

## 1. International News

**Q1. The 11th edition of the Raisina Dialogue, Asia's premier conference on geopolitics and geoeconomics, commenced in New Delhi on March 5, 2026. What is the official central theme for this edition?**

- (a) Terra Nova: Impassioned, Impatient, Imperilled
- (b) Saṁskāra: Assertion, Accommodation, Advancement
- (c) Provocation, Uncertainty, Turbulence
- (d) Shaping a New Global Order: Fluid Alliances, Rigid Realities

**Answer: (b) Saṁskāra: Assertion, Accommodation, Advancement**

**Detailed Explanation:** The 11th edition of the prestigious **Raisina Dialogue** was inaugurated in New Delhi, running from March 5–7, 2026. Co-organized by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the Observer Research Foundation (ORF), the 2026 edition centers around the theme **"Saṁskāra – Assertion, Accommodation, Advancement."** Finland's President Alexander Stubb attended the event as the Chief Guest and delivered the prominent opening keynote address.

**Q2. Following the sudden death of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, which Indian diplomat signed the official condolence book at the Iranian Embassy in New Delhi on behalf of the Government of India on March 5, 2026?**

- (a) Subrahmanyam Jaishankar
- (b) Vikram Misri
- (c) Vinay Mohan Kwatra
- (d) Taranjit Singh Sandhu

**Answer: (b) Vikram Misri**

**Detailed Explanation:** India officially condoled the passing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Foreign Secretary **Vikram Misri** visited the Iranian Embassy in New Delhi to formally sign the condolence book on behalf of the Government of India and convey New Delhi's message of deepest sympathy to the Iranian Ambassador to India.

**Q3. In a major move amidst ongoing geopolitical escalation, which country conducted a test launch of its Minuteman III Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM), commonly referred to as the "doomsday missile", on March 5, 2026?**

- (a) Russian Federation
- (b) United States
- (c) North Korea
- (d) United Kingdom

**Answer: (b) United States**

**Detailed Explanation:** The **United States** military successfully carried out a routine yet highly sensitive test launch of an unarmed **Minuteman III Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM)**. Termed the "doomsday missile" due to its role in the US strategic nuclear triad, the launch occurred amidst heightened global defense tensions and the ongoing West Asian conflict involving Iran.

**Q4. During the BRICS Foreign Ministers meeting in early March 2026, which critical maritime passage was highlighted as the world's most vulnerable energy chokepoint, lying geographically between Iran and Oman?**

- (a) Strait of Malacca
- (b) Bab-el-Mandeb
- (c) Strait of Hormuz
- (d) Bosphorus Strait

**Answer: (c) Strait of Hormuz**

**Detailed Explanation:** The **Strait of Hormuz** remains a central point of global economic discussion due to shipping disruptions. Geographically located between **Iran and Oman**, it connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea. It is considered the world's most critical oil chokepoint, handling over 20% of global petroleum and Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) consumption.

## 2. National News

**Q5. Consider the following statements regarding India's National HPV (Human Papillomavirus) Vaccination Campaign actively being rolled out in March 2026:**

1. The campaign primarily aims to eliminate cervical cancer by distributing the free Gardasil vaccine.
2. The routine immunisation records and digital tracking of this campaign are hosted on the U-WIN platform.
3. The drive aligns with the World Health Organization's (WHO) 90-70-90 target set for 2030.

**Which of the statements given above are correct?**

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2, and 3

**Answer: (d) 1, 2, and 3**

**Detailed Explanation:** All statements are correct. India's national HPV vaccination campaign is utilizing the indigenously developed/supplied Gardasil vaccine with support from Gavi (The Vaccine Alliance). The

campaign focuses on girls aged 14–15, with states like Maharashtra and Gujarat launching mega drives in March 2026. The program is completely digitized via the **U-WIN (Universal Immunisation-WIN) platform**, supporting the WHO's **90-70-90 cervical cancer elimination targets for 2030** (90% vaccinated by age 15, 70% screened by age 35, and 90% accessing cervical disease treatment).

**Q6. Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar was in the news on March 5, 2026, for filing his official nomination papers. Which legislative house or election did he file his nomination for?**

- (a) Bihar Legislative Assembly (By-polls)
- (b) Rajya Sabha
- (c) Lok Sabha
- (d) Bihar Legislative Council

**Answer: (b) Rajya Sabha**

**Detailed Explanation:** Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, along with several other NDA candidates including BJP State general secretary Shivesh Kumar and JD(U)'s Ram Nath Thakur, officially filed his nomination papers for the **Rajya Sabha** polls at the Vidhan Sabha in Patna.

