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Current Affairs Today – March 2, 2026

2 March 2026

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WHY IN NEWS

March 2, 2026 featured several significant developments: India and Canada launched CEPA negotiations with a \$50 billion bilateral trade target; Exercise Vayushakti-26 at Pokhran showcased 130+ aircraft before President Murmu; INS Anjadip — India’s third anti-submarine warfare craft — was commissioned; DRDO successfully tested the VSHORADS man-portable missile; PM Modi became the first Indian PM to address the Israeli Knesset; and Tamil Nadu inaugurated its first Dark Sky Park at Kolli Hills.

INDIA–CANADA CEPA NEGOTIATIONS LAUNCHED

Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** and Canadian Prime Minister **Mark Carney** held delegation-level talks at **Hyderabad House, New Delhi** on March 2, 2026, formally launching negotiations for a **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)** with the release of **Terms of Reference (ToR)**.

India set a bilateral trade target of **USD 50 billion by 2030** — up from the current ~USD 8–9 billion. Priority sectors identified include pharmaceuticals, iron and steel, seafood, cotton garments, electronics, chemicals, pulses, coal, fertilisers, paper, and crude petroleum.

India's CEPA network includes agreements with the UAE (2022), Australia (2022), and Mauritius (2021). Negotiations with the EU, UK, and Canada had been stalled — the India-Canada launch is significant because relations had severely deteriorated in 2023 following the Nijjar assassination controversy.

UPSC Angle — GS-2 (IR) / GS-3 (Economy): CEPA = Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (broader than FTA — includes goods, services, investment, IP). Compare: FTA (Free Trade Agreement) covers goods only. India's Ministry of Commerce negotiates CEPAs. Mark Carney became Canada's PM in March 2025, succeeding Justin Trudeau. India-Canada trade: India exports pharma, textiles, IT services; imports pulses, coal, potash fertilisers.

EXERCISE VAYUSHAKTI-26 — IAF'S LARGEST AIR COMBAT SHOWCASE

Exercise Vayushakti-26 was conducted at the **Pokhran Field Firing Range, Jaisalmer, Rajasthan** — the Indian Air Force's premier firepower demonstration exercise. President **Droupadi Murmu** attended as Chief Guest.

The exercise featured **over 130 aircraft** in a simulated live combat theatre format — the first time this format was used. Aircraft participating included: **Rafale, Su-30 MKI, Mirage-2000, MiG-29, Jaguar, Hawk** (trainers), **C-130J, C-295, C-17** (transport), **ALH Dhruv** (helicopter), and **LCH Prachand** (light combat helicopter).

Pokhran is also the site of India's nuclear tests — **Pokhran-I (Operation Smiling Buddha, 1974)** and **Pokhran-II (Operation Shakti, 1998)**.

UPSC Angle — GS-3 (Defence): LCH Prachand = India's first indigenously developed light combat helicopter (HAL); entered IAF service 2022. Rafale = French multirole fighter; India operates 36 aircraft (IAF) + 26 for Navy (on order). The Pokhran range falls under Rajasthan's Thar Desert — also relevant for Geography (Thar Desert ecology, arid zone). Vayushakti exercises are held every 4–5 years.

EXERCISE KALARI LEAP — IAF–NAVY MARITIME JOINT EXERCISE

The **Indian Air Force’s Southern Air Command** conducted **Exercise Kalari Leap** — a joint maritime exercise over the **Lakshadweep and Minicoy archipelago** in the **Arabian Sea**. Partners included the **Armed Forces Special Operations Division** and the **Indian Coast Guard**.

Assets deployed: **AN-32 transport aircraft, Mi-17V5 helicopters, and Su-30MKI fighters**. The exercise focused on maritime domain awareness, inter-service coordination, and protecting India’s island territories and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

UPSC Angle — GS-3 (Security): Lakshadweep is India’s only coral atoll territory — strategically significant in the Arabian Sea, proximate to major shipping lanes. India’s EEZ extends 200 nautical miles from the baseline. The **Southern Air Command** is headquartered at **Thiruvananthapuram**. Joint exercises between IAF, Navy, and Coast Guard reflect India’s Integrated Theatre Commands push.

INS ANJADIP COMMISSIONED — THIRD ASW SHALLOW WATER CRAFT

INS Anjadip, India’s **third Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASW SWC)**, was commissioned on **February 27, 2026** at **Chennai Port**, in the presence of **Admiral Dinesh Kumar Tripathi**, Chief of Naval Staff.

