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**English**



## Top Stories of The Day

- *ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026: India defeat New Zealand by 96 runs to win their third T20 World Cup title.*
- *All England Open Badminton Championships 2026: Lakshya Sen finishes runner-up as Lin Chun-Yi wins the men's singles title.*
- *State Bank of India launches \$500 million social loan to promote women's economic empowerment.*
- *Rastriya Swatantra Party wins historic majority in Nepal elections; Balendra Shah set to become Prime Minister.*
- *United States and South Korea launch large-scale Freedom Shield joint military exercise amid regional tensions.*
- *Mojtaba Khamenei appointed new Supreme Leader of Iran after the death of Ali Khamenei.*
- *Reserve Bank of India approves Ketan Merchant as interim CEO of Fino Payments Bank.*
- *Blue Sparrow missile reportedly used by Israel in strike on Tehran.*
- *K. G. George, Vir Chakra awardee and 1965 war veteran, passes away at 95.*
- *Andhra Pradesh introduces draft population policy encouraging two or three children amid falling fertility rate.*
- *George Russell wins the Australian Grand Prix 2026 as the new Formula One season begins.*

## India defeats New Zealand by 96 runs in the final



- India won the 2026 ICC Men's T20 World Cup after defeating New Zealand by 96 runs in the final held at Narendra Modi Stadium.
- India scored 255/5 in 20 overs, while New Zealand was bowled out for 159 runs in 19 overs.
- Sanju Samson scored 89 runs, while Jasprit Bumrah took 4 wickets for 15 runs and was named Player of the Match. Samson was also named Player of the Tournament.

### With this victory, India became:

- The first team to win the Men's T20 World Cup three times.
- The first team to successfully defend the T20 World Cup title.
- The first host nation to win the T20 World Cup at home.

### Key Facts:

- Tournament: ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026
- Final Match: India vs New Zealand
- Date: 8 March 2026
- Venue: Narendra Modi Stadium
- Result: India won by 96 runs
- India Score: 255/5 (20 overs)
- New Zealand Score: 159 all out (19 overs)
- Player of the Match: Jasprit Bumrah
- Player of the Tournament: Sanju Samson
- India Captain: Suryakumar Yadav
- Organised by: International Cricket Council (ICC).

- Edition: 10th edition of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup.
- First T20 World Cup: 2007 (won by India).
- Previous champion: India (2024).
- Next T20 World Cup: Scheduled for 2028 and will be co-hosted by Australia and New Zealand.

## Lakshya Sen finishes runner-up; Lin Chun-Yi wins men's singles title



- India's Lakshya Sen finished runner-up in the All England Open Badminton Championships 2026 after losing to Lin Chun-Yi in the men's singles final held in Birmingham.
- Lin Chun-Yi defeated Lakshya Sen 21-15, 22-20 in straight games to win his first All England title.
- Lakshya Sen fought strongly but eventually settled for second place, marking his second runner-up finish in this tournament after 2022.

### 2026 Champions:

- Men's singles: Lin Chun-yi (Chinese Taipei)
- Women's singles: Wang Zhiyi (China)
- Men's doubles: Kim Won-ho (South Korea), Seo Seung-jae (South Korea)
- Women's doubles: Liu Shengshu (China), Tan Ning (China)
- Mixed doubles: Ye Hong-wei (Chinese Taipei), Nicole Gonzales Chan (Chinese Taipei)

### Key Points:

- All England Open is the world's oldest badminton tournament, first held in 1899.

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- It is part of the Badminton World Federation (BWF) World Tour.
- The tournament belongs to the BWF World Tour Super 1000 category (highest level after World Championships and Olympics).
- First Indian winner: Prakash Padukone (1980).
- Second Indian winner: Pullela Gopichand (2001).
- Lakshya Sen hails from Almora.
- Lin Chun-Yi became the first men's singles player from Chinese Taipei to win the All England title.

