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 Monday, March 16, 2026

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Top Stories of The Day

- *José Antonio Kast Sworn in as Chile's President, Marking Major Right-Wing Political Shift*
- *Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026 Introduced in Lok Sabha to Revise Definition and Strengthen Protections*
- *Former All India Football Federation General Secretary Kushal Das Passes Away at 66*
- *Mayank Chakraborty Becomes India's 94th Grandmaster and First from North-East*
- *NMDC Limited Becomes First Indian Mining Firm to Produce 50 Million Tonnes of Iron Ore in a Year*
- *India Exports First GI-Tagged Joha Rice Consignment from Assam to UK and Italy*
- *Reserve Bank of India Launches Nationwide Digital Payment Awareness Programme*
- *United States and South Korea Begin Joint Military Exercise Freedom Shield*
- *Board of Control for Cricket in India Imposes Lifetime Ban on Video Analyst in Ranji Trophy Spot-Fixing Case*
- *Iran Uses Small Boats and Naval Mines in Strategic Strait of Hormuz Amid West Asia Tensions*

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Chile Witnesses Major Political Shift as José Antonio Kast Takes Office as President



- José Antonio Kast was sworn in as the President of Chile, marking the country's biggest right-wing political shift in decades.

Key Highlights

- José Antonio Kast assumed office as President of Chile on 11 March 2026, succeeding Gabriel Boric.
- His victory represents the strongest shift toward right-wing politics since Chile's return to democracy in 1990.
- Kast won the 2025 presidential runoff election with about 58% votes, defeating left-wing candidate Jeannette Jara.
- He has described his administration as an "emergency government" aimed at addressing crime, economic stagnation, and illegal immigration.
- Protests occurred in cities like Santiago and Valparaíso following his inauguration, reflecting political divisions.

Chile:

- Capital: Santiago
- Currency: Chilean peso

Geography

- Chile is located on the western coast of South America along the Pacific Ocean.

- It is the longest north–south country in the world (about 4,300 km).
- Neighbouring Countries:
- Peru (North)
- Bolivia (Northeast)
- Argentina (East)
- Major mountain range: Andes Mountains

Important Physical Features

- Driest Desert in the World: Atacama Desert
- Important Island Territory: Easter Island (Rapa Nui)
- Ocean: Pacific Ocean

Economy

- Chile is the world's largest producer of copper.
- Major copper mining company: Codelco (state-owned).
- Other major exports: Lithium, wine, fruits, fish products.

International Organisations

- Chile is a member of:
- United Nations (UN)
- World Trade Organization (WTO)
- Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

Important Historical Fact

- Chile was ruled by military dictator Augusto Pinochet from 1973 to 1990.
- Democracy was restored in 1990.

Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026 Introduced in Lok Sabha

- Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Virendra Kumar introduced the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights)

Amendment Bill, 2026 in the Lok Sabha to amend the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019.



Key Highlights of the Bill

- The Bill proposes changes in the legal definition of a transgender person to provide clearer identification for benefits and protections.
- It excludes individuals with different sexual orientations or self-perceived gender identity from the legal definition of transgender persons under the Act.
- The Bill recognises socio-cultural identities such as kinner, hijra, aravani, jogta and eunuch, along with persons having intersex variations.
- It proposes stricter and graded punishments for crimes against transgender persons and for coercive acts like forced gender alteration.
- A medical board may assist in the process of certification, with the final certificate issued by the District Magistrate.
- The amendment aims to ensure that government welfare benefits reach the intended transgender community facing social exclusion.

Background: Transgender Rights Law in India

- The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 provides for protection of rights and welfare of transgender persons in India.
- The Act prohibits discrimination in education, employment, healthcare, and access to public services.

- It allows transgender persons to apply for a certificate of identity from the District Magistrate to update their official documents.

Institutional Mechanism

- The National Council for Transgender Persons was established in 2020 to advise the government on policies and welfare measures related to the transgender community.

Former AIFF General Secretary Kushal Das Passes Away



- Former General Secretary of the All India Football Federation (AIFF), Kushal Das, passed away on 13 March 2026 in New Delhi at the age of 66.

