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**DAILY
CURRENT AFFAIRS**

Important Current News for UPSC & UPPSC

26th Mar 2026

TOPICS:-

- 1. National Biodiversity Authority (NBA)**
- 2. Assam Rifles**
- 3. Districts as Export Hubs (DEH) Initiative**
- 4. RoDTEP Scheme**
- 5. Sperm Whale**
- 6. GlobE Network**
- 7. Other Important News of the day**
- 8. Uttar Pradesh in News**

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NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY AUTHORITY (NBA)

 News On AIR

National Biodiversity Authority Launches 3-Month Internship Programme for Graduates and Postgraduates

The National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) launched a short-term Internship Programme of up to 3 months for students who are undergoing...



Why in News

- The **National Biodiversity Authority (NBA)** has launched a short-term internship programme for students.

Institutional Framework

- The NBA is a statutory body established under the **Biological Diversity Act, 2002**.
- It was formally constituted in **2003** to operationalise biodiversity governance in India.
- The headquarters of the authority is located in **Chennai, Tamil Nadu**.



Governance Architecture

- The authority comprises a **Chairperson, 10 ex-officio members, and 5 non-official experts**.
- **State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs)** regulate access to biological resources at the state level.
- **Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs)** operate at local levels for conservation and documentation.

Functional Mandate and Legal Linkages

- It performs **regulatory, advisory, and facilitative functions** related to biodiversity conservation.
- It ensures **equitable benefit sharing** under international commitments like the **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**.
- Plays a role in implementing **Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS)** mechanisms in India.

Governance Significance

- It strengthens decentralised environmental governance through **local-level participation mechanisms**.
- It aligns India's biodiversity regime with global frameworks like the **Nagoya Protocol**.

ASSAM RIFLES

 News On AIR

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh Greet Assam Rifles on Raising Day, Praises Role in Border Security

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has extended his greetings to all ranks of the Assam Rifles on the occasion of their Raising Day.



Why in News

- The **Union Home Minister** extended greetings on the Raising Day of the **Assam Rifles**.

Institutional Positioning

- It is one of the **six Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs)** under the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)**.
- The headquarters of the **Director-General of Assam Rifles (DGAR)** is in **Shillong**.

Historical Evolution

- It originated in **1835** as the **Cachar Levy** to protect British interests in Assam.
- It evolved into the **Frontier Force** and later became the **Assam Rifles in 1917**.
- It has contributed to major operations including the **1962 Sino-India War** and **IPKF in Sri Lanka (1987)**.

Operational Role and Security Significance

- It conducts **counter-insurgency operations** in the North-East region.
- It plays a key role in **border management along the Indo-Myanmar border**.
- Its motto "**Service, Security, Friendship**" reflects its civil-military engagement approach.

Strategic Importance

- It acts as a **bridge between armed forces and local populations** in sensitive regions.
- It contributes to **internal security and Act East Policy implementation**.

DISTRICTS AS EXPORT HUBS (DEH) INITIATIVE

Why in News

- The government updated the Parliament on the progress of the **Districts as Export Hubs (DEH) Initiative**.

— KJN India

Districts as Export Hubs Initiative Rolled Out Across All States & UTs: Jitin Prasada

The government's Districts as Export Hubs (DEH) initiative is being implemented across all states and union territories to boost local...



Policy Framework and Objectives

- It was launched in **August 2019** under the **Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT)**.
- It aims to **identify, brand, and promote district-specific products** for exports.
- It focuses on **balanced regional development and export diversification**.

Institutional Mechanism

- **State Export Promotion Committees (SEPCs)** and **District Export Promotion Committees (DEPCs)** are established.
- **District Export Action Plans (DEAPs)** identify bottlenecks and propose targeted interventions.

Economic and Strategic Significance

- The initiative covers **734 districts**, including **GI products, agriculture, and toy clusters**.
- It promotes **local-to-global value chains and MSME integration into exports**.
- It aligns with initiatives like **Make in India and Atmanirbhar Bharat**.

Governance Dimensions

- It decentralises export promotion by making **districts active stakeholders**.
- It enhances **logistics efficiency and supply chain competitiveness**.

RODTEP SCHEME

TH The Hindu

Government restores RoDTEP benefits for exporters

The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) has restored the complete benefits provided to exporters under the Remission of Duties and...



Why in News

- The government restored rates and value caps under the **RoDTEP Scheme** for exporters.

