



WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

Coverage of

19 March - 25 March, 2025

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Raisina Dialogue 2025

19th MARCH 2025

Prime Minister's Young Authors Mentorship Scheme (YUVA) Scheme

- **Context:** The Ministry of Education (MoE) and the National Book Trust (NBT) of India launched the third edition of the Prime Minister's Young Authors Mentorship Scheme.

Key Facts

- YUVA 1.0 (launched in May 2021) marked the beginning of the initiative during the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav celebrations, commemorating 75 years of India's independence.
 - Its theme was the National Movement of India, focusing on unsung heroes, little-known facts, and various aspects of the freedom struggle.
- YUVA 2.0 (launched in October 2022) built upon the foundation of YUVA 1.0 with a focus on Democracy as the core theme.
 - It aimed to develop young writers who could explore India's democratic values, traditions, and governance structures.

About PM-YUVA 3.0

- It aims to nurture young writers under 30 years of age, providing them with mentorship and exposure to hone their creative writing skills.
- It builds upon the success of its predecessors, YUVA 1.0 and YUVA 2.0, continuing the government's commitment to fostering literary talent and promoting reading, writing, and book culture in India.
- **It focuses on three themes:** the Contribution of the Indian Diaspora in Nation Building, Indian Knowledge System, and the Makers of Modern India (1950-2025).

Exercise VARUNA 2025

- **Context:** The 23rd edition of the annual naval 'Exercise VARUNA' between India and France has commenced in the Arabian Sea.

About Exercise VARUNA

- It was started in 2001 to enhance interoperability and operational synergy between India and France.
- VARUNA 2025 features a series of drills and manoeuvres involving underwater, surface, and air operations.

Other India-France Exercises

- **Exercise Shakti:** Indian and French Armies
- **Exercise Garuda:** Indian Air Force (IAF) and French Air and Space Force (FASF).

World's Largest White Hydrogen Deposit

- **Context:** France has discovered a massive 46-million-ton white hydrogen reserve in the Moselle region, valued at \$92 trillion.

Key Facts

- White hydrogen, a naturally occurring gas in the Earth's crust, is a relatively new discovery in the energy sector.
- Unlike other forms — gray, brown, blue, and green hydrogen — white hydrogen requires no industrial production and emits no carbon, making it an environmentally superior energy source.
- Its potential is enormous, with deposits found worldwide, including in the US, Russia, Australia, and Europe.

Extraction of Hydrogen

- Hydrogen exists in combination with other elements, so it must be extracted from naturally occurring compounds like water (H₂O).
- Green hydrogen is produced using renewable energy sources (wind, solar, hydropower) through electrolysis—splitting water into hydrogen (H₂) and oxygen (O₂).
 - When the electricity for electrolysis comes from renewable sources, the hydrogen produced is green.

- Grey hydrogen is produced from natural gas using steam methane reforming (SMR), releasing CO₂ and contributing to greenhouse gas emissions.
- Blue hydrogen involves capturing and storing CO₂ emissions from hydrogen production using natural gas.

20th MARCH 2025

Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore

- **Context:** NASA astronauts Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore have finally returned to Earth after a prolonged nine-month stay aboard the International Space Station (ISS).

Key Highlights

- Williams and Wilmore got stuck after technical issues with the spacecraft meant to bring them home.
- They had travelled to the ISS on board Boeing's CST-100 Starliner as part of its first crewed test flight.
 - The mission, under NASA's Commercial Crew Program, aimed to develop private spacecraft for transporting astronauts to and from the station.
 - By outsourcing low-Earth orbit missions, NASA aims to focus on deep space exploration.
- The team descended aboard Elon Musk's SpaceX Dragon capsule.

Squad Alliance

- **Context:** India has been invited to join the multilateral alliance Squad to prevent China's influence in the South China Sea.

Key Highlights

- The Squad is an informal alliance formed in 2024 with countries such as Australia, Japan, the Philippines and the United States. The group now plans to invite India and South Korea to join it.
- The defence forces of this alliance have conducted joint maritime activities in the exclusive economic zone of the Philippines in the South China Sea.

- **Aim:** The Squad's joint maritime activities are aimed at providing strategic responses to tensions in the Philippines' waters in the South China Sea.
- Currently, India is a part of Quad, an alliance of the US, Japan, and Australia, which informally tries to keep a check on China's dominance in the Indo-Pacific region.
- The Quad is a tactical grouping that operates at a higher, more strategic level, across the Indo-Pacific.

21st MARCH 2025

World Happiness Report 2025

- **Context:** The Wellbeing Research Centre has released the World Happiness Report 2025.

Key Facts

- **Published by:** University of Oxford's Wellbeing Research Centre in partnership with Gallup, the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network.
- **Parameters:** Social support, GDP per capita, health, life expectancy, freedom, generosity and perception of corruption.
- **Ranking:** Finland emerged as the 'happiest' country again, followed by Denmark and Iceland.
 - Afghanistan ranked the lowest followed by Sierra Leone and Lebanon.
 - India ranked 118 out of 147 countries, India's lowest ranking was 144 on the list in 2012, while its scores peaked in 2022 at 94.