**Q7. Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah unveiled the official mascots and soft-launched four critical digital enterprise tools to structurally power which upcoming national exercise?**

- (a) National Livestock Census 2026
- (b) Digital Census 2027
- (c) All India Economic Census
- (d) National Skill Mapping Survey

**Answer: (b) Digital Census 2027**

**Detailed Explanation:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah soft-launched four advanced digital

portals and unveiled the official mascot for the upcoming **Census 2027**. This upcoming census will be heavily paperless and data-driven, leveraging real-time geospatial tech and secure citizen self-enumeration portals to prevent administrative errors.

**Q8. Chief Justice of India (CJI) Justice Surya Kant visited Thimphu in March 2026 to hold bilateral discussions with King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck. India offered technical support to Bhutan for which of the following areas?**

- (a) Implementation of UPI systems
- (b) Digitalisation of judicial and court processes
- (c) Environmental mapping of glacial lakes
- (d) Setup of semiconductor design labs

**Answer: (b) Digitalisation of judicial and court processes**

**Detailed Explanation:** CJI Justice Surya Kant met with the King of Bhutan in Thimphu, where India extended full technical and infrastructural support for the **digitalisation of Bhutan's judicial architecture**. This includes building secure legal databases, digital case-filing frameworks, and virtual courtroom infrastructures modeled after India's e-Courts project.

**Q9. According to data monitored by the Transplant Authority of Tamil Nadu (Transtan) released in March 2026, which state continues to lead the entire nation in deceased organ donations, recording 57 successful cases in Jan-Feb 2026 alone?**

- (a) Maharashtra
- (b) Kerala
- (c) Tamil Nadu
- (d) Karnataka

**Answer: (c) Tamil Nadu**

**Detailed Explanation:** Tamil Nadu maintained its top national rank in deceased organ donations, logging 57 complex organ harvesting and transplant cases during the first two months of 2026 (averaging nearly one per day). The state's model under **Transtan** is widely recognized for its robust hospital grief-counseling frameworks, institutional green corridors, and efficient public registries.

### 3. Economics and Banking

**Q10. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced its Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) review. At what percentage did the RBI hold its benchmark Policy Repo Rate steady?**

- (a) 4.00%
- (b) 5.00%
- (c) 5.25%
- (d) 6.50%

**Answer: (c) 5.25%**

**Detailed Explanation:** Following a strategic pause after its rate cuts in late 2025, the RBI Monetary Policy Committee decided to hold India's benchmark **Policy Repo Rate steady at 5.25%**. The central bank projected a strong gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate of 7.4% for the upcoming financial cycle, citing stable inflation trajectories and strong domestic consumption.

**Q11. India and Canada launched formal negotiations for a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) following a meeting between PM Narendra Modi and PM Mark Carney. What is the target bilateral trade goal set by the two nations to be achieved by 2030?**

- (a) USD 25 billion
- (b) USD 50 billion

- (c) USD 75 billion
- (d) USD 100 billion

**Answer: (b) USD 50 billion**

**Detailed Explanation:** Following bilateral delegation-level talks held at Hyderabad House in New Delhi, India and Canada officially released the Terms of Reference (ToR) to resume **CEPA negotiations**. The two economies have set a bilateral trade target of **USD 50 billion by 2030**, focusing heavily on pharmaceuticals, seafood, critical minerals, clean tech, electronics, and agricultural pulses.

**Q12. Under the recommendations implemented by the 16th Finance Commission (covering the period 2026–31), what percentage of the central divisible tax pool has been allocated for vertical devolution to the states?**

- (a) 32%
- (b) 41%
- (c) 42%
- (d) 45%

**Answer: (b) 41%**

**Detailed Explanation:** The **16th Finance Commission** officially retained the vertical devolution share of states in the central divisible pool of taxes at **41%**. This maintains parity with the allocation framework established by the preceding 15th Finance Commission, keeping the remaining 1% reserved for the Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.

