

Daily Current Affairs

Date : 20 March 2026



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State-Level Awards under the 'Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan'



Why in News?

- Recently, doctors and institutions demonstrating outstanding performance under the 'Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan' were felicitated at the state level.



Key Points:

- Venue:** State Institute of Health and Family Welfare, Jaipur.

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Honored Individuals/Institutions:

S.No.	Category	Awarded Individual/Institution
1.	Government Medical Institution (For identifying maximum high-risk pregnant women and achieving availability of maximum 4 antenatal check-ups)	First - Bhinmal CHC (Jalore) Second - Sumerpur CHC (Pali) Third - Merta CHC (Nagaur)
2.	Individual Award Category for Private Doctors (For excellence in antenatal check-up services)	First - Dr. Ranjana Gupta Second - Dr. Priyanka Maheshwari Third - Dr. Nidhi Bansal

Other Awards:

- Special awards were conferred upon 6 districts in the category of ensuring maximum access to services for pregnant beneficiaries under the PMSA and for conducting PMSA sessions exceeding the set targets.
- In the category of High-Priority Districts, Udaipur, Rajsamand, and Bundi were awarded the first, second, and third prizes, respectively; similarly, among Non-High-Priority Districts, Jaipur-I, Bikaner, and Kota districts received the first, second, and third prizes.

Facts for Prelims (Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan):

- **Launch Date:** June 9, 2016.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW).
- **Objective:** To provide universal, free, and high-quality Antenatal Care (ANC) to pregnant women, with the aim of reducing maternal and infant mortality rates.
- Under this campaign, free check-ups for pregnant women are conducted by obstetricians or doctors at all government health centers on the 9th of every month.

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Launch of the 'Mukhyamantri Viksit Gram Ward Abhiyan'

Why in News?

- On the occasion of Rajasthan Day – 2026 (March 19), the 'Mukhyamantri Viksit Gram Ward Abhiyan' was launched by the Chief Minister.

Key Points:

- Objective:** To formulate a local 'Master Plan' for the development of every village and urban ward in Rajasthan, aligned with the vision of a developed Rajasthan by 2047 (Viksit Rajasthan@2047).
- Duration:** From March 19 to May 15, 2026.
- Under this campaign, 'Gram Sabhas' (Village Assemblies) in all Gram Panchayats across the state, and 'Ward Sabhas' in urban areas, will be organized on March 20, 2026.
- Under this initiative, development plans will be formulated based on local needs and resources, setting short-term (2030), medium-term (2035), and long-term (2047) goals.
- Priorities of this campaign include enhancing employment opportunities at the local level, strengthening basic infrastructure, and improving the standard of living for the general public.

Facts for Prelims:

Prominent Rajasthan Gram Panchayats in Recent News:

- Bamanwas Kankad (Kotputli-Behror):** Rajasthan's first fully organic-certified Gram Panchayat.
- Sawaipura (Pali):** Launch of the 'Smart Village Mission Mode Project' by the 'Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR),' under the Ministry of Science and Technology.
- Pindawal (Dungarpur):** Ranked first in the state in the 'Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI),' released by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj.
- Khairabad (Kota):** Established the state's first steel utensil bank on March 23, 2025.
- Desula (Alwar):** Became the country's first Gram Panchayat in August 2025 where insurance cover was provided to all residents.

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NEWS IN SHORTS

S. No.	News
1.	<p>Rajasthan Sets World Record in Food Safety Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The Food Safety Commissionerate of Rajasthan provided training to over 48,000 food business operators within just two days. This achievement has been recorded in the 'World Book of Records, London'.■ Objective: To ensure the availability of pure and safe food products for the people of the state and to raise awareness among traders regarding food safety standards.
2.	<p>Bhagwan Atlani (Jaipur) receives Sahitya Akademi Award for Sindhi Language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Recently, the Sahitya Akademi selected Jaipur-based litterateur Bhagwan Atlani for the 2025 Sahitya Akademi Award for the Sindhi language.■ Title of the Work: "Waghu" — a collection of Sindhi short stories.
3.	<p>MoU Signed Between the Department of Watershed Development & Soil Conservation and AIWC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ A significant Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was recently signed between Rajasthan's Department of Watershed Development and Soil Conservation and the Australia-India Water Centre (AIWC).■ The primary objective of this agreement is to facilitate the exchange of the latest Australian and Indian technologies in the fields of water management, soil conservation, and safe drinking water.

