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Important Current News for UPSC & UPPSC

7th Mar 2026

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MOONSHOT PROJECT

TOI The Times of India

IISc, Pratiksha Trust launch 'Moonshot' project on brain co-processors

Bengaluru: The Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Wednesday said it has launched a "moonshot" project to develop brain co-processors that...

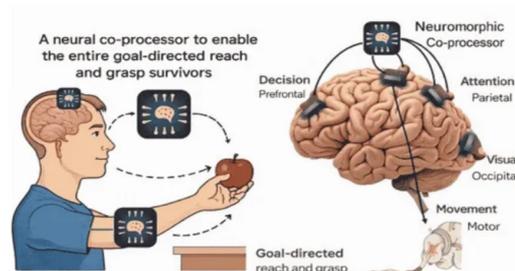


Why in News

- The **Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru** launched the **Moonshot Project** to develop **AI-enabled brain co-processors** that can restore or enhance brain functions.

Technological Architecture and Research Framework

- The project aims to develop **brain co-processors**, devices designed to assist the brain in performing neural functions.
- It integrates **neuromorphic hardware** (brain-inspired computing) with **Artificial Intelligence (AI) algorithms**.
- The system will function as a **closed-loop device**, continuously reading and responding to brain signals.
- The initiative evolved from the **IISc Brain, Computation and Data Science programme**, reflecting interdisciplinary research.



Functional Mechanism of Brain Co-Processors

- The device will **decode neural signals from brain recordings** using **AI algorithms**.
- Processed signals will be returned to the brain through **neural stimulation or neurofeedback**.
- It will interact with different brain regions to restore **coordinated sensorimotor activity**.
- Both **implantable and non-invasive versions** of the technology are being developed.

Medical and Social Significance

- The technology aims to support **cognitive rehabilitation for stroke survivors**.
- It can help restore **goal-directed movements**, including reaching and grasping.
- The system may also assist in treatment of **paralysis and other motor impairments**.
- The project is funded by the **Pratiksha Trust**.

Policy and Innovation Implications

- Indigenous development of **AI-based neurotechnology** strengthens India's **deep-tech research ecosystem**.
- It can expand India's capabilities in **brain-computer interface (BCI) technologies** and medical innovation.

SHARAVATHI PUMPED STORAGE HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT

THE Hindu

Karnataka High Court notice to State and Centre on plea challenging wildlife boards' approval for ₹10,000 crore Sharavathi Pumped Storage Hydroelectric project



The High Court of Karnataka on Thursday ordered issue of notice to the Centre and State government on a PIL petition, which had questioned...

Why in News

- The **Karnataka High Court** recently issued notice to the **Central and State governments** regarding approvals granted for the **Sharavathi Pumped Storage Hydroelectric Project (PSHP)**.

Project Overview and Technical Design

- The **Sharavathi Pumped Storage Hydroelectric Project** is proposed on the **Sharavathi River in Shivamogga district, Karnataka**.
- The project aims to generate **2,000 MW of electricity**, making it the **largest pumped storage project in India**.
- It is being developed by **Karnataka Power Corporation Limited (KPCL)**.
- The project will operate by transferring water between two reservoirs to store and generate electricity.

Operational Mechanism of Pumped Storage Systems

- During **off-peak electricity demand**, water will be **pumped from a lower reservoir to a higher reservoir using surplus power**.
- During **peak demand periods**, water will be released downhill to generate electricity through turbines.
- In this project, the **Talakalale Dam (62.48 m)** will serve as the **upper reservoir**.
- The **Gerusoppa Dam (about 64 m)** will act as the **lower reservoir**, completing the pumped storage cycle.

Ecological and Environmental Concerns

- The project lies within the **Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ)** of the **Sharavathi Wildlife Sanctuary**, part of the **Western Ghats biodiversity hotspot**.
- The sanctuary hosts endangered and endemic species such as the **lion-tailed macaque, hornbills, and king cobras**.
- Environmental concerns include **forest fragmentation, wildlife disturbance, and ecosystem alteration**.
- The issue raises questions about compliance with provisions under the **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972** and the role of the **National Board for Wildlife (NBWL)**.

Geographical Profile of the Sharavathi River

- The **Sharavathi River** originates in the **Western Ghats of Karnataka** and flows westwards into the **Arabian Sea at Honnavar**.
- The river has a total length of about **128 km**, making it one of the few **west-flowing rivers in peninsular India**.
- It forms the famous **Jog Falls**, where the river plunges about **253 metres**, making it one of India's highest waterfalls.
- Major tributaries include **Nandihole, Haridravathi, Mavinahole, Hilkunji, Yennehole, Hurlihole, and Nagodihole**.