**Q13. Which of the following parameters was newly introduced by the 16th Finance Commission into the horizontal devolution formula for calculating inter-state tax distribution?**

- (a) Forest and Ecology
- (b) Demographic Performance

- (c) Contribution to GDP
- (d) Area and Population

**Answer: (c) Contribution to GDP**

**Detailed Explanation:** In a major structural shift, the 16th Finance Commission introduced **"Contribution to GDP"** with a designated weight of **10%** into its horizontal tax devolution formula. This replaces older metrics like fiscal discipline or tax effort, rewarding states that drive national macroeconomic expansion.

**Q14. The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) released a crucial exposure draft in March 2026 proposing that all Indian insurers transition from IGAAP to which accounting framework?**

- (a) US GAAP
- (b) Ind AS
- (c) Basel IV Accounting
- (d) Euro Financial Grid

**Answer: (b) Ind AS**

**Detailed Explanation:** IRDAI issued a detailed draft mandate on the Actuarial, Finance, and Investment Functions of Insurers, directing a transition from Indian Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (IGAAP) to **Indian Accounting Standards (Ind AS)**. This alignment brings Indian insurance reporting closer to International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), enhancing balance-sheet transparency for global investors.

**Q15. Under the newly revised Mutual Fund categorisation and risk-exposure norms issued by SEBI, the maximum portfolio overlap allowed between thematic or sectoral funds and other general equity schemes is capped strictly at:**

- (a) 25%

- (b) 40%
- (c) 50%
- (d) 75%

**Answer: (c) 50%**

**Detailed Explanation:** To protect retail mutual fund investors from hidden asset concentration risks, SEBI capped the portfolio holding overlap between distinct thematic/sectoral funds and any other general equity schemes of the same fund house at **50%**. This rule ensures that thematic funds maintain distinct investment strategies rather than replicating general large-cap or multi-cap fund portfolios.

#### 4. Sports

**Q16. The Hirakud Wildlife Division announced that the second edition of the unique "Indian Bison Fest" (Gaur Fest) will be hosted on March 8–9, 2026. Inside which wildlife sanctuary is this event being organized?**

- (a) Similipal Wildlife Sanctuary
- (b) Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary
- (c) Bhitarkanika National Park
- (d) Chilika Nalaban Sanctuary

**Answer: (b) Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary**

**Detailed Explanation:** The second edition of the **Indian Bison Fest** is being organized at Zeropoint inside the **Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary, Odisha**. The immersive community event celebrates the Indian Bison (Gaur), locally known as 'Gayala'. A January 2026 census revealed that the Debrigarh-Hirakud landscape experienced a healthy increase in its gaur population, counting 848 individuals.

**Q17. The Union Government announced a major infrastructure funding grant to upgrade the iconic Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium for upcoming**

**athletic events. In which city is this multi-sport stadium located?**

- (a) Mumbai
- (b) New Delhi
- (c) Kolkata
- (d) Chennai

**Answer: (b) New Delhi**

**Detailed Explanation:** The iconic **Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium** is located in **New Delhi**. It is receiving upgraded track, field, and digital monitoring equipment under sports infrastructure grants to prepare the facility to host upcoming international athletic competitions and support elite training under the Target Olympic Podiums Scheme (TOPS).

#### 5. Appointments

**Q18. Who assumed charge as the Director General of Naval Armament (DGONA) at the Naval Headquarters in New Delhi on March 1–5, 2026?**

- (a) Divakar Jayant
- (b) B.P. Singh
- (c) Ajay Kumar
- (d) Rajesh Verma

**Answer: (b) B.P. Singh**

**Detailed Explanation:** **B.P. Singh**, a 1994-batch officer of the Indian Naval Armament Service (INAS), took over as the new **Director General of Naval Armament (DGONA)**. He succeeded Divakar Jayant following the latter's retirement. B.P. Singh previously served as the Chief General Manager of the vital Naval Armament Depot (NAD) in Mumbai.

**Q19. Who was appointed as the Superintendent of Srinagar Central Jail in March 2026, creating**



history as the first Kashmiri woman to head this high-security facility?

- (a) Saba Shawl
- (b) Rubina Khan
- (c) Nighat Mir
- (d) Asma Hassan

**Answer: (a) Saba Shawl**

**Detailed Explanation:** Senior J&K Prison Department officer **Saba Shawl** was appointed as the Superintendent of Srinagar Central Jail, becoming the **first Kashmiri woman to hold this position** in the history of the correctional institution. The jail is historically significant and handles both high-profile undertrials and convicts.