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4.

"Birding by Ear" Initiative

- The Ajmer Forest Division has recently launched the "Birding by Ear" initiative to make nature more accessible to everyone.
- Under the "Birding by Ear" initiative, visually impaired children are taught to identify birds by listening to their calls.
- This unique initiative—the first of its kind in the state—demonstrates a strong commitment to inclusivity, dignity, and equal access to nature.

5.

Deputy Chief Minister Diya Kumari Conferred with Honorary D.Litt. Degree

- Recently, Deputy Chief Minister Diya Kumari has been conferred with an honorary Doctor of Literature (D.Litt.) degree by IIS (Deemed to be) University, Jaipur.
- The University bestowed this honor upon her in recognition of her distinguished contributions to the fields of social and community service.

6.

Vasudev Devnani Conferred with Honorary Title of 'Vidya Vachaspati'

- The Chancellor and Governor of Rajasthan, Haribhau Bagde, recently conferred the honorary title of 'Vidya Vachaspati' upon the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Vasudev Devnani.
- This title has been bestowed upon him by the Bikaner Technical University in recognition of his outstanding innovations in the fields of education and society.
- The Speaker of the Rajasthan Legislative Assembly is the first Speaker among the country's legislative bodies to be honored with the honorary title of 'Vidya Vachaspati' for exceptional innovations in the spheres of education and society.

7. **"India's World Heritage: Rajasthan" Exhibition: Jodhpur**
- **Organizer:** National Archives, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Government of India.
 - **Duration:** From March 14 to March 23, 2026.
 - **Venue:** Jai Narain Vyas University (JNVU), Jodhpur.
 - This exhibition showcases the rich heritage of Rajasthan's prominent cultural regions: Mewar, Marwar, Dhundhar, and Hadoti.
 - The National Archives is an attached office under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India. It was established on March 11, 1891, in Kolkata (then Calcutta) as the 'Imperial Record Department'.
8. **AI-Powered 'Electronic Nose' Developed by IIT Jodhpur**
- Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Jodhpur have developed an AI-powered 'Electronic Nose' capable of detecting diseases through human breath.
 - This technology identifies the early symptoms of diseases by analyzing Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) present in the breath.
9. **Rajasthan in the "Community Radio Movement in India" Scheme**
- The Central Government is implementing a Central Sector Scheme titled 'Community Radio Movement in India' to promote community-based broadcasting across the country.
 - During the period from April 2021 to February 2026, financial assistance has been provided to a total of 149 community radio stations nationwide under this scheme, including 8 stations from Rajasthan.
10. **Chief Minister Flags Off 207 New Buses**
- On the occasion of Rajasthan Day, the Chief Minister flagged off and launched 207 new buses belonging to the Rajasthan State Road Transport Corporation (RSRTC) from Jaipur.
 - These buses include 100 'Blueline Express' buses, 79 'Starline' buses, and 28 air-conditioned buses inducted into the RSRTC's service fleet.



India Becomes Host Nation for the 'World Athletics Indoor Championships – 2028'