RAISINA DIALOGUE 2026

THE Hindu

Karnataka High Court notice to State and Centre on plea challenging wildlife boards' approval for ₹10,000 crore Sharavathi Pumped Storage Hydroelectric project



The High Court of Karnataka on Thursday ordered issue of notice to the Centre and State government on a PIL petition, which had questioned...

Why in News

- The **Prime Minister of India** recently inaugurated the **11th edition of the Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi**.

Institutional Structure and Global Role

- The **Raisina Dialogue** is India's premier conference on **geopolitics and geo-economics**.
- It is organised annually since **2016** in **New Delhi**.
- The dialogue is hosted by the **Observer Research Foundation (ORF)** in partnership with **the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)**.
- It follows a format similar to the **Munich Security Conference** and the **Shangri-La Dialogue**.

Participation and Diplomatic Engagement

- The event brings together heads of state, ministers, policymakers, strategic experts, private sector leaders, and academics.
- Approximately 2,700 participants from 110 countries are attending the 2026 edition.
- The platform promotes **multi-stakeholder global dialogue on security, economy, technology, and governance.**

Theme and Discussion Pillars for 2026

- The theme for **Raisina Dialogue 2026** is “**Samskāra – Assertion, Accommodation, Advancement.**”
- Discussions are organised around **six thematic pillars** including **global power dynamics, climate challenges, global commons governance, and technology futures.**
- Key themes include **Contested Frontiers, Repairing the Commons, Agenda 2030, Climate and Conflict, Technology Governance, and Trade Resilience.**

Strategic Significance for India

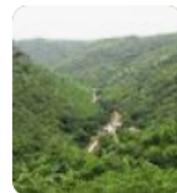
- The dialogue strengthens India’s position as a **global convener of strategic debates and diplomatic engagement.**
- It supports India’s aspiration to act as **a bridge between the Global North and the Global South.**
- The platform contributes to shaping discussions on **multilateral cooperation, global governance reform, and emerging security challenges.**

KAPPATAGUDDA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

TH The Hindu

[Karnataka High Court directs inclusion of left-out 55 sq. km reserve forest area to Kappatagudda Wildlife Sanctuary.](#)

Karnataka High Court orders inclusion of 55 sq. km of reserve forest into Kappatagudda Wildlife Sanctuary, correcting prior notification...



Why in News

- The **Karnataka High Court** directed the state government to notify additional areas of **Kappatagudda reserve forest** as part of the **Kappatagudda Wildlife Sanctuary.**

Location and Geographical Setting

- **Kappatagudda Wildlife Sanctuary** is located in the **Gadag district of Karnataka**.
- The region contains diverse ecosystems including **dry deciduous forests, scrublands, grasslands, and riverine habitats**.
- Due to its ecological diversity, the region is often referred to as the **“Western Ghats of North Karnataka.”**

Ecological Characteristics

- The sanctuary supports vegetation typical of **dry-scrub and deciduous ecosystems**.
- The forest contains nearly **400 species of medicinal plants**, highlighting its ethnobotanical importance.
- The region also forms an important **catchment area for the Tungabhadra River basin**.

Faunal Diversity

- Key mammals include **leopards, wolves, hyenas, jackals, foxes, and jungle cats**.
- Herbivores such as **blackbucks and four-horned antelopes** are also found in the sanctuary.
- Reptiles like **monitor lizards** and a variety of birds contribute to the area’s biodiversity richness.

Cultural and Historical Landscape

- The hills contain numerous **ancient temples and archaeological remains**, reflecting the influence of historical dynasties such as the **Chalukyas and Rashtrakutas**.
- Important structures include the **Kappatagudda Jain Basadi, Brahma Jinalaya, Trikuteshwara Temple, and Dambala Temple**.
- The site therefore represents a **convergence of ecological and cultural heritage**.

VERY LOW EARTH ORBIT (VLEO) SATELLITE SYSTEMS

Why in News

- **Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL)** and **Bellatrix Aerospace** signed an **MoU** to jointly develop **Very Low Earth Orbit (VLEO) satellite systems**.

 The Times of India

[BEL, Bellatrix ink pact to develop very low Earth orbit satellite systems](#)

India News: BENGALURU: State-run defence electronics major Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) has signed a memorandum of understanding with...



Institutional Collaboration and Strategic Aim

- The partnership combines **BEL's defence electronics manufacturing capabilities** with **Bellatrix Aerospace's satellite propulsion technologies**.
- It aims to build **indigenous VLEO satellite platforms and payloads**.
- The collaboration will develop **integrated satellite solutions for defence and civilian applications**.

Orbital Characteristics and Operational Mechanism

- **VLEO** refers to satellite altitudes between **150 km and 450 km above Earth**.
- This is significantly lower than **Low Earth Orbit (LEO)**, which ranges between **500 km and 2,000 km**.
- Satellites in this orbit face **atmospheric drag due to thin residual atmosphere**.
- **Electric or green propulsion systems** provide continuous thrust to maintain orbital stability.

