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CURRENT AFFAIRS

Important Current News for UPSC & UPPSC

13th Mar 2026

TOPICS:-

- 1. Tephra**
- 2. Fiscal Health Index (FHI)**
- 3. Kamakhya Temple**
- 4. Jhelum River**
- 5. European Free Trade Association (EFTA)**
- 6. Other Important News of the day**
- 7. Uttar Pradesh in News**

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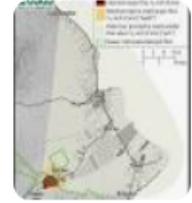
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TEPHRA

USGS (.gov)

Volcano Watch — Episode 43, new fountain height record and tephra fallout on communities

Episode 43 at the summit of Kīlauea began at 9:17 a.m. HST on March 10, 2026, and continued for 9 hours. Both the north and south vents...



Why in News

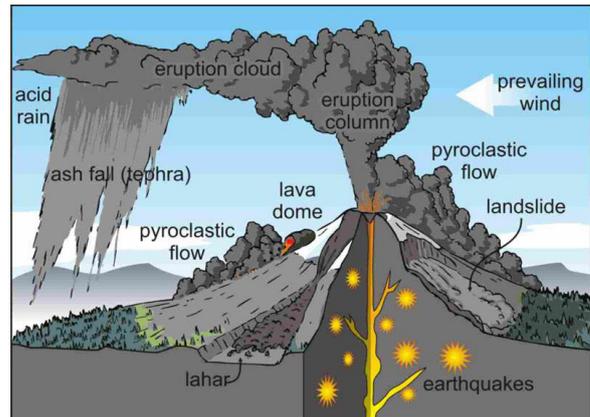
- **Tephra emissions** have been observed during eruptions of **Kīlauea volcano in Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park**.

Concept and Formation

- **Tephra** refers to **volcanic ash and rock fragments** ejected into the atmosphere during eruptions.
- These particles are dispersed by wind and deposited around the volcano.

Distribution Characteristics

- **Larger particles** fall close to the volcanic vent due to greater mass.
- **Smaller particles** travel farther away before deposition.



Hazards Associated with Tephra

- Volcanic ash clouds can become **electrically charged**, producing **volcanic lightning**.
- Ash deposition can disrupt **electricity, telecommunications, and transportation systems**.
- Accumulated ash may **collapse rooftops, bury infrastructure, and clog drainage systems**.
- It can damage **crops, machinery, and aviation operations**.

Health and Environmental Impact

- Tephra clouds reduce **visibility** and may temporarily block sunlight.
- Fine ash particles can cause **respiratory problems and environmental contamination**.

FISCAL HEALTH INDEX (FHI)

ET The Economic Times

Odisha retains No.1 position in the NITI Aayog's fiscal health index 2026

NITI Aayog released its 2026 Fiscal Health Index for 2023-24. Odisha, Goa, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Chattisgarh, Telangana,...



Why in News

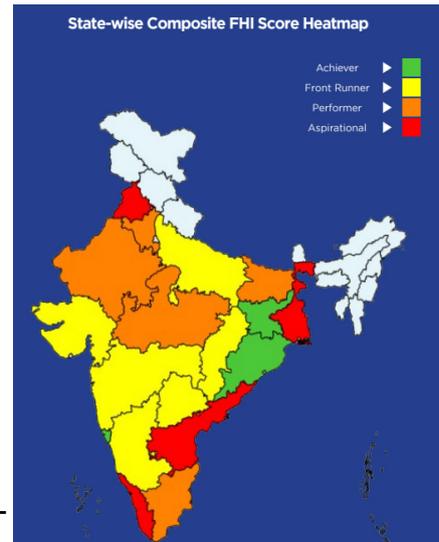
- **NITI Aayog** released the **Fiscal Health Index (FHI) 2026**, assessing fiscal performance of Indian states.

Institutional Framework and Objective

- The **Fiscal Health Index** provides a **data-driven framework** to evaluate fiscal performance of **18 major states and 10 North-Eastern and Himalayan states**.
- It aims to promote **fiscal discipline and evidence-based fiscal policymaking** across states.