Parameter	Details
Builder	Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata
Indigenous content	Over 80%
Length	77 metres
Displacement	1,400 tonnes
Speed	25 knots (water-jet propulsion)
Role	Anti-submarine warfare in shallow coastal waters
Named after	Anjadip Island, Karwar, Karnataka

UPSC Angle — GS-3 (Defence/Indigenisation): GRSE (Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers) is a **Defence PSU** under the Ministry of Defence — it also built INS Vikrant’s LCVPs. ASW capability is critical as the Indian Ocean sees increasing submarine activity from China (PLA-N). India’s indigenisation push under **IDEX (Innovations for Defence Excellence)** and **DPIIT’s Defence corridor** targets 70% domestic procurement by 2027.

DRDO'S VSHORADS — THREE CONSECUTIVE SUCCESSFUL TRIALS

The **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** successfully conducted **three consecutive flight trials** of the **VSHORADS (Very Short Range Air Defence System)** missile at the **Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur, Odisha**.

VSHORADS is a **man-portable air defence system (MANPADS)** — a shoulder-fired missile designed to destroy **low-altitude aerial threats** including aircraft, helicopters, UAVs, and drones. It is developed indigenously under the **Atmanirbhar Bharat** initiative as a replacement for the ageing **Igla** (Russian MANPADS) in service with the Indian Army and Air Force.

UPSC Angle — GS-3 (Defence/S&T): MANPADS = shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles; effective up to ~5–6 km altitude. ITR Chandipur (Odisha) = India's primary missile test range on the Bay of Bengal coast, managed by DRDO. Other DRDO missiles tested at Chandipur: Akash, Prahar, Prithvi. VSHORADS is distinct from the **Sky Sting** (Israel, 6th-gen BVRAAM) that was also in news around this period.

PM MODI'S ISRAEL VISIT — FIRST INDIAN PM TO ADDRESS KNESSET

Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** visited Israel on **February 25–26, 2026** — a landmark visit that included:

Address to the Israeli Knesset (Parliament) — first Indian Prime Minister to do so

Visit to Yad Vashem — Israel's Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem

Receipt of the Speaker of the Knesset Medal — first Indian PM to receive this honour

Signing of bilateral agreements covering geophysical exploration, maritime heritage, culture, digital payments, agriculture, AI, fisheries, and cybersecurity

Announcement of Special Strategic Partnership for Peace, Innovation, and Prosperity

India–Israel relations were upgraded to a **Strategic Partnership** in 2017 during Modi's first visit to Israel (the first ever by an Indian PM). Israel is one of India's top defence suppliers alongside Russia and France.

UPSC Angle — GS-2 (IR): Yad Vashem = Israel's official memorial to Holocaust victims; located on Mount of Remembrance, Jerusalem. The Knesset = Israel's 120-member unicameral parliament. India abstained on multiple UN resolutions condemning Israel (2023–24 Gaza conflict) — reflecting India's "calibrated engagement" doctrine. India imports defence equipment, agricultural technology (drip irrigation), and cybersecurity solutions from Israel.

INDIA–GERMANY CLIMATE RESILIENCE INITIATIVE — €20 MILLION GRANT

Germany announced a **€20 million grant** to India under a **Climate Resilience Initiative**, with the announcement made by German State Secretary **Jochen Flasbarth**. The initiative targets five ecological zones: **Himalayas, island regions, Western Ghats, Northeast India, and Lower Gangetic floodplains**.

Interventions include forest restoration, biodiversity corridors, flood control infrastructure, and groundwater recharge projects. The initiative supports India's **National Adaptation Plan (NAP)** — India's framework for building long-term climate resilience.

UPSC Angle — GS-3 (Environment/IR): India-Germany bilateral cooperation falls under the **Indo-German Green and Sustainable Development Partnership (2022)**. Germany is one of India's largest development cooperation partners. NAP = National Adaptation Plan (under UNFCCC's adaptation framework; India submitted its NAP in 2023). Compare with **NDC** (Nationally Determined Contribution — India's mitigation commitment under Paris Agreement).

TAMIL NADU'S FIRST DARK SKY PARK — KOLLI HILLS

Tamil Nadu inaugurated its **first Dark Sky Park** at **Ariyur Shola Reserve Forest, Kolli Hills, Namakkal district**, at a cost of **₹1 crore**. The park features **three advanced telescopes** and **solar-powered infrastructure**, and is operational from **January 15 to June 15** annually.

India's **first official Dark Sky Park** was designated at **Pench Tiger Reserve, Maharashtra** in 2024. Dark Sky Parks are designated areas with minimal light pollution, enabling astronomical observation and raising awareness about the harm of artificial light pollution to wildlife, ecosystems, and human health.

UPSC Angle — GS-3 (Environment/Biodiversity): Light pollution is a **non-chemical form of environmental pollution** — it disrupts nocturnal animal behaviour, bird migration, marine turtle nesting, and insect activity. Kolli Hills is part of the **Eastern Ghats** (not Western Ghats — a common confusion). Namakkal district is also known for poultry farming and transport industry. Dark Sky designations are by the **International Dark-Sky Association (IDA)**, headquartered in the USA.