Policy Features and Legal Basis

- The scheme was introduced under the **Foreign Trade Policy 2015–20** and became effective from **January 1, 2021**.
- It replaces the **Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS)**.
- It is compliant with **World Trade Organization (WTO)** norms.

Operational Mechanism

- It refunds embedded taxes and duties not otherwise reimbursed in exports.
- Benefits are provided as **transferable electronic duty credit scrips**.
- It operates through a **digital platform ensuring transparency and efficiency**.

Coverage and Eligibility

- It covers **all sectors**, with priority for **labour-intensive industries**.
- It includes **SEZ units, EOUs, and e-commerce exports**, but excludes re-exported goods.

Economic Significance

- It enhances **export competitiveness by reducing hidden costs**.
- It supports India's integration into **global value chains**.

SPERM WHALE

N Nature

Description of a collaborative sperm whale birth and shifts in coda vocal styles during key events | Scientific Reports

Wild cetacean birth observations are extremely rare, with observations having been recorded in less than 10% of cetacean species.

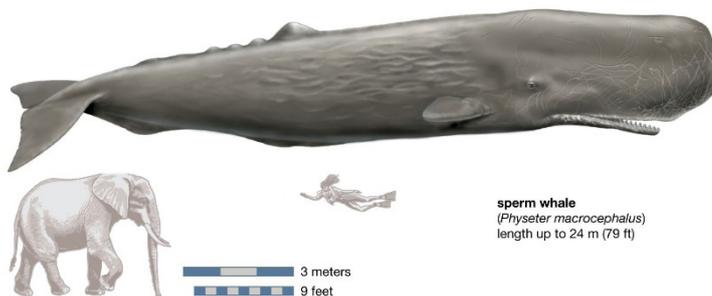


Why in News

- Sperm whales were observed displaying **headbutting behaviour**, indicating social interaction patterns.

Biological Characteristics

- The **Sperm Whale (Physeter macrocephalus)** is the largest toothed whale.
- It has the **largest brain among all animals** and a distinctive square head.



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Unique Features

- It contains **spermaceti oil**, used for sound focusing and historically in industries.
- It communicates through **codas (click-based sound patterns)**.

Distribution and Ecology

- It has a **global distribution across deep oceans**, from equator to polar regions.
- It feeds primarily on **squid and deep-sea organisms**.

Conservation Status

- Listed as **Vulnerable (IUCN)** and under **Appendix I of CITES**.

Environmental Relevance

- It plays a role in **marine nutrient cycling and ocean ecosystem balance**.

GLOBE NETWORK

 News On AIR

India Hosts 12th Steering Committee Meeting of the Global Operational Network

The Director of Enforcement Directorate (ED), Rahul Navin, today said that asset recovery is not an afterthought but the truest measure of...



Why in News

- India hosted **the 12th Steering Committee Meeting of the Globe Network** in New Delhi.

Institutional Framework

- The **Globe Network (Global Operational Network of Anti-Corruption Law Enforcement Authorities)** operates under **UNCAC**.
- It was established under the **Riyadh Initiative** during **Saudi Arabia's G20 Presidency**.

Membership and Governance

- It includes **135 countries, 250 authorities, and 18 observers** like **EUROPOL and World Bank**.
- The steering committee consists of a **chair, vice-chair, and 13 members**.

Functional Role

- It enables **direct cooperation among law enforcement agencies** for corruption cases.
- It facilitates **asset recovery, investigation, and prosecution** of corruption offences.

India's Role and Significance

- India's nodal agency is the **Ministry of Home Affairs**, with **CBI and ED** as member bodies.
- It strengthens India's commitment to **global anti-corruption governance frameworks**.

Strategic Relevance

- It complements formal mechanisms under **UNCAC** by enabling faster coordination.
- It enhances **transnational crime control and financial transparency**.

OTHER IMPORTANT NEWS OF THE DAY

Places in
News

TONGA

Why in News

- A **7.6 magnitude earthquake** struck near **Tonga** in the South Pacific Ocean.

Geographical Location

- Tonga is a **Polynesian island country** consisting of **169 islands** in the South Pacific Ocean.



- It lies near **Fiji (west), Samoa (north), and Cook Islands (east)**.
- The capital city is **Nuku'alofa** on **Tongatapu Island**.

Geophysical Characteristics

- The western islands are of **volcanic origin**, forming the **Tongan Volcanic Arc**.
- The eastern islands are composed of **coral limestone and sand formations**.
- The highest point is **Kao Island** in the Ha'apai group.