## SBI Launches \$500 Million Social Loan for Women Empowerment



- The State Bank of India (SBI) launched a USD 500 million syndicated social term loan facility to promote women's economic empowerment on the eve of International Women's Day. The initiative includes a greenshoe option, allowing the loan amount to be increased if investor demand rises.
- This financing initiative is designed to reduce the gender gap and create economic opportunities for women, while supporting inclusive growth and social impact. The loan also aligns with **United Nations Sustainable Development Goal-5 (SDG-5): Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls.**
- The transaction is considered the first such social loan by SBI and is expected to become the largest gender-themed loan globally, marking a significant milestone in Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) financing by an Indian financial institution.

### Key Points:

- Initiative: \$500 million Syndicated Social Term Loan
- Launched by: State Bank of India (SBI)
- Purpose: Promote women empowerment and reduce gender gap
- Occasion: Ahead of International Women's Day (8 March)
- Feature: Greenshoe option (loan amount may increase based on demand)
- Coordinator: Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group (MUFG) acted as lead arranger, underwriter and bookrunner.
- Focus: Supporting gender equality and inclusive economic growth

### Additional Important Facts:

- SDG-5 focuses on gender equality and empowerment of women and girls worldwide.
- Syndicated Loan: A loan provided by a group of lenders (banks/financial institutions) to a single borrower.
- ESG Financing: Investments based on Environmental, Social and Governance criteria to promote sustainable development.
- State Bank of India is India's largest public sector bank, established in 1955 after nationalisation of the Imperial Bank of India.
- Headquarters: Mumbai, Maharashtra.
- Chairman: C. S. Setty.
- SBI plays a key role in financial inclusion initiatives such as Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana.

## Nepal Election 2026: Rastriya Swatantra Party Secures Historic Majority

- In the 2026 general elections of Nepal, the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) achieved a historic landslide victory, winning 122 out of 165 directly elected seats in the House of

Representatives, marking the largest majority in Nepal's democratic history.

- The party is led by Balendra Shah (popularly known as Balen), a former Kathmandu mayor and rapper-turned-politician, who is expected to become Nepal's next Prime Minister following the victory.
- The election marked a major political shift, as the newly formed RSP defeated traditional political parties such as Nepali Congress and Communist Party of Nepal (UML). The elections were held after the 2025 youth-led protests that forced the resignation of the previous government.



### Nepal Political System

- Form of Government: Federal Democratic Republic.
- Current Constitution: Adopted in 2015.
- Parliament: Bicameral legislature consisting of:
- House of Representatives (Pratinidhi Sabha) – 275 members.
- National Assembly (Rastriya Sabha) – 59 members.

### Electoral System

- 165 members elected through First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) system.
- 110 members elected through Proportional Representation (PR) system.

### Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP)

- Founded: 2022
- Founder: Rabi Lamichhane
- Known for anti-corruption and governance reform agenda.

### Significance of the Election

- Represents a major generational shift in Nepal's politics.
- Traditional parties lost dominance after youth-led protests in 2025 against corruption and governance issues.

### US and South Korea Launch 'Freedom Shield' Joint Military Exercise



- The United States and South Korea have launched the large-scale "Freedom Shield" joint military exercise to enhance their combined defence capabilities and preparedness against security threats, particularly from North Korea.
- The exercise is scheduled to continue until 19 March 2026 on the Korean Peninsula.
- The drills involve around 18,000 South Korean troops along with an undisclosed number of US military personnel. The exercise focuses on strengthening joint operational readiness, interoperability and coordinated defence strategies between the two allies.
- The annual exercise is considered a defensive drill by the allies, but North Korea has repeatedly criticised it as a rehearsal for invasion, often responding with missile tests or military demonstrations.

### US-South Korea Defence Alliance

- The US-South Korea alliance began with the Mutual Defense Treaty of 1953, signed after the Korean War (1950-1953).

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- The United States maintains US Forces Korea (USFK) with tens of thousands of troops stationed in South Korea.