**Q20. In early March 2026, Nidhi Chhibber was in the news following a high-level administrative shuffle. Which apex public policy think-tank did she take charge of as CEO?**

- (a) National Informatics Centre (NIC)
- (b) NITI Aayog
- (c) National Statistical Office (NSO)
- (d) Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)

**Answer: (b) NITI Aayog**

**Detailed Explanation:** Senior bureaucrat **Nidhi Chhibber** officially assumed charge as the **Chief Executive Officer (CEO)** of **NITI Aayog**, succeeding the outgoing leadership. She is tasked with driving the state-level cooperative federalism agenda and overseeing the monitoring frameworks of the Aspirational Districts and Blocks programs.

## 6. Awards and Honors

**Q21. Safeena Husain, who was recently honored globally by being named in TIME Magazine's 'Women of the Year 2026' list, is the founder of which prominent non-profit social organization in India?**

- (a) Pratham
- (b) Educate Girls
- (c) SEWA
- (d) Ladli Foundation

**Answer: (b) Educate Girls**

**Detailed Explanation:** Indian social reformer **Safeena Husain** was featured in **TIME's Women of the Year 2026** for her work as the founder of **Educate Girls**. Her non-profit uses advanced data analytics, community mapping, and local mobilization to successfully return over 2 million out-of-school girls in rural India back into the formal education system.

**Q22. The Sahitya Akademi announced a special commemorative fellowship honor for regional language translators in March 2026. Who is the current President of the Sahitya Akademi?**

- (a) Madhav Kaushik
- (b) Chandrashekhara Kambar
- (c) Kumud Sharma
- (d) Vishwanath Prasad Tiwari

**Answer: (a) Madhav Kaushik**

**Detailed Explanation:** Well-known Hindi writer and scholar **Madhav Kaushik** serves as the President of India's National Academy of Letters, the Sahitya Akademi (with Prof. Kumud Sharma as Vice President). The Academy introduced special translation fellowships in early March 2026 to promote the translation of

classical tribal dialects into Scheduled 8 languages.

## 7. Books and Authors

**Q23. A commemorative book detailing India's ancient maritime linkages and the voyage of the traditional stitched ship 'INSV Kaundinya' was released in Mumbai. Who is the author of this historic research volume?**

- (a) Sanjeev Sanyal
- (b) Dr. Ashwin Fernandes
- (c) Vice Admiral Girish Luthra
- (d) Ramesh Narayan

**Answer: (a) Sanjeev Sanyal**

**Detailed Explanation:** Renowned economist and historian **Sanjeev Sanyal** authored the research text accompanying the revival of India's ancient maritime routes. The book analyzes the civilizational footprints of Indian merchants across the Indian Ocean rim, published alongside the return voyage of the indigenously built stitched vessel INSV Kaundinya.

## 8. Defense News

**Q24. In March 2026, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) signed a capital procurement contract worth ₹2,901 crore with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL). What is this contract for?**

- (a) Six Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH) Mk-III for the Indian Coast Guard
- (b) Twelve Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas Mk-1A for the IAF
- (c) Eight Dornier-228 Maritime Patrol Aircraft
- (d) Four HTT-40 Basic Trainer Aircraft

**Answer: (a) Six Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH) Mk-III for the Indian Coast Guard**

**Detailed Explanation:** Under the "Aatmanirbhar Bharat" defense initiative, the MoD signed a ₹2,901 crore capital contract with HAL to supply six Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH) Mk-III (Maritime Role) for the Indian Coast Guard (ICG). These helicopters are equipped with surveillance radars and electro-optical sensors for long-range maritime search and rescue and coastal security operations.

**Q25. To strengthen the air defense shield of the Indian Navy's frontline surface combatants, the Ministry of Defence signed a ₹2,182 crore contract with Rosoboronexport (Russian Federation) for the procurement of which missile system?**

- (a) S-400 Triumf
- (b) Surface-to-Air VL-Shtil Missiles
- (c) BrahMos Extended Range
- (d) Igla-S MANPADS

**Answer: (b) Surface-to-Air VL-Shtil Missiles**

**Detailed Explanation:** The MoD signed an essential defense import contract worth ₹2,182 crore with Russia's JSC Rosoboronexport for the bulk procurement of Surface-to-Air Vertical Launch (VL) – Shtil missiles along with their associated holding frames. These quick-reaction missiles provide multi-channel defense coverage against anti-ship missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) for Indian Navy warships.