Core Pillars of Fiscal Assessment

- **Quality of Expenditure** assesses the developmental effectiveness of government spending.
- **Revenue Mobilisation** evaluates the capacity to generate **own-tax and non-tax revenues**.
- **Fiscal Prudence** measures fiscal deficit management and budget discipline.
- **Debt Index** assesses the level and structure of public debt.
- **Debt Sustainability** evaluates the long-term ability to service government liabilities.



Performance Classification of States

- **Achievers:** States with strong fiscal discipline and sustainable debt levels.
- **Front Runners:** States with broadly sound finances but minor fiscal weaknesses.
- **Performers:** States showing mixed fiscal performance across indicators.
- **Aspirational:** States facing persistent deficits, high debt, and limited revenue capacity.

Key Findings of FHI 2026

- **Odisha, Goa, and Jharkhand** ranked as **Achievers**.
- **Karnataka and Telangana** moved from **Front Runner** to **Performer** category.
- **Kerala and Tamil Nadu** slipped into the **Aspirational** category.
- Among **North-Eastern and Himalayan states**, **Arunachal Pradesh** ranked **first**, followed by **Uttarakhand and Tripura**.

KAMAKHYA TEMPLE

Deccan Chronicle

SCR to Operate Amrut Bharat Express from Cherlapally to Kamakhya Temple



The train with sleeper and general second class coaches will run between Cherlapally and Maa Kamakhya temple, a famous pilgrimage site in...

Why in News

- **Amrut Bharat Express** will facilitate pilgrimage connectivity to **Kamakhya Temple in Assam**.

Historical and Religious Significance

- Located on **Nilachal Hill in Guwahati**, near the **Brahmaputra River**.
- Dedicated to **Goddess Sati**, an incarnation of **Durga and consort of Lord Shiva**.
- It is one of the **51 Shakti Peethas** and an important centre of **Tantric worship traditions**.
- The original temple was destroyed by **Kala Pahar** and rebuilt in **1565** by **Koch dynasty ruler Chilarai**.



Major Religious Festival

- **Ambubachi Mela** is the most significant festival celebrated annually.
- It commemorates the **annual menstruation of Goddess Kamakhya**, symbolising fertility.

Architectural Characteristics

- Combines **Nagara (North Indian)** and **Saracenic/Mughal architectural styles**, known as **Nilachala style**.
- The structure features a **beehive-shaped dome** with sculptural motifs.
- The temple has **five chambers** including **Garbhagriha, Antarala, Jagan Mohan, Bhogmandir, and Natmandir**.

JHELUM RIVER

Why in News

- The **Jhelum River** in **Kashmir Valley** has dropped **below the zero-gauge level** due to unusual early spring warming.

Down To Earth

Dry winter and rising temperatures leave Kashmir's lifeline Jhelum river at historic low

Kashmir's Jhelum river hits historic low amid dry winter and rising temperatures.

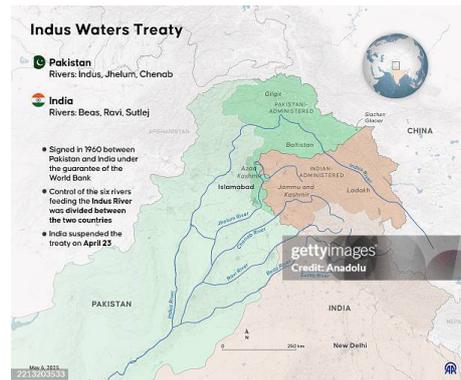


Geographic Identity

- The river flows through **India and Pakistan** and is a **major tributary of the Indus River**.
- Historically known as **Vitasta (Sanskrit), Hydaspes (Greek), and Bidasp (Persian)**.

Origin and Course

- Originates from **Verinag Spring in Anantnag district**, at the **foot of the Pir Panjal Range**.
- Flows northwest through the **Kashmir Valley** before entering **Wular Lake near Srinagar**.
- Forms a **deep gorge before entering Pakistan** and joins the **Chenab River near Trimmu**.



Hydrology and Tributaries

- River flow depends on **Himalayan snowmelt and southwest monsoon rainfall**.
- Major tributaries include **Kishenganga (Neelum), Kunhar, Lidder, Bringi, Sandran, Arapath, Watlara, and Veshaw**.