NOTE:

- The UN declared March 20 as the International Day of Happiness in 2012.
- The concept of World Happiness Day was first proposed by Bhutan in the 1970s, a country known for prioritizing Gross National Happiness over Gross Domestic Product.

Indo-U.S. Cultural Property Agreement

- **Context:** The Cultural Property Agreement (CPA) has been signed with the United States of America (USA).

About Indo-U.S. Cultural Property Agreement

- It aims to prevent smuggling of Indian antiquities.
- The agreement aligns with Article 9 of the 1970 UNESCO Convention, which enables countries whose cultural patrimony is in jeopardy from pillage to seek international cooperation.
- It is preventive in nature and has no timelines or target numbers.
 - So far, 588 antiquities have been repatriated from the USA, out of which 297 received in 2024.
- It has provision for fostering cooperation and mutual understanding in the matters of technical assistance, illicit trade and pillage of cultural property.
- India collaborates with different international organizations including UNESCO and INTERPOL as per requirement.

■ DO YOU KNOW: _____

Initiatives like the Kashi Culture Pathway and the New Delhi Leaders' Declaration (NDLD) 2023 underscore the growing international consensus on the urgent need to combat illicit trafficking.

Project PARI

- **Context:** The Ministry of Culture is committed to preserving public art installations created under the Public Art of India (PARI) project.

About Project PARI (Public Art of India)

- It is an initiative launched by the Ministry of Culture to celebrate and enhance the public art scene in India.
- It is executed by the Lalit Kala Akademi and the National Gallery of Modern Art.
- It showcases India's diverse regional art forms, such as Phad, Thangka, Gond, and Warli, through

over 200 artists. At present, the 'Public Art of India' (PARI) project has been implemented only in Delhi.

- It aims to stimulate dialogue and reflection through public art that blends India's rich cultural heritage with contemporary themes.
- It is a part of continuous effort of the Government in blending India's rich cultural history with contemporary themes in public art by providing incentives to the talented artists.

22nd MARCH 2025

Raisina Dialogue 2025

- **Context:** The 10th edition of the Raisina Dialogue was recently held in New Delhi, bringing together leaders, thinkers, and policymakers from across the globe.

Key Facts

- It was co-hosted by the Observer Research Foundation (ORF) and the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.
- Christopher Luxon, Prime Minister of New Zealand was the Chief Guest.
- The central theme for 2025 was "Kalachakra – People, Peace, and Planet," emphasizing the interconnectedness of humanity, global harmony, and environmental sustainability.
- The dialogue served as a platform to discuss pressing global challenges, including climate change, digital transformation, economic competition, and geopolitical conflicts, aiming to foster collaborative solutions and strengthen international partnerships.
- The dialogue witnessed participation from representatives of over 125 countries, including ministers, former heads of state and government, military commanders & industry leaders etc.

Demands for Grants

- **Context:** The Lok Sabha passed the Demands for Grants for various Ministries for 2025-26, approving an expenditure of over 50 lakh crore.

About Demand for Grants

- It is a proposal for expenditure from the Consolidated Fund, presented to the Lok Sabha as part of the annual financial statement, in accordance with Article 113 of the Constitution.
- It covers revenue & capital expenditure, grants to states/UTs, and loans & advances.
- Every ministry or department of the Government of India presents its own Demand for Grants. Large ministries (e.g., Defence, Railways) may present multiple Demands based on their functional divisions.
- The Lok Sabha has the power to approve, reject, or reduce the proposed amounts, Rajya Sabha does not vote on these demands.
- The demand can only be presented with prior approval from the President.

23rd MARCH 2025

UN World Water Development Report 2025

- **Context:** The United Nations World Water Development Report 2025 – Mountains and Glaciers: Water Towers was released by UNESCO.

Key Highlights

- Glaciers are melting faster than ever, with a significant loss of mass in the last few years.
 - Since 1975, glaciers have lost over 9,000 billion tonnes of mass, equivalent to an ice block the size of Germany.
 - Impurities such as black carbon from wildfires and dust storms are accelerating the melting by increasing the absorption of solar radiation.
- Rising temperatures are causing permafrost to melt, releasing organic carbon into the atmosphere and exacerbating climate change. The thaw also destabilizes slopes, increasing the risk of landslides and other hazards.

- Snow cover has decreased in mountain regions, especially in spring and summer, with further declines expected. A global mean decline of 7.79% in snow cover between 1979 and 2022.
- The impacts of glacier melting and permafrost thaw include erratic water flow, increased risk of glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs), and rising sea levels.
 - GLOFs have caused over 12,000 deaths in the past 200 years.
 - The melting of glaciers contributes to 25-30% of global sea level rise, posing risks to millions of people.

Shaheed Diwas

- **Context:** The Prime Minister paid tributes to Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev on Shaheed Diwas (March 23), which marks the execution of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev in 1931.