Key Highlights

- Kushal Das served as General Secretary of the All India Football Federation from 2010 to 2022, making him one of the longest-serving administrators in Indian football.
- He played a major role in organising the 2017 FIFA U-17 World Cup, which was hosted by India for the first time.
- During his tenure, India also hosted major tournaments like the 2022 AFC Women's Asian Cup and the 2022 FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup.
- He stepped down from the AIFF post in 2022 due to health reasons after serving for about 12 years.

All India Football Federation:

- Founded: 23 June 1937
- Headquarters: Dwarka, Delhi
- President: Kalyan Chaubey
- Vice-President: N. A. Haris
- General Secretary: Anilkumar Prabhakaran

Mayank Chakraborty Becomes India's 94th Grandmaster



- Sixteen-year-old Mayank Chakraborty from Assam has become India's 94th Chess Grandmaster and the first ever Grandmaster from the North-East region of India after securing his final GM norm in a tournament in Sweden.

Key Highlights

- Mayank Chakraborty achieved his third and final Grandmaster norm at the 8th GM Tournament in Stockholm, Sweden.
- He finished the tournament with an impressive score of 7 out of 9 points.
- With this achievement, he became the first chess Grandmaster from the North-East region of India.
- Before becoming a Grandmaster, he held the title of International Master (IM).
- His success marks an important milestone for the development of chess in the North-East region.

About the Grandmaster Title

- The Grandmaster (GM) title is the highest title awarded to chess players by the International Chess Federation (FIDE).
- To become a Grandmaster, a player must:

- Achieve three GM norms in international tournaments.
- Cross a FIDE rating of 2500 at some point in their career.

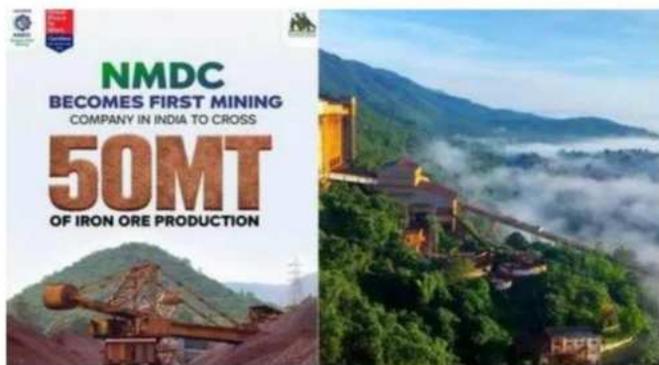
Important Background Facts

- India's first Grandmaster was Viswanathan Anand in 1988.
- India has seen rapid growth in chess talent, producing many young Grandmasters in recent years.
- The governing body for chess in India is the All India Chess Federation.
- Chennai is often called the "Chess Capital of India."

FIDE:

- Formation: July 20, 1924
- Founder: Pierre Vincent
- Headquarters: Lausanne, Switzerland
- President: Arkady Dvorkovich
- Deputy President: Viswanathan Anand

NMDC Becomes India's First Mining Company to Produce 50 Million Tonnes of Iron Ore



- NMDC Limited has become the first mining company in India to produce 50 million tonnes (MT) of iron ore in a single financial year (FY 2025-26), marking a historic milestone for the country's mining sector.

Key Highlights

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- NMDC Limited achieved the milestone ahead of the close of FY 2025–26, demonstrating strong operational growth.
- The company is the largest producer of iron ore in India and plays a major role in supplying raw materials to the domestic steel industry.
- Production has grown significantly over the decades—from about 10 million tonnes in 1978 to 50 million tonnes in FY2025–26.
- Iron ore output has increased rapidly in recent years, rising from around 30 MT in 2015 to 50 MT, reflecting expansion in mining capacity and efficiency.
- The achievement strengthens India’s efforts to ensure stable domestic iron ore supply for its growing steel industry.

About NMDC

- NMDC Limited was established in 1958 as a Government of India public sector enterprise.
- It is a Navratna Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE) under the Ministry of Steel.
- Headquarters: Hyderabad, Telangana.
- Major iron-ore mining operations are located in Chhattisgarh and Karnataka.
- The company also explores minerals such as copper, diamond, graphite, and coal.
- Chairman-Cum-Managing Director: Amitava Mukherjee

Significance for India’s Steel Sector

- Iron ore is the primary raw material for steel production.
- India aims to expand its steel-making capacity to about 300 million tonnes by 2030, increasing the demand for iron ore.
- NMDC’s increased production is crucial for ensuring raw material security for India’s steel industry.