### **Korean Peninsula Security Context**

- North Korea (DPRK) frequently conducts ballistic missile tests and nuclear weapons development, increasing tensions in the region.
- Joint exercises such as Freedom Shield are intended to deter aggression and maintain regional stability.
- Types of Training in Freedom Shield

### **Command-post simulations**

- Field training exercises
- Joint air, land and naval operations
- Cyber and multi-domain warfare training
- Other Major US–South Korea Military Exercises
- Ulchi Freedom Guardian
- Foal Eagle
- Max Thunder
- These exercises are part of a broader strategy to strengthen security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.

## **Iran Appoints Mojtaba Khamenei as New Supreme Leader**



- Iran has named Mojtaba Khamenei as the new Supreme Leader of Iran, succeeding his father Ali Khamenei, who was killed in U.S.–Israeli airstrikes on 28 February 2026 amid escalating conflict in West Asia.
- The decision was taken by Iran’s Assembly of Experts, the constitutional body responsible for

selecting the country’s supreme leader. Mojtaba Khamenei assumed office on 8 March 2026, becoming the third Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

- The appointment came during an ongoing regional conflict involving Iran, Israel and the United States, following the killing of Ali Khamenei in strikes targeting his compound in Tehran.

### **Supreme Leader of Iran**

- The Supreme Leader is the highest political and religious authority in Iran.
- Holds control over:
  - Armed forces
  - Judiciary
  - State broadcasting
  - Appointment of key officials.

### **Previous Supreme Leaders of Iran**

- Ruhollah Khomeini (1979–1989)
- Ali Khamenei
- Mojtaba Khamenei

### **Assembly of Experts**

- Consists of 88 Islamic jurists (clerics) elected by the public.
- Responsible for appointing, supervising, and dismissing the Supreme Leader.

### **Mojtaba Khamenei – Profile**

- Born: 1969, Mashhad, Iran
- Education: Qom Seminary (Islamic theology)
- Known for strong ties with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, Iran’s powerful military organisation.

### **Iran Political System**

- Official name: Islamic Republic of Iran
- Form of government: Islamic theocratic republic
- Capital: Tehran

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- Legislature: Islamic Consultative Assembly

## RBI Approves Ketan Merchant as Interim CEO of Fino Payments Bank



### Why in News

- Reserve Bank of India approved the appointment of Ketan Merchant as the Interim Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Fino Payments Bank.

### Key Points:

- Ketan Merchant currently serves as the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of Fino Payments Bank.
- RBI approved his appointment as interim CEO for a period of three months starting from 27 February 2026.
- He will serve until the Managing Director & CEO Rishi Gupta resumes office or until RBI takes a final decision.

### Reason for Interim Appointment:

- Rishi Gupta, MD & CEO of the bank, was arrested in February 2026 in connection with alleged Goods and Services Tax (GST) violations.
- He has not yet been granted bail in the case.
- The bank's Nomination and Remuneration Committee (NRC) and board will reassess his "fit and proper" status, after which RBI will take a final decision.

### Previous RBI Approval:

- About one month before Gupta's arrest, RBI had approved a three-year extension of his tenure as MD & CEO.
- The extension was scheduled to begin from 2 May 2026.

### Transition to Small Finance Bank:

- In December 2025, RBI granted in-principle approval to Fino Payments Bank to convert into a Small Finance Bank (SFB).
- It is the first payments bank in India to apply for conversion into an SFB.
- The bank has 18 months to complete the transition.

## What is Blue Sparrow? The 'missile from space' Israel used to kill Khamenei



### Why in News?

- Israel reportedly used the Blue Sparrow missile in a strike on Tehran on 28 February 2026.
- The strike allegedly killed Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's Supreme Leader who had ruled the country since 1989.
- The missile was developed by Rafael Advanced Defense Systems of Israel.