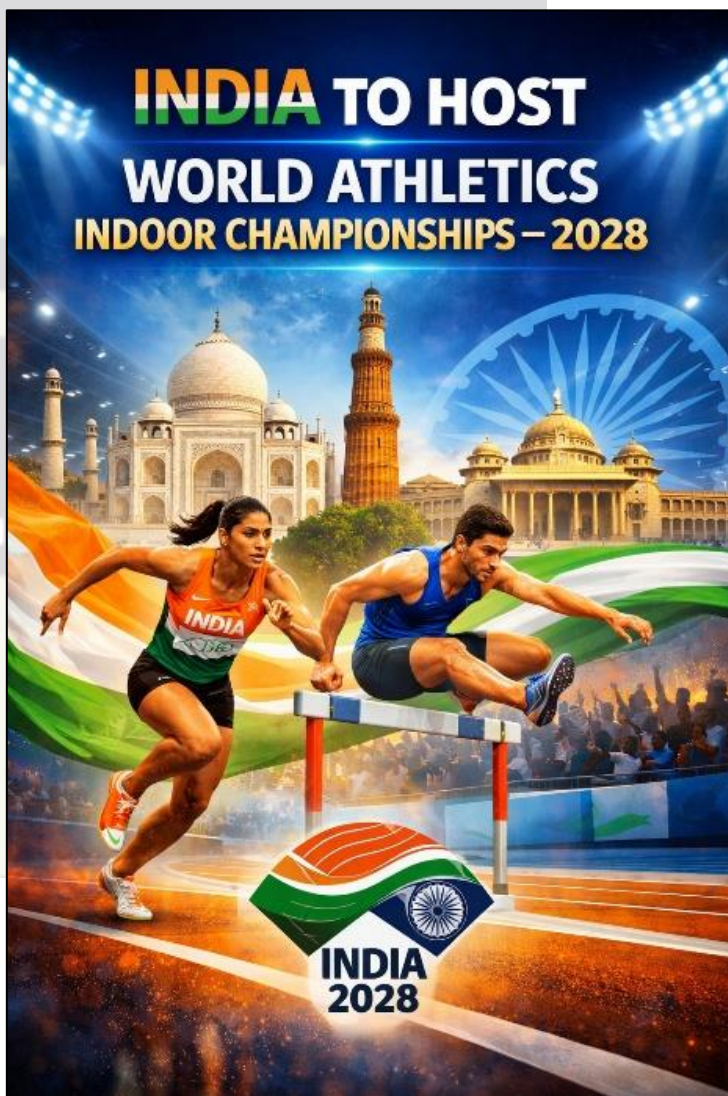
Why in News?

- During a meeting of the World Athletics Council held in Toruń, Poland, India was awarded the hosting rights for the 'World Athletics Indoor Championships – 2028'.



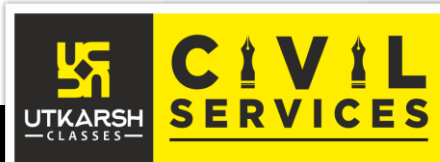
Key Points:

- This marks the first time that India will host a global track and field championship. Furthermore, following Japan (1999), Qatar (2010), and China (2025), India becomes the fourth Asian nation to achieve this distinction.
- **Venue of the Competition:** Bhubaneswar, Odisha.
- **Duration:** From March 3 to 5, 2028.
- All events of the championship will take place at the Kalinga Indoor Athletics Stadium in Bhubaneswar.



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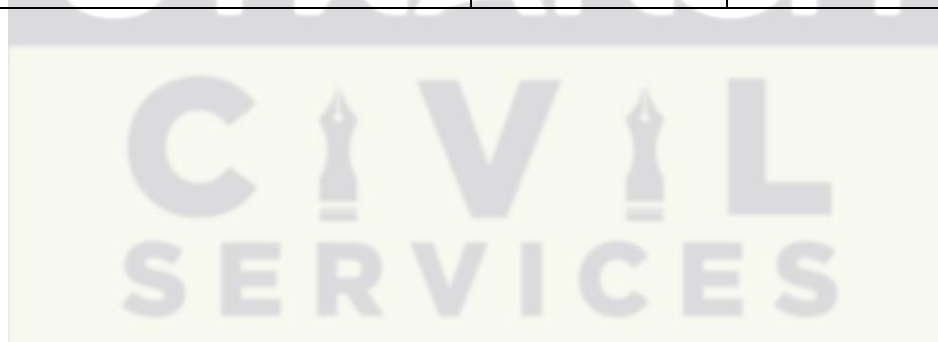
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Facts for Prelims:

International Competitions Hosted in India in Recent Times:

Event	Sport	Venue
ICC Women's Cricket World Cup – 2025	Cricket	Various cities
World Boxing Cup Final	Boxing	New Delhi
Syed Modi India International	Badminton	Lucknow
Men's FIH Hockey Junior World Cup	Hockey	Chennai/Madurai
WSF Squash World Cup	Squash	Chennai
ICC Men's T20 World Cup - 2026	Cricket	Various cities
Asian Weightlifting Championship	Weightlifting	Ahmedabad
BWF World Championship 2026	Badminton	New Delhi



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Vikram Doraiswami



Key Points:

- **Status:** A senior diplomat and a 1992-batch Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officer, appointed on March 19, 2026, as India's next Ambassador to China. Currently serves as India's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom.
- **Current Status (as of March 2026):** Appointed to succeed Pradeep Kumar Rawat in Beijing. This move is seen as a major step in stabilising India-China relations following the 2020-2024 Ladakh standoff.



