges to travel more easily to the surface. This explains why not all earthquakes produce such lights — the phenomenon depends on both mineral composition and fault geometry.
- **Recent Aegean Sea Event:** During the late March 2026 tremors near Turkey and Greece, witnesses reported stunning glowing beams above coastal regions, leading to viral social media posts. Speculations ranged from sightings of angels to theories about simulated realities, before experts confirmed the scientific explanation.

SPORTS

Sunil Narine Sets New Record with Most Matches as Overseas Player

In the News: Sunil Narine became the most-capped overseas player in IPL history, playing his 190th match for Kolkata Knight Riders against Mumbai Indians at Wankhede Stadium, surpassing Kieron Pollard's record of 189 matches.

Key Points:

- **Record Achievement:** Sunil Narine surpassed Kieron Pollard (189 matches) to become the overseas player with the most IPL appearances, reaching 190 matches — all played exclusively for Kolkata Knight Riders.

- **Top Overseas Players by Appearances:** | Player | Matches | Team(s) | |---|---|---| | Sunil Narine | 190* | Kolkata Knight Riders | | Kieron Pollard | 189 | Mumbai Indians | | AB de Villiers | 184 | RCB & Delhi Capitals | | David Warner | 184 | Delhi Capitals & SRH | | Dwayne Bravo | 161 | Chennai Super Kings, Mumbai Indians & Gujarat Lions |
- **IPL Journey:** Narine was signed by KKR in 2012 for ₹3.4 crore. He played a significant role in KKR's title wins, including the 2024 season, and has represented only one franchise throughout his entire IPL career.
- **Bowling Records:** Narine has claimed 192 wickets in IPL, including 7 four-wicket hauls and 1 five-wicket haul, making him one of the most impactful spinners in the league's history.
- **Batting Records:** He has scored 1,780 runs in 122 innings, with 1 century and 7 half-centuries, often playing as an explosive pinch-hitter in the powerplay.
- **Versatility:** Narine's unique dual role as both a frontline spinner and a powerplay pinch-hitter makes him one of the most valuable all-rounders in IPL history.

Inaugural Khelo India Tribal Games 2026 Concludes: Karnataka Emerges Victorious

In the News: The inaugural Khelo India Tribal Games 2026 concluded in Chhattisgarh with a vibrant closing ceremony. Karnataka emerged as the overall champion of the Games. The closing ceremony was attended by Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai as Chief Guest, Deputy Chief Minister Arun Sao, and celebrated sportspersons Mary Kom and Bhaichung Bhutia as special guests.

Key Points:

- **About Khelo India Tribal Games:** The Khelo India Tribal Games are aimed at promoting sports among tribal communities across India, providing a national platform for tribal athletes to showcase their talent and fostering inclusivity in national sports development.
- **Host State:** The Games were hosted by Chhattisgarh. The closing ceremony was presided over by Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai, with Deputy CM Arun Sao also in attendance. International boxer Mary Kom and footballer Bhaichung Bhutia graced the event as special guests.
- **Participation:** A total of 3,800 athletes from 30 states and Union Territories participated in the inaugural edition of the Games.
- **Sports Disciplines:** Competitions were held across 7 main disciplines — Archery, Athletics, Football, Hockey, Swimming, Weightlifting, and Wrestling. Mallakhamb and Kabaddi were included as demonstration sports, highlighting India's indigenous sporting heritage.
- **Overall Champion — Karnataka:** Karnataka topped the overall medal tally with 23 Gold, 8 Silver, and 7 Bronze medals, emerging as the overall champion of the Games.
- **Other Top Performers:** Odisha finished second with 21 Gold, 15 Silver, and 21 Bronze medals, while Jharkhand secured third position with 16 Gold, 8 Silver, and 11 Bronze medals. Host state Chhattisgarh finished ninth with 3 Gold, 10 Silver, and 6 Bronze medals.
- **Football Final:** In the Men's Football final held at Raipur, West Bengal defeated host state Chhattisgarh 1–0 to clinch the Gold medal, while Chhattisgarh settled for Silver.