Key Physical Feature

- The river is approximately **725 km long** and is the **westernmost river of the Punjab river system**.

EUROPEAN FREE TRADE ASSOCIATION (EFTA)

Why in News

- **India–EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA)** has completed **two years since signing**.

ddnews.gov.in

[India-EFTA trade pact completes two years, targets \\$100 billion investment and deeper market access](#)

The Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) between India and the member states of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) has...



Institutional Background

- **European Free Trade Association (EFTA)** is an **intergovernmental organisation established in 1960 by the Stockholm Convention**.
- It promotes **free trade and economic integration among member states**.

Member Countries

- Iceland
- Liechtenstein
- Norway
- Switzerland

Institutional Structure

- **EFTA Council** is the highest governing body overseeing cooperation among members.
- **EFTA Surveillance Authority (ESA)** monitors compliance with **European Economic Area rules**.
- **EFTA Court**, located in **Luxembourg**, resolves disputes related to **EEA agreements**.

Key Distinction from the European Union

- Unlike the **European Union**, EFTA is **not a customs union**.
- Member states maintain **independent trade policies and tariff systems**.

OTHER IMPORTANT NEWS OF THE DAY

Places in News

MOZAMBIQUE

Why in News

- **India sent 500 metric tonnes of rice** to **Mozambique** after severe flooding.

Geographic Location

- Mozambique is in **Southern Africa**, in the **Southern and Eastern Hemispheres**.
- It has an extensive coastline along the **Indian Ocean**.

Bordering Countries

- **Tanzania** lies to the north.
- **Malawi and Zambia** lie to the northwest.
- **Zimbabwe** lies to the west.
- **South Africa and Eswatini** lie to the south and southwest.

Physical Geography

- The **Zambezi River** is the largest river in the country.
- Other rivers include **Limpopo, Licungo, Lurio, and Rovuma**.
- The major lake is **Lake Malawi (Nyasa)**.



Natural Resources and Topography

- The highest peak is **Mount Binga**.
- Key natural resources include **natural gas, coal, minerals, hydropower potential, and heavy mineral sands**.

Environment in News

NEW LICHEN MOTH SPECIES

 ThePrint

ZSI scientists discover 2 new moth species in eastern Himalayas

Kolkata, Mar 11 (PTI) Scientists from the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) have discovered two new species of lichen moths in the eastern...



Why in News

- Scientists of the **Zoological Survey of India (ZSI)** discovered two new lichen moth species in the **Eastern Himalayas**.

Taxonomy and Discovery

- Newly discovered species are **Caulocera hollowayi** and **Asura buxa**, belonging to the **lichen moth group**.
- **Caulocera hollowayi** was identified from specimens collected near **Golitar in Sikkim**.
- **Asura buxa** was discovered from specimens collected at **Panijhora in West Bengal**.

Distinctive Morphological Characteristics

- The species were identified through **unique wing patterns, colour bands, and microscopic anatomical features**.
- Distinct internal structures helped differentiate them from other species within the **same genus**.

Ecological Importance

- Lichen moth caterpillars feed on **lichens**, organisms highly sensitive to **air pollution**.
- Their presence helps scientists **monitor air quality and environmental health**.
- They act as **bio-indicators of pollution**, particularly in **fragile Himalayan ecosystems**.

NAURADEHI WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Why in News

- **Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary** in **Madhya Pradesh** is expected to receive **cheetahs** under the **Cheetah Reintroduction Project**.



Geographic and Ecological Setting

- Located on a **plateau in the Upper Vindhyan Range** in **Madhya Pradesh**.
- Spread across **1187 sq km**, it is the **largest wildlife sanctuary in the state**.
- Forms an ecological corridor linking **Panna, Satpura, and Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserves**.

Hydrological Features

- Around **three-fourths of the sanctuary** lies in the **Yamuna (Ganga) basin**.
- The remaining **one-fourth** lies in the **Narmada basin**.
- Major rivers include **Kopra, Bamner, and Bearma**, tributaries of the **Ken River**.