### Blue Sparrow Missile

- Blue Sparrow is an air-launched ballistic target missile.
- It belongs to the Sparrow missile family, which includes:
- Black Sparrow

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- Silver Sparrow
- These missiles were designed mainly as practice targets for Israel's Arrow missile defense system.

### Purpose of Sparrow Missile Family

- The Sparrow missiles simulate enemy ballistic missile threats.
- They help test and improve the Arrow missile defence system, which intercepts ballistic missiles before they reach the ground.

### Key Technical Specifications

- Length: 6.51 metres
- Weight: 1,900 kg
- Propulsion: Single-stage solid rocket propellant
- Guidance system: Dual GPS + INS (Inertial Navigation System)
- INS allows the missile to track its movement without external signals.

### How the Blue Sparrow Works

- The missile is released from a fighter jet at high altitude.
- It accelerates steeply upward, reaching near the edge of the atmosphere.
- A front section called the re-entry vehicle then separates.
- The re-entry vehicle falls almost vertically toward the target at extremely high speed.
- Built-in thrusters help it maintain course during descent.

### Why It Is Difficult to Intercept

- Most air-defence systems monitor threats coming horizontally from the horizon.
- Blue Sparrow drops almost vertically from above.
- It travels at several times the speed of sound, giving defenders very little reaction time.

### Role in the Israel–Iran Conflict

- Israeli strikes hit Tehran on 28 February 2026.

- Israel described the operation as Operation Roaring Lion.
- The United States referred to the coordinated effort as Operation Epic Fury.

- Evolution into Combat Missile
- Technology from Blue Sparrow led to the development of the ROCKS missile.

### ROCKS is a combat-ready precision missile capable of:

- Long-range stand-off attacks
- Striking underground targets
- Operating even when GPS signals are jammed.
- Warhead capacity: Up to 500 kg
- Accuracy: Within about 3 metres of the target.

### Vir Chakra Awardee KG George Passes Away at 95



- K. G. George (Retd.), a veteran of the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965, passed away.
- He had been awarded the Vir Chakra for his bravery during the 1965 India–Pakistan War.

### Lance Havildar K.G. George:

- Born in February 1931 in Kerala.
- Later joined the Indian Army and served as a Lance Havildar.

### Military Service

- Served in the Corps of Signals of the Indian Army.

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- The Corps of Signals is responsible for military communications and signal networks.
- It was established on 15 February 1911.

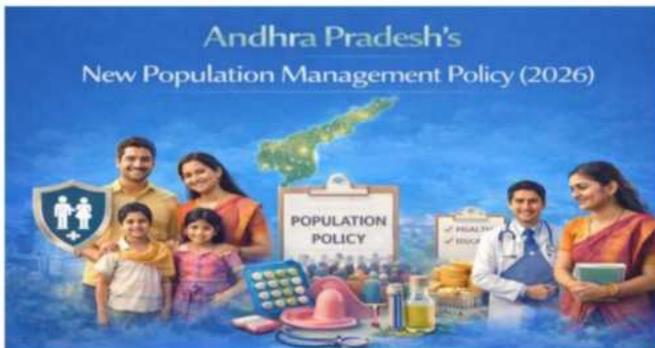
### Gallantry During the 1965 War

- During the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965, he served in the Wagah Sector.
- Between 6–10 September 1965, despite heavy enemy shelling and air strafing, he led his section to restore disrupted communication lines.
- On the night of 8–9 September 1965, he successfully established communication between Brigade Headquarters and forward battalions during an enemy attack.
- His actions ensured continuous military communication during combat operations.

### Vir Chakra Award

- For displaying extraordinary courage and devotion to duty, he was awarded the Vir Chakra.
- Vir Chakra is the third-highest wartime gallantry award in India after Param Vir Chakra and Maha Vir Chakra.

## Andhra Pradesh's draft population policy: How a shift from 'population control' tries to address decline in fertility rates



### Why in News?

- The Andhra Pradesh government introduced a Draft Population Management Policy.
- The policy encourages families to have two or three children.
- It was introduced because the fertility rate in the state is falling quickly.