SCIENCE AND TECH

What Is Mission Mitra? ISRO's New Experiment for Gaganyaan Explained

In the News: ISRO launched Mission MITRA (Mapping of Interoperable Traits & Response Assessment) in Leh, Ladakh — a first-of-its-kind behavioral and physiological study designed to test astronaut endurance, teamwork, and psychological resilience under space-analog conditions, in support of India's Gaganyaan human spaceflight programme.

Key Points:

- **Mission Overview:** Mission MITRA is a joint initiative by ISRO's Human Space Flight Centre (HSFC) and the IAF-Institute of Aerospace Medicine (IAM), conducted at Leh, Ladakh (≈3,500 m altitude) from April 2–9, 2026. It is the first study of its kind focused on team behavioral dynamics in a high-altitude space-analog environment.

- **Full Form & Objective:** MITRA stands for Mapping of Interoperable Traits & Response Assessment. It is designed to examine the physiological, psychological, and operational dynamics of crew (Gaganyatris) and ground control teams functioning under environmental and operational stress.
- **Why Ladakh:** Leh's high altitude offers natural space-analog conditions — hypoxia, low temperatures, and isolation — closely mimicking challenges faced during long-duration spaceflight. These conditions help researchers study how astronauts react, coordinate, and maintain performance under stress.
- **Inauguration:** Mission MITRA was inaugurated on April 2, 2026 via a virtual address by Dr. V. Narayanan, Chairman ISRO/Secretary DOS, in the presence of senior officials including Air Commodore N. K. Tripathy (Director, IAM), Shri D. K. Singh (Director, HSFC), and others.
- **Participating Crew:** Four selected astronaut candidates (Gaganyatris) are participating in the mission following an acclimatization period at Leh. They are being closely monitored by researchers and experts throughout the study.
- **About Gaganyaan:** Gaganyaan is India's first human spaceflight programme, aimed at sending Indian astronauts to space and returning them safely to Earth, while demonstrating advanced crew safety systems and strengthening India's position in global space exploration.

Indian Navy INS Aridaman: Features, Role, and Strategic Importance Explained

In the News: India inducted its third nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine, INS Aridhaman, marking a significant milestone as the nation will, for the first time, maintain three operational SSBNs at sea. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh formally inducted the submarine. India also recently commissioned the stealth frigate INS Taragiri, further boosting the Indian Navy's ability to secure the country's interests in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

Key Points:

- **About INS Aridhaman:** INS Aridhaman is India's third nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) of the Arihant-class, developed under the Advanced Technology Vessel (ATV) project in Visakhapatnam. It follows INS Arihant (commissioned 2016) and INS Arighat (commissioned 2024). The 6,000-tonne INS Arihant established the sea leg of India's nuclear triad and completed its first deterrence patrol in 2018, while INS Arighat further stabilised India's continuous presence in deep waters.
- **Enhanced Missile Capacity:** The 7,000-tonne INS Aridhaman features 8 vertical launching system (VLS) tubes, allowing it to carry a larger payload of K-15 Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs) with a range of 700 km and K-4 SLBMs with a range of 3,500 km.
- **Nuclear Triad and Second-Strike Capability:** The commissioning of INS Aridhaman solidifies India's nuclear triad — the ability to launch nuclear weapons from land (Agni missiles), air (Rafale, Su-30MKI), and sea — ensuring a credible second-strike capability in alignment with India's No First Use nuclear doctrine.
- **Operational Milestone:** With this induction, India joins a select group of nations — including the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, and China — capable of operating an undersea nuclear deterrent. India will now, for the first time, maintain three operational SSBNs at sea simultaneously.
- **About INS Taragiri:** INS Taragiri is a Project 17A stealth frigate, the fourth vessel in its class, constructed by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) in Mumbai. The 6,670-tonne warship features a reduced radar cross-section and is equipped with supersonic surface-to-surface missiles, medium-range surface-to-air missiles, and an advanced anti-submarine warfare suite integrated with a cutting-edge combat management system.
- **Aatmanirbharta in Defence:** Taragiri embodies India's push for indigenous defence manufacturing, with over 75% indigenous content and contributions from more than 200 MSMEs. Both INS Aridhaman and INS Taragiri reflect India's vision of platforms designed, built, and operated by Indians.