Previous Major Roles:

- **High Commissioner to the UK (2022–2026):** Key figure during the India-UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations, which were signed in July 2025.
- **High Commissioner to Bangladesh (2020–2022):** Managed critical "Neighbourhood First" policy initiatives and connectivity projects.
- **Ambassador to South Korea (2015–2018) & Uzbekistan (2014–2015).**

Economic Developments

NPCI BHIM Services Limited (NBSL) & M.S. Dhoni Partnership

Why in News?

- In March 2026, NPCI BHIM Services Limited (NBSL) appointed former Indian cricket captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni as the brand ambassador for its digital payments platform, BHIM (Bharat Interface for Money).



Key Points:

- New Brand Vision:** With this partnership, BHIM has been repositioned as "Bharat Ka Apna Payments App" (India's Own Payments App).
- Strategic Objective:** The primary goal is to promote Trust and Simplicity in digital payments, specifically targeting Tier-2, Tier-3 cities, and rural India.
- Organizational Structure:** The management of the BHIM app is now handled by NBSL, which is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).
- Competition & Inclusion:** This move is part of a strategy to increase BHIM's market share among private fintech giants (like PhonePe and Google Pay) and to strengthen Financial Inclusion.

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Important Facts for Examinations:

- **BHIM App:** Launched on December 30, 2016. It is based on UPI (Unified Payments Interface).
- **Formation of NBSL:** NPCI created this separate entity (NBSL) to make BHIM's operations more focused and commercial.
- **Technology Foundation:** It is based on UPI technology, which is an advanced version of IMPS (Immediate Payment Service).

Key Technical Features:

- **Three-level Authentication:** Security is ensured through Device Binding, App PIN, and UPI PIN.
- **Without Internet (USSD-based):** A major feature of BHIM is that it can be used on feature phones without internet by dialing *99#.
- **Multilingual Support:** It currently supports 20 Indian and International languages, making it accessible to rural India.
- **Payment Methods:** Payments can be made via Virtual Payment Address (VPA), Mobile Number, QR Code, and Aadhaar Number (Aadhaar-linked accounts).
- **Regulator:** The overall regulation of UPI and BHIM is conducted by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

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Schemes and Policies

Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojna(BHAVYA)

Why in News?

- With a view to accelerating industrial development, the Union Cabinet recently approved the Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojna (BHAVYA).

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BHAVYA
Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojna

Cabinet approves **Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojna (BHAVYA)** to develop **100 plug-and-play industrial parks** with an allocation of **₹ 33,660 crore**

Scheme aims to develop **world-class industrial infrastructure**, unlocking manufacturing potential and driving India's growth story

Industrial parks from **100 to 1000 acres** to be developed with support of up to **₹ 1 crore per acre**

BHAVYA to be implemented with **states and private sector**, under the **National Industrial Corridor Development Programme** framework

CABINET DECISION
18-03-2026

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Key Points:

- **Target:** Under this scheme, the objective is to develop 100 'Plug-and-Play' industrial parks across the country.
- **Plug-and-Play Model:** This implies that industries will find pre-approved land, electricity, water, roads, and other basic amenities ready for use, enabling companies to commence their production without any delays.
- **Objective:** To create world-class industrial infrastructure and unlock manufacturing potential.
- **Implementing Agency:** National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation Limited (NICDC), under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- Under this scheme, industrial parks ranging in size from 100 to 1,000 acres will be selected for development. Additionally, financial assistance of up to ₹1 crore per acre will be provided for core infrastructure, value-added infrastructure, and social infrastructure.

Beneficiaries under the Scheme:

- **Primary Beneficiaries:** Manufacturing units, MSMEs, startups, and global investors requiring ready-to-use industrial infrastructure.
- **Secondary Beneficiaries:** Workers, logistics service providers, service sector enterprises, and local communities.