### Declining Fertility Rate:

#### Fertility Trends:

- Total Fertility Rate (TFR) in Andhra Pradesh:
- 2003: 2.2
- 2023: 1.5
- Replacement level fertility: 2.1 (needed for stable population).
- Telangana also has TFR 1.5.
- India overall TFR fell from 3 (2003) to about 1.9 today.

### Reasons for Falling Fertility:

- Better education and healthcare
- Urbanisation
- Higher income levels
- Increase in nuclear families

### Regional Differences in Fertility:

- Southern States (Lower Fertility)
- Tamil Nadu: 1.3
- Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala: Around 1.5
- Northern & Eastern States (Higher Fertility)
- Bihar: 2.8
- Uttar Pradesh: 2.6
- Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Assam: Above national average.

### Objectives of the Policy:

- Encourage higher birth rates.
- Improve maternal health.
- Increase women's workforce participation.
- Strengthen elderly care systems.
- Improve public health services.

### Key Pillars of the Policy:

- Matrutva: Maternal health.
- Shakti: Women's employment.
- Kshema: Elderly care.
- Naipunyam: Skill development in healthcare.
- Sanjeevani: Digital public health system.

### Incentives for More Children:

- ₹25,000 incentive for the birth of a second or third child.
- ₹1,000 monthly support for five years for the third child.
- Free education for second and third child till 18 years.
- Subsidised IVF treatment for couples.

### Health & Workforce Measures:

- ₹50,000 and 15 days leave for retiring employees for health check-ups.
- Training 10,000 healthcare assistants every year.

### Ageing Population Concern:

- Median age in Andhra Pradesh: 32.5 years
- India's median age: 28.4 years
- Population above 60 years:
  - Current: 10%
  - Expected by 2047: 23%
- Female workforce participation:
  - AP: 31%
  - India: 37%

### Why the Policy Is Important:

- Falling fertility may reduce the working-age population.
- Ageing population may increase welfare costs.
- The policy aims to prevent demographic dividend from becoming a demographic burden.

## George Russell Wins Australian Grand Prix 2026 Starts New Season With Bangs



### Why in News?

- The Australian Grand Prix opened the 2026 Formula One season at Albert Park Circuit, Melbourne.
- George Russell of Mercedes-AMG Petronas Formula One Team won the race.
- The race highlighted new 2026 F1 regulations focusing on engine-electric power balance.

### Major Regulation Changes

- One of the biggest rule changes in F1 history.
- Changes affect car design (chassis) and engines.
- Power units now use about 50% engine power and 50% electrical energy.

### Race Results

- 1st: George Russell – Mercedes
- 2nd: Kimi Antonelli – Mercedes
- 3rd: Charles Leclerc – Ferrari
- 4th: Lewis Hamilton – Ferrari
- 5th: Lando Norris – McLaren
- Mercedes secured a one-two finish.

### Key Highlights

- Russell and Leclerc exchanged the lead six times in early laps.
- Isack Hadjar retired on lap 12 causing a Virtual Safety Car.

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- Mercedes used this moment for a strategic pit stop, helping Russell win.

- Fernando Alonso did not finish.
- Lance Stroll finished far behind and was not classified.

### Other Notable Performances

- Max Verstappen finished 6th after starting 20th.
- Rookie Arvid Lindblad finished 8th for Racing Bulls.
- Gabriel Bortoleto finished 9th for Audi F1 Team.

### New Teams in F1

- Cadillac Formula One Team debuted; Sergio Pérez finished 16th.
- Audi F1 Team joined F1 as a full works team.