Strategic and Environmental Significance

- Tonga lies in the **Pacific Ring of Fire**, making it prone to earthquakes and volcanic activity.
- It is part of initiatives like the **Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance**.

**Environ-
ment**

BEAVER

... BBC

Released beavers settle after year of ups and downs

The BBC speaks to conservationists a year after beavers were released at a nature reserve in Dorset.



Why in News

- A recent study highlights the role of beavers in reducing carbon emissions through ecosystem engineering.



Ecological Characteristics

- Beavers belong to the genus **Castor** and are **semi-aquatic rodents**.
- They inhabit **rivers, streams, marshes, and lakes** across North America, Europe, and Asia.
- Their incisors grow continuously, enabling them to cut wood effectively.

Ecosystem Engineering Role

- Beavers construct dams using **branches, stones, and mud**, altering hydrological systems.
- These dams create wetlands that act as **carbon sinks and biodiversity hotspots**.
- They regulate water flow and reduce **soil erosion and flood risks**.

Environmental Significance

- They are termed “**ecosystem engineers**” due to their landscape-modifying abilities.
- Their activities enhance **climate resilience and ecological restoration**.

Conservation Status

- Listed as **Least Concern** under the **IUCN Red List**, indicating stable populations.

Science and Technology

HELIUM

FE The Financial Express

Helium shortage may tighten chip supplies for user industries



A global helium supply disruption triggered by the West Asia crisis is beginning to add pressure on the semiconductor supply chain,...

Why in News

- Disruptions in helium supply due to geopolitical tensions near Qatar’s LNG hub may affect India’s semiconductor sector.

Scientific Characteristics

- **Helium (He)** is an inert noble gas with atomic number 2, making it the second lightest element.
- It has an extremely low boiling point of -268.9°C , allowing use in cryogenic conditions.
- It cannot be solidified under normal atmospheric pressure, making it unique among elements.

Discovery and Occurrence

- It was discovered in 1868 by Jules Janssen and Norman Lockyer during a solar eclipse.
- It is primarily extracted from natural gas reserves present in geological formations.
- Major global reserves are found in the USA, Algeria, and Russia.

WAR HITS ALUMINIUM, HELIUM PRODUCTION

The disruption to global commodity prices from the US-Israeli war with Iran is spreading far beyond energy markets. From basic plastics and fertilizer made in Saudi Arabia and Oman to sugar from Brazil and helium from Qatar, the conflict has affected the price, supply or production of a variety of commodities that are essential to the global economy. How severe the disruption becomes will depend largely on how long the conflict drags on.

Here are six major commodities, besides oil and gas, that are being affected by the war

Aluminium
Aluminium prices jumped to their highest level in almost four years Monday after a halt to deliveries from major aluminium smelters in Qatar and Bahrain, forcing buyers to hunt for replacement metal from Asia. Producers in the Persian Gulf accounted for about 8% of the world's supply of aluminium last year, according to the International Aluminium Institute. Processing for the metal requires huge amounts of energy, but raw materials for aluminium have to be imported, by ships

Ethanol and Sugar
In Brazil, the world's largest producer of sugarcane, the crop can be used for sugar or to produce ethanol, a fuel used in cars across the country. When ethanol prices rise, mills tend to focus on more profitable fuel, and that may be about to happen again. With oil prices soaring, ethanol jumped about 10% Monday, and gains like that may lead Brazilian processors to use more cane for fuel when harvest begins in weeks

Helium
Helium is a vital gas for semiconductor manufacturing. It helps cool delicate equipment, powers MRI machines and supports research labs and defense technologies -- and, of course, it's used in party balloons. Qatar produces roughly a third of the world's helium, making it the second-largest supplier after the United States. But production there has been disrupted since Iran struck the Ras Laffan Industrial City -- the natural gas hub where the country's helium facilities are. More than a quarter of the world's helium supply could be cut off if the Strait of Hormuz remains closed, Phil Kornbluth, president of Kornbluth Helium Consulting, told CNBC

Sulfur and Urea
Sulfur, which is produced during oil and gas refining, is also essential for fertilizer production and used in many other industries. The yellow powder makes it easier to cut, drill and shape certain metals, such as copper, without ruining the tools or machinery. Nearly half the world's sulfur is now trapped on the Persian Gulf side of the Strait of Hormuz, according to CRU Group