Vegetation and Biodiversity

- Vegetation consists of **tropical dry and mixed deciduous forests and grasslands**.
- Dominant tree species include **Teak, Saja, Dhaora, Ber, Bel, Mahua, Tendu, and Amla**.

Faunal Diversity

- Wildlife includes **Indian wolf, Bengal tiger, leopard, sloth bear, sambar deer, nilgai, and chinkara**.
- The sanctuary is identified as a **potential landscape for cheetah population expansion**.

Defence

ASTEROID 2024 YR4

TH The Hindu

Asteroid YR4 will miss the moon, too, NASA says

NASA confirms asteroid 2024 YR4 will safely miss the moon, eliminating previous collision concerns for December 2032.



Why in News

- NASA has ruled out the possibility of **asteroid 2024 YR4 colliding with the Moon in 2032.**

Classification and Discovery

- It is an **Apollo-type Near-Earth Asteroid (NEA)** whose orbit crosses Earth's orbit.
- It was discovered in **December 2024** by the **Asteroid Terrestrial-impact Last Alert System (ATLAS)** telescope in **Chile.**

Naming Convention

- The letter "Y" indicates discovery in the **second half of December.**
- "R4" indicates it was **the 117th asteroid discovered during that period.**

Physical and Orbital Characteristics

- Diameter ranges between **53–67 metres (174–220 feet).**
- Orbital period is **4.011 years (1468 days).**
- Rotation period is **19.46 minutes.**

Composition

- Likely an **S-type asteroid**, composed mainly of **silicate minerals and nickel-iron.**
- Such asteroids generally originate from the **main asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter.**

Defence

INS TRIKAND

Why in News

- **INS Trikand** will participate in the **58th National Day celebrations of Mauritius.**

News On AIR

INS Trikand to Join 58th National Day celebrations of Mauritius on March 12

Indian Naval Ship INS Trikand will participate in the 58th National Day celebrations of Mauritius tomorrow. The ship reached Port Louis...



Platform and Deployment

- **INS Trikand** is a **Talwar-class guided-missile frigate** of the **Indian Navy**.
- It operates under the **Western Naval Command** headquartered **in Mumbai**.

Construction and Commissioning

- Built at **Yantar Shipyard, Kaliningrad, Russia**.
- Commissioned into the Indian Navy on **29 June 2013**.

Combat Capabilities

- Equipped with **BRAHMOS supersonic cruise missiles**.
- Air defence provided by **Shtil surface-to-air missile system**.
- Includes **A-190 naval gun and electro-optical close-in weapon system**.

Integrated Warfare Systems

- Uses **Trebovanie-M Combat Management System** for integrated threat engagement.
- Equipped with **anti-submarine torpedoes and rocket launchers**.
- Capable of operating a **Kamov-31 helicopter**.

UTTAR PRADESH IN NEWS

Project GANGA: UP Government–Hinduja Group MoU

 The Indian Express

What is UP gov't's 'Project GANGA' that aims to bring high-speed internet to 20 lakh homes in rural areas

An MoU was signed between the State Transformation Commission and One OTT Entertainment Limited, a subsidiary of the Hinduja Group.



Why in News

- The **Uttar Pradesh State Transformation Commission (STC)** signed an **MoU (9 March 2026)** with **OneOTT Intertainment Ltd (Hinduja Global Solutions)** to expand **broadband connectivity** and reduce the **digital divide**.

Digital Infrastructure Expansion

- The project aims to provide **high-speed broadband to 20 lakh households** in **2–3 years**.

- It will strengthen **e-governance systems** and support the **Digital India Mission**.

Regional Focus

- Priority will be given to **rural and semi-urban areas**.
- Special focus on **aspirational and border districts** such as **Shravasti, Bahraich, and Balrampur**.



Employment and Entrepreneurship

- Expected to generate **over 1 lakh direct and indirect jobs**.
- **8,000–10,000 youths** will be trained as **Digital Service Providers (DSPs)** at the **Nyaya Panchayat level**.
- The project targets **50% women participation** among local entrepreneurs.

Social Impact

- Improves access to **telemedicine, online education, e-commerce, and digital services** in rural areas.
- Promotes **digital inclusion and rural economic empowerment**.