### Aston Martin Struggles

## Lets Revise

- ❖ Which team did India defeat in the T20 World Cup 2026 final? **New Zealand.**
- ❖ Who was the Player of the Match in the T20 World Cup 2026 final? **Jasprit Bumrah.**
- ❖ Who was the Player of the Tournament in the T20 World Cup 2026? **Sanju Samson.**
- ❖ Who won the All England Open 2026 men's singles title? **Lin Chun-Yi.**
- ❖ Which Indian player finished runner-up in the All England Open 2026? **Lakshya Sen.**
- ❖ Which bank launched a \$500 million syndicated social term loan for women empowerment in 2026? **State Bank of India.**
- ❖ Which party won the 2026 Nepal general elections with a historic majority? **Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP).**
- ❖ Which two countries conduct the joint military exercise Freedom Shield? **United States and South Korea.**
- ❖ Who became the Supreme Leader of Iran in 2026? **Mojtaba Khamenei.**
- ❖ Who has been appointed as the Interim CEO of Fino Payments Bank? **Ketan Merchant.**
- ❖ Which Israeli air-launched ballistic missile was used in the 2026 Tehran strike? **Blue Sparrow**
- ❖ Which company developed the Blue Sparrow missile? **Rafael Advanced Defense Systems**

- ❖ Which missile defence system uses Sparrow missiles as practice targets? **Arrow missile defense system**
- ❖ Which precision combat missile evolved from Blue Sparrow technology? **ROCKS missile**
- ❖ Which Indian Army soldier and Vir Chakra awardee passed away in Kerala in March 2026? **K. G. George**
- ❖ In which war did K.G. George display gallantry for which he received the Vir Chakra? **Indo-Pakistani War of 1965**
- ❖ In which Indian Army corps did K.G. George serve? **Corps of Signals**
- ❖ Vir Chakra is the \_\_\_\_\_ highest wartime gallantry award in India. **Third**
- ❖ Which state introduced the Population Management Policy to encourage higher birth rates? **Andhra Pradesh**
- ❖ What is the current Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of Andhra Pradesh? **1.5**
- ❖ What is the replacement level fertility required for population stability? **2.1**
- ❖ Which major political process linked to population distribution is expected to resume in India? **Delimitation of Parliamentary Constituencies in India.**
- ❖ Who won the 2026 Australian Grand Prix? **George Russell**
- ❖ Which American team debuted in F1 in 2026? **Cadillac Formula One Team**
- ❖ Which German manufacturer entered F1 as a works team? **Audi F1 Team.**

Current affairs form the dynamic backbone of preparation for competitive examinations such as UPSC, SSC, and banking services. They bridge the gap between theoretical concepts and real-world developments, transforming static knowledge into practical understanding. In an age marked by rapid geopolitical changes, economic reforms, and policy innovations, a significant portion of these exams—often 30–35%—draws directly or indirectly from recent events.

Mastery of current affairs not only enhances scores but also cultivates analytical thinking, clarity of perspective, and decision-making skills—qualities indispensable for future administrators and professionals.

#### Key Dimensions of Importance

- **Syllabus Integration:** Current events seamlessly connect with core subjects like polity, economy, history, and geography. For instance, understanding constitutional provisions becomes more meaningful when linked to recent judicial reforms or landmark judgments.
- **Scoring Edge:** Many questions in prelims and mains are derived from contemporary developments. A well-prepared aspirant can secure quick and confident marks through accurate knowledge of high-yield topics from reliable news sources.
- **Interview Excellence:** In personality tests and interviews, panels evaluate awareness of pressing national and global issues—ranging from climate diplomacy to economic policy—requiring thoughtful, balanced responses.

As many toppers emphasize, current affairs are not a separate subject but the soul of exam preparation. Consistent engagement with credible sources like The Hindu, PIB releases, and Yojana magazine strengthens critical thinking and nurtures a well-rounded outlook, moving beyond rote memorization.

In a competitive landscape where millions aspire for limited opportunities, current affairs serve as a decisive differentiator. Adopting structured habits—daily news analysis, monthly revisions, and regular mock tests—empowers candidates to adapt confidently to evolving exam patterns. Ignoring this essential component is like navigating uncertain waters without direction—while mastering it ensures clarity, confidence, and a competitive advantage.

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