Small Hydro Power (SHP) Development Scheme

Why in News?

- The Union Cabinet recently approved the Small Hydro Power (SHP) Development Scheme. The primary objective of this scheme is to deliver clean energy to the remote and rural areas of the country.

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SMALL HYDRO POWER (SHP) DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

- Cabinet approves **Small Hydro Power (SHP) Development Scheme** for FY 2026-27 to FY 2030-31 with an outlay of ₹ 2584.60 crore for approx. 1500 MW capacity
- Scheme to support **small hydro projects (1-25 MW)** across states, especially benefiting hilly and **North Eastern states**
- Central Financial assistance up to ₹ 3.6 crore per MW or 30% of project cost for **North Eastern states and border districts**, with a cap of ₹ 30 crore per project
- Central Financial assistance up to ₹ 2.4 crore per MW or 20% of project cost for **other states**, with a cap of ₹ 20 crore per project

CABINET DECISION- 18-03-2026



Key Points:

- **Duration:** From the Financial Year 2026-27 to 2030-31.
- This scheme will facilitate the installation of small hydro projects (with a capacity of 1–25 MW) across various states, thereby specifically benefiting the hilly and North-Eastern states, where the potential for such projects is immense.
- **Target:** To establish small hydro projects with a cumulative capacity of approximately 1,500 Megawatts (MW) over the next 5 years.
- **Implementation:** By Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE).
- **Note:** In India, projects with a capacity ranging from 1 to 25 MW are categorized as 'Small Hydro Power' (SHP) projects.
- Under this scheme, it is mandatory for 100 percent of the machinery and equipment to be manufactured within India.

Financial Assistance (CFA)

Region	Financial Assistance	Maximum Limit
Northeastern states and border districts	₹3.6 crore per megawatt	₹30 crore
All other states	₹2.4 crore per megawatt	₹20 crore



World happiness report



Key Points:

1. Report Overview

- **Release Date:** 19 March 2026 (Released annually around the International Day of Happiness, March 20).
- **Edition:** 14th edition (First released in 2012).
- **Publishing Bodies:** Produced by the Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford, in partnership with Gallup and the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (UNSDSN).
- **2026 Theme:** "Happiness and Social Media".

2. India's Performance (Key points for Prelims/Mains)

- **Rank:** 116th out of 147 countries.
- **Trend:** Marginal improvement from 118th in 2025 and 126th in 2024.
- **Life Evaluation Score:** 4.536 out of 10.
- **Regional Comparison:** India lags behind Nepal (99th) and Pakistan (104th) but ranks ahead of Bangladesh (127th) and Sri Lanka (134th).
- **Strengths vs. Weaknesses:**
 - o **Strengths:** Perception of corruption (64th), Generosity (78th), and Freedom (61st).
 - o **Weaknesses:** Social support (123rd) and GDP per capita (89th) are major drags on the overall score.

3. Global Rankings & Trends

- **Happiest Nation:** Finland (Topped for the 9th consecutive year).
- **Top 5:** Finland, Iceland, Denmark, Costa Rica (highest-ever ranking for a Latin American nation), and Sweden.
- **Unhappiest Nation:** Afghanistan (147th), followed by Sierra Leone (146th) and Malawi (145th).
- **English-Speaking Nations:** None in the Top 10 for the second year (USA: 23rd, Canada: 5th, UK: 29th).

4. Methodology: The 6 Key Parameters

- The rankings are based on the Cantrill Ladder (self-reported life satisfaction) and explained by six variables:
 1. GDP per capita (Purchasing Power Parity)
 2. Social Support (Having someone to count on)
 3. Healthy Life Expectancy
 4. Freedom to make life choices
 5. Generosity (Donations to charity)
 6. Perceptions of Corruption (Government and business)
- **Special Focus in 2026: Social Media & Youth**
- **Youth Well-being Crisis:** A sharp decline in happiness among those under 25 in Western nations.
- **Screen Time Correlation:** Heavy use (5+ hours/day) correlates with significantly lower life satisfaction, especially among teenage girls.
- **Optimal Use:** Moderate social media use (<1 hour/day) is linked to higher well-being than no use at all.