Background

- Simon Commission, an all-British panel arrived in India in 1928, to decide on governance, which sparked protests.
 - Lala Lajpat Rai led a protest in Lahore against the Simon Commission.
 - Police Superintendent James A. Scott ordered a baton charge, severely injuring Lajpat Rai, who died on November 17, 1928.
- Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev sought to avenge Lajpat Rai's death and targeted James Scott, but mistakenly killed British officer John Saunders instead.
- The three were arrested, tried, and sentenced to death for Saunders' murder.
- Their martyrdom became a symbol of resistance and inspired countless others to continue the struggle for freedom. The day is observed to remember their courage, patriotism, and ultimate sacrifice.

Key Facts about Bhagat Singh

- Bhagat Singh was a member of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA), a radical revolutionary organization aimed at overthrowing British rule through direct action and armed rebellion.
- Bhagat Singh was deeply influenced by Marxist and anarchist thinkers such as Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin, Leon Trotsky.
- Bhagat Singh became known for his bold actions, including the bombing of the Central Legislative Assembly in Delhi in 1929. The goal was not to kill but to protest against repressive laws.

24th MARCH 2025

Jnanpith Award, 2024

- **Context:** Vinod Kumar Shukla, a poet and writer, was announced as the recipient of the 59th Jnanpith Award for 2024.

About Jnanpith Award

- It is considered the highest literary award in India, given annually for the best creative literary output to writers in any of the 22 languages recognized by the Constitution of India and, from 2013, in the English language.
- The award idea was proposed by Rama Jain to select the best literary work in Indian languages.
- It carries a citation, a bronze replica of 'Vagdevi,' and a cash prize of 11 Lakh.

Literary Works

Vinod Kumar Shukla's career began in 1971 with his poetry collection Lagbhag Jaihind, followed by several other acclaimed works, including novels like Deewar Mein Ek Khidki Rehti Thi and Naukar Ki Kameez, which was adapted into a film.

Tavasya

- **Context:** The Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL) launched Tavasya, the second frigate under Project 1135.6 Additional Follow-on Ships.

Key Facts

- In 2016, India and Russia signed an agreement for four additional Krivak-class frigates, with two imported and two built in India under technology transfer.
 - The first frigate, Tripud, was launched in 2024, with both ships set to be delivered to the Indian Navy by 2026 and 2027.
- Tavasya is the second of the two follow-on Krivak-class stealth frigates.
 - 'Tavasya' named after Bhima's mace, symbolising naval strength
 - Designed to perform surface, sub-surface, and air combat operations.
- Both ships are 124.8 meters long, 15.2 meters wide, with a draught of 4.5 meters and a displacement of approximately 3,600 tonnes. They have a maximum speed of 28 knots.
- Tripud and Tavasya feature indigenous equipment, weapons, and sensors.
- Tavasya marks the likely end of license-built warships in India, as the country is moving towards designing and constructing its own warships.

25th MARCH 2025

Blue Flag Tag

- **Context:** Rushikonda Beach in Visakhapatnam wins back the Blue Flag tag. India currently has 13 beaches with Blue Flag certification.

About Blue Flag Tag

- The Blue Flag is an international eco-label awarded to beaches, marinas, and sustainable boating tourism operators. It is administered by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE), headquartered in Copenhagen, Denmark.
- Recognized globally as a symbol of cleanliness, safety, and environmental sustainability.
- To earn the Blue Flag, a beach/marina must meet 33 strict criteria across four main categories:

- Environmental Education and Information
- Water Quality
- Environmental Management
- Safety and Services

Pay Hike for MPs

- **Context:** The Centre notified a 24% increase in the salaries of MPs with effect from April 1, 2023. The salaries and allowances were last revised in April 2018.

Key Facts

- The increase in the salary has been notified in exercise of the powers granted under the Salary, Allowances and Pension of Members of Parliament Act on the basis of the Cost Inflation Index specified in the Income Tax Act of 1961.
- A Lok Sabha or a Rajya Sabha member will get ₹1.24 lakh a month, up from the ₹1 lakh they receive at present.
- The daily allowance has been increased from ₹2,000 to ₹2,500.
- The pension for former MPs has been increased from 25,000 a month to ₹31,000.
- During their term, MPs are provided with rent-free housing in New Delhi.

AIKEYME and IOS Sagar

- **Context:** The Indian Navy is set to launch two maiden initiatives—AIKEYME and IOS Sagar—aimed at strengthening India's position as the 'Preferred Security Partner' and 'First Responder' in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

About AIKEYME (Africa India Key Maritime Engagement)

- 'AIKEYME', which means 'Unity' in Sanskrit, is a large-scale multilateral maritime exercise with African nations.
- The first edition will be co-hosted by the Indian Navy and the Tanzania Peoples' Defence Force (TPDF).
 - It will take place off the coast of Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, over six days in mid-April 2025.
- Participating nations include Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, and South Africa, alongside the co-hosts.

About Indian Ocean Ship (IOS) Sagar

As part of this initiative, the Indian Naval Ship (INS Sunayna) will be deployed to the Southwest IOR with a combined crew from India and nine Friendly Foreign Countries (FFCs), namely: Comoros, Kenya, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, Sri Lanka and South Africa.