DRDO VSHORADS VS SKY STING — TWO AIR DEFENCE MISSILES IN NEWS

While India tested its indigenous **VSHORADS MANPADS** at Chandipur, Israel's **Sky Sting** — a **6th-generation Beyond-Visual-Range Air-to-Air Missile (BVRAAM)** — was also in news in the context of the ongoing West Asia conflict. Sky Sting is an air-launched missile designed to engage targets beyond pilot visual range at extended distances.

UPSC Angle — GS-3 (Defence): BVRAAM = Beyond Visual Range Air-to-Air Missile; engages targets the pilot cannot see, using radar guidance. India's indigenous BVRAAM: **Astra** (developed by DRDO; Mach 4+ speed; integrated on Su-30 MKI and Tejas). MANPADS are ground-launched; BVRAAMs are air-launched — different categories entirely.

DEBRIGARH WILDLIFE SANCTUARY — INDIAN BISON FEST

Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary in **Bargarh district, Odisha** hosted the **Indian Bison (Gaur) Fest** — a conservation and ecotourism event highlighting the sanctuary's **Gaur (Indian Bison, *Bos gaurus*)** population. Debrigarh lies adjacent to the **Hirakud Reservoir** on the **Mahanadi River** and covers an area of **346.91 sq km**.

UPSC Angle — GS-3 (Biodiversity): Gaur (*Bos gaurus*) = the largest wild bovine species in the world; listed as **Vulnerable** on the IUCN Red List (since 1986); protected under **Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972** (highest protection). Hirakud Dam = India's first major multipurpose river valley project post-independence; completed 1953, inaugurated by PM Nehru on January 13, 1957; on Mahanadi (Odisha). Debrigarh is NOT a Tiger Reserve — a common exam trap.

GUJARAT SEMICONNECT CONFERENCE 2026 — SEMICONDUCTOR ECOSYSTEM

The **Gujarat SemiConnect Conference 2026** was held on **March 1–2** at **Mahatma Mandir, Gandhinagar**, focusing on strengthening India's **semiconductor ecosystem**. The event brought together global chipmakers, investors, and policymakers.

India's semiconductor push is anchored by the **India Semiconductor Mission (ISM)** under the **₹76,000 crore semiconductor incentive scheme** (approved 2022). Key approved projects: **Tata Electronics** (semiconductor fab, Dholera, Gujarat) and **CG Power** (OSAT facility, Sanand, Gujarat) — both supported under the scheme.

UPSC Angle — GS-3 (Economy/S&T): ISM = India Semiconductor Mission (under MeitY). Semiconductor fabrication requires ultra-pure water, stable power, and precision engineering. Dholera SIR (Special Investment Region) is India's first greenfield smart city and a designated semiconductor zone. Gandhinagar (not Ahmedabad) is Gujarat's capital.

INTERNATIONAL MALARIA CONFERENCE 2026 — NEW DELHI

The **International Malaria Conference (IMC) 2026** concluded in **New Delhi** after three days of scientific discussions aimed at accelerating malaria elimination efforts. India has committed to **malaria elimination by 2027** under its **National Framework for Malaria Elimination (NFME) 2016–2030**.

India accounts for approximately **2–3% of global malaria cases** — a significant reduction from over 75% of South-East Asia’s burden a decade ago, driven by indoor residual spraying, insecticide-treated bed nets, and improved diagnostics.

UPSC Angle — GS-3 (Health): Malaria is caused by *Plasmodium* parasites transmitted by *Anopheles* mosquitoes. India’s target: elimination (< 1 case per 1,000 population at risk) by 2027; zero indigenous transmission by 2030. The **WHO Global Malaria Report** tracks progress. Key drugs: Chloroquine (P. vivax), Artemisinin-based Combination Therapy or ACT (P. falciparum). High burden states: Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Meghalaya.

PERSONS IN NEWS

Utsav Charan Das (1946–2026)

Padma Shri awardee **Utsav Charan Das** passed away on **February 26, 2026** in Choudwar, Cuttack, Odisha, at age **80**. Born on **April 14, 1945** in **Manian village, Choudwar, Cuttack district**, Odisha, he was the foremost practitioner of **Chaiti Ghoda Nacha** — a traditional Odia folk dance form depicting scenes from the Mahabharata and Ramayana performed with a decorated horse costume. He received the **Padma Shri in 2020** and had a performing career spanning over **60 years**. He founded **Sangeet Kala Sansad** in 1964 to train students in the art form.