India Exports First GI-Tagged Joha Rice Consignment from Assam to UK and Italy



- India exported the first consignment of 25 metric tonnes of GI-tagged Joha rice from Assam to the United Kingdom and Italy on 12 March 2026, facilitated by the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Key Highlights

- The export was facilitated by Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA).
- The 25-metric-tonne consignment was sent from Assam to the United Kingdom and Italy.
- The shipment was organised in collaboration with the Assam Department of Agriculture.
- The export aims to promote indigenous agricultural products from Northeast India in global markets.
- It is expected to increase income opportunities for farmers and boost India’s agricultural exports.

About Joha Rice

- Joha Rice is a short-grain aromatic rice variety traditionally grown in Assam.
- It is known for its distinct fragrance, soft texture and rich taste.
- The rice received Geographical Indication (GI) status in 2017, recognising its unique origin and traditional cultivation.
- Major producing districts include Sivasagar, Jorhat, Golaghat, Nagaon and Majuli.
- The crop is cultivated across over 21,000 hectares in Assam, producing around 43,000 metric tonnes annually.

Role of APEDA

- Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority is a statutory body established under the APEDA Act, 1985.
- It functions under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- The authority promotes export of agricultural and processed food products and helps connect Indian producers with global markets.
- APEDA also promotes GI-tagged agricultural products internationally.

RBI Launches Awareness Programme on Digital Payments



- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) launched a nationwide Digital Payment Awareness Programme to promote safe and secure digital transactions and increase financial literacy among citizens.

Key Highlights

- The awareness campaign is organised as Digital Payment Awareness Week (DPAW) from 9–15 March 2026 across India.
- The initiative aims to educate people about safe use of digital payment platforms and prevention of online financial fraud.
- The campaign is conducted by the Department of Payment and Settlement Systems of RBI with support from banks and financial institutions.

- The theme of the campaign emphasises caution in online transactions with the slogan “Thoda Dhyan Se” (Be cautious).
- Awareness programmes include workshops, outreach activities, quizzes, and training sessions to teach safe digital banking practices.
- Participants include Self-Help Groups (SHGs), bank officials, entrepreneurs and citizens, promoting digital financial inclusion.

Objectives of the Programme

- Promote safe digital payment practices.
- Prevent cyber fraud and online financial scams.
- Strengthen financial literacy and digital banking awareness.
- Encourage wider adoption of digital payment systems.

Digital Payments in India

- India is among the global leaders in digital payment transactions.
- A major driver is the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), an instant real-time payment system developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) in 2016.
- UPI allows instant transfer of money between bank accounts using a mobile phone and a UPI ID.

About the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)

- Established: 1935
- Nationalised: 1949
- Headquarters: Mumbai
- Governor: Sanjay Malhotra
- Deputy Governors: Shirish Chandra Murmu, Swaminathan Janakiraman, T. Rabi Sankar, Poonam Gupta
- Role: India’s central bank responsible for monetary policy, currency issuance, and regulation of banking and payment systems.

Significance

- Enhances trust and security in digital transactions.

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- Supports the Digital India and cashless economy initiatives.
- Helps reduce financial fraud and cybercrime risks.
- Encourages financial inclusion, especially in rural areas.

United States and South Korea Launch Joint Military Exercise “Freedom Shield”



- The United States and South Korea have launched a large-scale joint military exercise called Freedom Shield 2026, involving thousands of troops to strengthen their combined defence readiness on the Korean Peninsula.

About the Freedom Shield Exercise

- Freedom Shield is an annual joint military exercise conducted by the armed forces of the United States and South Korea.
- The drills integrate operations across land, air, sea, space, and cyber domains to test modern warfare scenarios.
- The exercise is designed to improve interoperability between allied forces and prepare for potential crises on the Korean Peninsula.
- It is part of the broader U.S.–South Korea security alliance established after the Korean War (1950–53).

Strategic Context

- The Korean Peninsula remains a major geopolitical hotspot due to tensions with North

Korea, which continues to develop nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles.

- Military exercises like Freedom Shield are intended to deter aggression and ensure regional stability.
- Such drills often trigger strong reactions from North Korea, which sees them as hostile actions.