Roughly one-third of the world's traded urea, the dominant form of nitrogen fertilizer, normally passes through the Strait of Hormuz. It's produced in the Middle East because natural gas is an essential feedstock for fertilizer. Urea prices have risen as much as 35% since the war began

RESOLUTE DUBAI KEEPS SHELVES STOCKED

An analysis of 2025 trade transactions by Altana, a New York-based global supply chain management company, found that Saudi Arabia, Iraq, the UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain together imported an estimated \$10 billion in cereals, meat, and fresh produce. Nearly all of it arrives by sea, transiting through the Strait of Hormuz. The United Arab Emirates imports around 80-90% of its food requirements due to limited arable land and water scarcity. For now, the UAE goes is keeping the shelves packed and has sought to reassure residents there are enough reserves to last for several months and is monitoring prices

Cargo delays and rerouting: Ships carrying Indian rice, Australian meat and Indonesian coffee are delayed or forced to take alternative routes

Air freight replacing sea routes: Retailers such as Lulu Group are chartering cargo flights to bring in meat, fruits and vegetables

Food exports halted: Iran, the top supplier of fresh fruit and vegetables to the UAE, has banned exports of all food and agricultural products until further notice, the semi-official Tasnim news agency reported last week

Sugar stock to last two years: UAE's giant Al Khaleej sugar refinery has enough reserves for two years and can meet demand from the UAE and the rest of the Gulf for that period

Rice shipments stuck: Around 400,000 tonnes of Indian basmati rice are stranded at ports or at sea due to vessel shortages

Logistics costs rising: Rerouting cargo by air or land is increasing supply-chain costs, which could push up food prices

Text: N.Y. Bloomberg

Indian Context and Strategic Value

- India has helium reserves in the **Rajmahal Volcanic Basin (Jharkhand)**.
- It is critical for **semiconductors, space technology, and cryogenics**, making it strategically significant.
- Supply disruptions highlight India’s vulnerability in **critical mineral supply chains**.

Applications and Economic Relevance

- It is used in **rocket fuel pressurisation and cooling systems** in space missions.
- It is essential for **MRI machines, electronics manufacturing, and scientific research**.

Lakes in News

GREAT SALT LAKE

Why in News

- New research indicates fresh-water saturation beneath the **Great Salt Lake up to deep geological levels**.

Geographical Features

- It is located in **Utah, USA**, and is the largest saltwater lake in the Western Hemisphere.
- It is an **endorheic basin** with no outlet, fed by **Bear, Weber, and Jordan rivers**.

Hydrological Characteristics

- The lake shows **high salinity due to evaporation exceeding inflow**.
- Its size fluctuates significantly based on **river inflow and climatic conditions**.

Environmental Significance

- It supports diverse avifauna like **American avocet and white pelican**.
- It resembles the **Dead Sea** in terms of salinity and arid environment.



UTTAR PRADESH IN NEWS

UTTAR PRADESH CABINET DECISIONS (MSP, SOLAR, COAL, URBAN)

🔴 The Indian Express

UP hikes wheat MSP by Rs 160; procurement from March 30

The Uttar Pradesh government on Monday announced a hike of Rs 160 per quintal in the minimum support price (MSP) for wheat, setting it at Rs...



Why in News

- The UP Cabinet approved wheat MSP hike, solar project, coal mine funding, and urban reform scheme.

Agriculture and MSP Reform

- Wheat MSP increased to ₹2,585/quintal (₹160 hike) for 2026 procurement season.
- Procurement will run from March 30 to June 15, 2026 with target of 50 lakh metric tonnes.
- About 6,500 centres and agencies like FCI, NAFED, NCCF will handle procurement.
- Online registration ensures transparency and reduces middlemen.

Renewable Energy Push

- A 20 MW floating solar plant approved at Chilua Tal (Gorakhpur).
- Executed by Coal India Limited under plan to develop Gorakhpur as Solar City.
- Existing plants include Auraiya (20 MW, NTPC) and Khurja (11 MW, THDC).

Energy Security and Cost Efficiency

- ₹2,242.90 crore approved for Pachhwara coal mine (Jharkhand).
- It will supply coal to Ghatampur Thermal Plant (3×660 MW).
- Expected to reduce power cost by ~80 paise/unit and lower transport expenses.

Urban Governance Reform

- Navyug Palika Yojana aims to develop 58 district towns into smart urban centres.
- Focus on improving infrastructure, governance efficiency, and service delivery.