Technological Advantages

- **Closer proximity to Earth** enables **high-resolution imaging** even with smaller optical sensors.
- Shorter distance to ground stations enables **ultra-low latency communication**.
- Launching satellites to lower altitude requires **less fuel**, reducing launch costs.

Strategic and Environmental Significance

- High-resolution imaging improves **border surveillance, reconnaissance, and intelligence gathering**.
- The orbit acts as a **self-cleaning environment**, where failed satellites naturally burn up due to atmospheric drag.
- The collaboration strengthens India's **space technology ecosystem and strategic autonomy**.

KHELO INDIA TRIBAL GAMES (KITG)

Why in News

- The **first-ever Khelo India Tribal Games (KITG)** will be held in **Chhattisgarh from 25 March to 6 April 2026**.

ddnews.gov.in

[Khelo India Tribal Games to be held from March 26 to April 6 in Chhattisgarh](#)

The inaugural edition of the Khelo India Tribal Games (KITG) will be held from March 26 to April 6 across three cities in Chhattisgarh...



Institutional Framework and Organisation

- **KITG** is a **national multi-sport event** dedicated to **tribal athletes** across India.
- It is organised under the **Khelo India Scheme** of the **Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports**.
- The event supports the government's objective of promoting **sports culture and talent development**.

Host Locations and Event Structure

- **Host State:** **Chhattisgarh**.
- **Host Cities:** **Raipur, Jagdalpur, and Sarguja**.
- Competitions will follow **technical standards aligned with international sporting events**.

Sports Disciplines

- **Medal Sports:** Athletics, Football, Hockey, Weightlifting, Archery, Swimming, and Wrestling.
- **Demonstration Sports:** **Mallakhamb** and **Kabaddi**.

Significance for Tribal Development

- The games aim to **identify and nurture sporting talent** from tribal regions.
- They encourage **mass participation in sports** among tribal youth.
- The initiative promotes **social inclusion and integration** of tribal athletes into **national sports systems**.
- The **Khelo India programme** was declared an **Event of National Importance** under the **Sports Broadcasting Signals Act, 2007** in **2020**.

LNG AND LPG PRICE DETERMINATION

THE Hindu

[LPG, LNG and India's production, supply and distribution | Explained](#)

Explore India's LPG and LNG production, supply challenges, and government responses amid rising global crude oil prices.



Why in News

- The **West Asia conflict (March 2026)** has increased **global crude oil prices by nearly 30%**, raising the cost of **LNG and LPG**.

Nature of Price Determination

- **Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG)** and **Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG)** prices are influenced by **global crude oil benchmarks and regional indices**.

- Unlike crude oil, these gases **do not have a single global benchmark price**.

Pricing Mechanisms and Supply Structure

- **Crude Oil Linkage:** LNG and LPG prices generally move in line with **crude oil price trends**.
- **Long-term Contracts:** India imports large volumes of LNG through **long-term agreements, particularly from Qatar**.
- **Spot Markets:** Additional purchases occur through **volatile spot markets**, benchmarked by indices such as **Japan Korea Marker (JKM)**.

Domestic Production and Import Dependence

- **LPG:** **Around 60% of India's LPG supply is imported**, mainly from **Saudi Arabia and Qatar**.
- The remaining **40% is produced domestically** by **Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs)** such as **IOC and BPCL**.
- **LNG:** Approximately **half of India's demand is met through domestic production**, with the rest imported via **cryogenic LNG carriers**.

Factors Influencing Prices

- **Geopolitical tensions**, especially disruptions in **West Asia or the Strait of Hormuz**, can sharply raise prices.
- **Supply disruptions** by major producers like **Qatar** can create global supply shortages.
- **Transport and insurance costs** increase because LNG must be transported at **-160°C in cryogenic tanks**.
- Countries with **limited storage capacity**, such as India, face stronger price volatility.

Implications for India

- Rising LPG prices may affect the affordability of the **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)**.
- Around **30% of natural gas is used for ammonia production for fertilizers**, linking gas prices to agricultural costs.
- Natural gas contributes about **13% of power generation and 21% of City Gas Distribution (CGD)** demand.
- High gas prices often push industries to shift toward **alternative fuels like naphtha or furnace oil**.

OTHER IMPORTANT NEWS OF THE DAY

Places in
News

PORTUGAL

Why in News

- A **Parliamentary delegation from Portugal** recently met the **Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha in India**, highlighting diplomatic engagement.



Geographical Location and

Political Boundaries

- **Portugal** is the **westernmost country of mainland Europe**, situated on the **Iberian Peninsula**.
- It shares a **land border with Spain to the north and east**.
- The country is bounded by the **North Atlantic Ocean to the west and south**.
- Portugal administers two autonomous archipelagos — **Madeira and the Azores**.