BCCI Imposes Lifetime Ban on Video Analyst in Ranji Trophy Spot-Fixing Case



- The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has imposed a lifetime ban on video analyst Raja Reddy for involvement in a spot-fixing attempt during the 2024 Ranji Trophy.

Key Highlights

- The BCCI’s Ombudsman banned video analyst Raja Reddy from all cricket-related activities for life after an investigation into corruption charges.
- The incident occurred during the quarter-final match between Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh in the Ranji Trophy held in Indore.
- Reddy allegedly offered ₹5 lakh to Andhra all-rounder Girinath Reddy in exchange for team information and deliberate underperformance in the match.
- The player rejected the offer and reported the approach to team management, which then informed the BCCI’s anti-corruption unit.
- The investigation was conducted by the BCCI Anti-Corruption and Security Unit (ACSU).
- Reddy was found guilty of violating Articles 2.1.3 and 2.1.4 of the BCCI Anti-Corruption

Code, which deal with corrupt approaches and attempts to influence a match.

About the Ranji Trophy

- The Ranji Trophy is India's premier domestic first-class cricket tournament.
- It was started in 1934–35 and named after Ranjitsinhji, a former Indian princely ruler and cricketer.
- The tournament is organised by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).
- Teams represent Indian states and regional cricket associations.

About BCCI's Anti-Corruption Measures

- The Anti-Corruption and Security Unit (ACSU) monitors suspicious activities related to match-fixing, spot-fixing, and betting.
- The unit educates players and officials about reporting corrupt approaches.
- Similar anti-corruption bodies exist in international cricket under the International Cricket Council (ICC).

Iran's Use of Small Boats and Naval Mines in West Asia Conflict



- Iran has reportedly used small boats and naval mines in the Strait of Hormuz as part of its strategy during rising tensions in West Asia involving the United States and Israel. This reflects Iran's asymmetric naval warfare strategy to challenge stronger military powers.

Key Highlights

- Iran has used small fast boats to deploy naval mines in the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most strategic maritime chokepoints.
- The Strait of Hormuz handles nearly one-fifth of global oil trade, making disruptions there globally significant.
- Small vessels can carry two to three mines each, allowing Iran to deploy mines quickly and covertly.
- Iran's naval doctrine focuses on asymmetric warfare, where weaker forces use unconventional tactics against stronger militaries.
- The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Navy plays a major role in operating fast-attack boats and coordinating maritime attacks.
- Iran can use swarm tactics, where large numbers of small boats attack or harass enemy ships simultaneously.

What Are Naval Mines?

- Naval mines are underwater explosive devices placed in sea routes to damage or sink ships.
- They can be triggered by contact, pressure, magnetic fields, or acoustic signals from passing vessels.
- Naval mines are cheap but highly effective, making them a common tool in maritime warfare.

Strategic Importance of the Strait of Hormuz

- Connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea.
- Located between Iran and Oman.
- Around 20% of global oil and LNG trade passes through this narrow passage.
- Any disruption can lead to global oil price spikes and energy supply shocks.

Lets Revise

- ❖ Who was sworn in as the President of Chile? **José Antonio Kast**
- ❖ Who did José Antonio Kast succeed as President of Chile in 2026? **Gabriel Boric**
- ❖ The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026 aims to amend which Act? **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019**
- ❖ Who was the former General Secretary of the All India Football Federation who passed away in March 2026? **Kushal Das**
- ❖ Who became India's 94th Chess Grandmaster and the first from North-East India? **Mayank Chakraborty**
- ❖ Which company became the first mining firm in India to produce 50 million tonnes of iron ore in a single financial year? **NMDC Limited**
- ❖ Which organisation facilitated the export of GI-tagged Joha rice from Assam to Europe in 2026? **APEDA**
- ❖ GI-tagged Joha rice exported to the UK and Italy originates from which Indian state? **Assam**
- ❖ Which organisation launched the Digital Payment Awareness Programme in India? **Reserve Bank of India**
- ❖ Freedom Shield is a joint military exercise conducted between which two countries? **United States and South Korea**
- ❖ Which organisation imposed a lifetime ban on video analyst Raja Reddy for spot-fixing in the Ranji Trophy? **BCCI**
- ❖ Which strategic waterway connects the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman? **Strait of Hormuz**

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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