**Q26. On March 2, 2026, the traditionally stitched sailing vessel INSV Kaundinya safely returned to Mumbai Harbour after an ocean voyage. This vessel's unique "stitched" design (using coir ropes and zero metal fasteners) was inspired by ancient Indian maritime paintings found at which UNESCO World Heritage Site?**

- (a) Ellora Caves

- (b) Elephanta Caves
- (c) Ajanta Caves
- (d) Mahabalipuram Rock Monuments

**Answer: (c) Ajanta Caves**

**Detailed Explanation:** The Indian Naval Ship Vessel (INSV) **Kaundinya** completed its historical voyage from Porbandar to Muscat and back to Mumbai. Flagged in by MoS Defence Sanjay Seth, the ship features a "stitched" design inspired by **5th-century murals found at the Ajanta Caves, Maharashtra**. The voyage was designed to demonstrate the historical techniques used by ancient Indian merchants to navigate trade routes across the Indian Ocean and West Asia.

## 9. Government Schemes and MoUs

**Q27. Union Minister Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya chaired the 239th meeting of the Central Board of Trustees (CBT) of the EPF. The board officially recommended retaining the interest rate on Employees' Provident Fund deposits for the Financial Year 2025-26 (FY26) at what percentage?**

- (a) 8.15%
- (b) 8.25%
- (c) 8.50%
- (d) 8.75%

**Answer: (b) 8.25%**

**Detailed Explanation:** The CBT, chaired by Union Minister for Labour & Employment Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya, recommended retaining the interest rate on **EPF deposits at 8.25% for FY25-26**. Additionally, the board approved a one-time Amnesty Scheme for Exempted Establishments and cleared the notification framework for the restructured social security

schemes: **EPF Scheme 2026, EPS 2026, and EDLI Scheme 2026**.

**Q28. The National Mobile Monitoring System (NMMS) application, which was highlighted by the Ministry of Rural Development for its updated geofencing and real-time biometric tracking parameters on March 5, 2026, is the primary monitoring app for which scheme?**

- (a) Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)
- (b) MGNREGS (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme)
- (c) Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - NRLM
- (d) PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi

**Answer: (b) MGNREGS (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme)**

**Detailed Explanation:** The NMMS application is used to record real-time worker attendance along with geotagged photographs at worksites under **MGNREGS**. The system helps prevent administrative duplication, eliminates proxy attendance, and ensures transparent direct-benefit wage disbursements to rural laborers.

## 10. Important Days and Science news

**Q29. Researchers from Germany, India, and Switzerland published a study in the peer-reviewed scientific journal *Zootaxa* on March 5, 2026, documenting a new genus and species of blind, aquifer-dwelling (phreatobitic) fish named *Gitchak nakan*. In which Indian state was it discovered?**

- (a) Kerala
- (b) Assam
- (c) Meghalaya
- (d) Arunachal Pradesh

**Answer: (b) Assam**

**Detailed Explanation:** The unique, blind, aquifer-dwelling fish species *Gitichak nakan* was discovered living inside a deep hand-dug well in a village in **Assam**. The name is derived from the local Garo language, where 'Gitichak' translates to red (reflecting its bright blood-red hue due to visible blood vessels through its translucent skin) and 'na-tok kana' refers to its complete absence of eyes.

**Q30.** In March 2026, researchers also discovered two entirely new species of moniligastrid earthworms, named *Moniligaster girishi* and *Drawida reynoldsi*. In which national park were these endemic species discovered?

- (a) Eravikulam National Park, Kerala
- (b) Silent Valley National Park, Kerala
- (c) Periyar National Park, Kerala
- (d) Mudumalai National Park, Tamil Nadu

**Answer: (b) Silent Valley National Park, Kerala**

**Detailed Explanation:** The two new earthworm species (*Moniligaster girishi* and *Drawida reynoldsi*) were discovered by zoologists in the **Silent Valley National Park**, located within the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve of the Western Ghats, **Kerala**. This discovery brings the total number of recognized moniligastrid earthworm species in India to 95, with 70 endemic to the Western Ghats ecosystem.