UPSC RELEVANCE

India-Canada CEPA, Terms of Reference, Mark Carney; Vayushakti-26 (Pokhran, LCH Prachand, Rafale); Kalari Leap (Lakshadweep, Southern Air Command); INS Anjadip (GRSE, ASW SWC, Anjadip Island, Karwar); VSHORADS (MANPADS, Chandipur ITR); Sky Sting (Israel, BVRAAM); PM Modi–Knesset (first Indian PM), Yad Vashem, Medal of Knesset; India-Germany Climate Resilience (€20M, NAP); Tamil Nadu Dark Sky Park (Kolli Hills, Namakkal; Pench = India’s first); Debrigarh WLS (Gaur/Indian Bison, Hiraakud, Mahanadi, Bargarh); Gujarat SemiConnect (ISM, Dholera, ₹76,000 crore); IMC 2026 (malaria elimination, NFME 2016–2030).

MAINS GS-2:

India-Canada relations; India-Israel relations; India’s neighbourhood and major power diplomacy.

MAINS GS-3:

Defence indigenisation; India’s semiconductor policy; malaria elimination.

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

INDIA–CANADA CEPA:

Launched: March 2, 2026 | Venue: Hyderabad House, New Delhi

Canadian PM: Mark Carney (succeeded Trudeau, March 2025)

Trade target: USD 50 billion by 2030 (current: ~USD 8–9B)

CEPA vs FTA: CEPA covers goods + services + investment + IP; FTA covers goods only

EXERCISE VAYUSHAKTI-26:

Location: Pokhran Field Firing Range, Jaisalmer, Rajasthan

Chief Guest: President Droupadi Murmu

Aircraft: 130+ (Rafale, Su-30 MKI, Mirage-2000, MiG-29, Jaguar, Hawk, C-130J, C-295, C-17, ALH Dhruv, LCH Prachand)

First time: Simulated live combat theatre format

Pokhran also: Nuclear tests — Pokhran-I (1974, Smiling Buddha) + Pokhran-II (1998, Operation Shakti)

INS ANJADIP:

Type: Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASW SWC) — 3rd in class

Commissioned: February 27, 2026 | Chennai Port

Builder: GRSE (Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers), Kolkata

Specs: 77m, 1,400 tonnes, 25 knots, 80%+ indigenous content

Named after: Anjadip Island, Karwar, Karnataka

VSHORADS:

Full form: Very Short Range Air Defence System

Type: MANPADS (Man-Portable Air Defence System) — shoulder-fired

Tested at: ITR (Integrated Test Range), Chandipur, Odisha

Replaces: Igla (Russian MANPADS)

Targets: Low-altitude aircraft, helicopters, UAVs, drones

PM MODI'S ISRAEL VISIT (FEB 25–26, 2026):

First Indian PM to address Israeli Knesset

First Indian PM to receive Speaker of the Knesset Medal

Visited: Yad Vashem (Holocaust memorial, Jerusalem)

New partnership: Special Strategic Partnership for Peace, Innovation, Prosperity

India-Israel relations upgraded to Strategic Partnership: 2017

TAMIL NADU DARK SKY PARK:

Location: Ariyur Shola RF, Kolli Hills, Namakkal district (Eastern Ghats)

Cost: ₹1 crore | Features: 3 telescopes, solar-powered

Season: January 15 – June 15 annually

India's first Dark Sky Park: Pench Tiger Reserve, Maharashtra (2024) — also Asia's 5th

DEBRIGARH WILDLIFE SANCTUARY:

Location: Bargarh district, Odisha

Key species: Gaur (Indian Bison, *Bos gaurus*) — IUCN Vulnerable, WPA Schedule I

Adjacent to: Hirakud Reservoir (Mahanadi River) — India's first major multipurpose dam (completed 1953, inaugurated 1957)

NOT a Tiger Reserve

INDIA SEMICONDUCTOR MISSION:

Budget: ₹76,000 crore scheme (2022)

Nodal agency: ISM under MeitY

Key approved projects: Tata Electronics fab (Dholera SIR, Gujarat), CG Power OSAT (Sanand, Gujarat)

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

Gaur (*Bos gaurus*): world's largest wild bovine species; also called Indian Bison (misnomer — it is not a true bison)

Hirakud Dam: River Mahanadi; Odisha; completed 1953 (inaugurated by PM Nehru on January 13, 1957); 25.8 km long (world's longest earthen dam when built)

GRSE: Defence PSU, Kolkata; also built patrol vessels, survey vessels, fleet tankers

Malaria elimination target: India 2027 (< 1 case/1,000 pop); zero transmission 2030

Utsav Charan Das: Padma Shri 2020; Chaiti Ghoda Nacha (Odia folk dance); born April 14, 1945, Manian, Cuttack; died Feb 26, 2026 at age 80; founded Sangeet Kala Sansad (1964)

Sources: [AffairsCloud](#), [GKToday](#), [PIB](#)

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