Physical Geography and Climate

- The country experiences a **Mediterranean-type climate**, characterised by **hot summers and mild winters**.
- The **Tagus River**, one of the Iberian Peninsula's major rivers, divides Portugal into **mountainous northern regions and plains in the south**.
- The highest point is **Ponta do Pico**, located in the **Azores archipelago**.

Natural Resources and Economic Geography

- Portugal possesses mineral resources such as **iron ore, copper, zinc, tin, tungsten, silver, gold, uranium, marble, clay, and gypsum**.
- The capital city of Portugal is **Lisbon**, a major political and economic centre in Southern Europe.

**Environ-
ment**

NEWLY DISCOVERED FRESHWATER FISH SPECIES

Why in News

- Researchers discovered two new freshwater fish species — **Glyptothorax sentimereni** and **Oreichthys elianae** — in tributaries of the **Brahmaputra River in Nagaland**.

Geographical Context of Discovery

- The species were discovered during **ichthyological surveys in Mokokchung district, Nagaland**.
- Both were found in tributaries of the **Brahmaputra River basin**.



- The discovery highlights the **rich freshwater biodiversity of Northeast India**.

Species Characteristics: **Glyptothorax sentimereni**

- Found in the **rocky stretches of the Dikhu River**.
- It belongs to **torrent-dwelling catfishes** adapted to fast-flowing streams.
- It has an **adhesive organ** that helps it cling to rocks in strong currents.
- Distinct features include **serrations on the dorsal-fin spine** and **folded ventral fins**.

Species Characteristics: **Oreichthys elianae**

- Discovered in a **tributary of the Tsurang River**.
- It measures **just over 2.5 cm in length**.
- It has **bright red fins** and a **black blotch near the tail**.
- It also has an **incomplete lateral line with five pored scales**.

Ecological and Conservation Significance

- The discovery indicates **high endemic biodiversity in the Brahmaputra basin**.
- Freshwater ecosystems face threats from **habitat alteration, pollution, and hydropower projects**.
- Species documentation supports **biodiversity conservation and ecosystem monitoring**.

Defence

SHAHED DRONES

Why in News

- The **United States** recently raised concerns about the operational capabilities of **Iran’s Shahed attack drones**.

Nature and Classification

- These are low-cost **one-way attack unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs)** developed by **Iran**.



- They are often called “**kamikaze**” or **suicide drones** because they explode upon hitting the target.

- Functionally, they operate like **guided missiles but at a much lower cost**.

Variants and Range

- The main variants are **Shahed-131** and **Shahed-136**.
- **Shahed-131** has a range of about **700–900 km**.
- **Shahed-136** can travel **2,000–2,500 km**, enabling long-range strikes.
- In Russia, these drones are called **Geran-1** and **Geran-2**.

Technical Features

- The drones are about **2.5–3 metres long** and weigh around **200 kg at launch**.
- They are launched using a **rocket booster**, followed by propulsion from a **piston engine**.
- Launch platforms include **vehicles or static rail launchers**.

Strategic Significance

- Each drone costs around **\$20,000–\$50,000**, making them cheaper than conventional missiles.
- They are often termed the “**poor man’s cruise missile**.”
- **Swarm attacks** can overwhelm air defence systems.
- Navigation relies on **GPS/GLONASS with an Inertial Navigation System (INS)**.

UTTAR PRADESH IN NEWS

Aerodrome License for Noida International Airport

Why in News

- The **Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA)** granted the **Aerodrome License** to the **Noida International Airport (NIA)** at **Jewar, Uttar Pradesh**.



III The Hindu

Aviation regulator DGCA grants aerodrome license for Noida International Airport

Location and Institutional Framework

- The airport is in **Jewar, Gautam Buddha Nagar district, Uttar Pradesh**.
- It is developed and operated by **Yamuna International Airport Private Limited**, a subsidiary of **Zurich Airport International AG**.
- The project represents a major **Public-Private Partnership (PPP)** involving foreign investment.

Regulatory Approval and Operational Readiness

- The **Aerodrome License** confirms compliance with **International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards**.
- It also meets the **Civil Aviation Requirements (CAR)** prescribed by the **DGCA**.
- Approval followed **successful calibration flights, Instrument Landing System (ILS) validation, and emergency drills**.

Economic and Infrastructure Significance

- The airport is a key component of the **PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan** for integrated infrastructure development.
- It is expected to **reduce congestion at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport**.
- The project will boost the **industrial and logistics economy of Western Uttar Pradesh**.

Regional Development and Urban Planning

- The airport anchors development in the **Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA) region**.
- It supports planned projects such as the **Noida Film City, Medical Device Park, and Apparel Park**.
- The project is expected to transform the **Jewar–Greater Noida corridor into a major economic hub**.