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# Current Affairs Today - March 12, 2026

12 March 2026

## SUBJECTS COVERED

**IR****ECONOMY****SCIENCE & TECH****HISTORY & CULTURE**

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12 March 2026 · 6 min read

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## ✎ WHY IN NEWS

March 12, 2026 brought together external shock, technological change, scientific infrastructure, and historical memory: the geoeconomic impact of the West Asia conflict on India's energy security, the task-level disruption caused by AI in labour markets, the proposed high-energy proton accelerator at Visakhapatnam for thorium utilisation, and the 96th anniversary of the Dandi March.

## WEST ASIA CONFLICT CARRIES A DIRECT GEOECONOMIC RISK FOR INDIA

The **US-Israel-Iran conflict environment** matters to India because West Asia affects multiple parts of the Indian economy at once: **crude oil prices, shipping costs, insurance premiums, fertiliser supply, diaspora welfare** (approximately **9 million Indians** live in the Gulf), and broader investor sentiment. The key vulnerability is maritime disruption around the **Strait of Hormuz**, through which approximately **20 million barrels of crude oil per day** transit — roughly **20% of global oil consumption**.

India imports approximately **87% of its crude oil** (as of 2024-25), with consumption at roughly **5.5 million barrels per day**. Approximately **50% of India's crude imports** pass through the Strait of Hormuz, though this share has been declining as India diversifies towards Russian crude (now about **one-third of imports**) and other non-Hormuz sources. By March 2026, India has reportedly rerouted **70% of crude imports** away from Hormuz through alternative maritime routes. India imports crude from approximately **40 countries**.

This means geopolitical instability in West Asia quickly becomes a macroeconomic issue, affecting inflation, the current-account deficit, and fiscal calculations. India's **Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR)** facilities at **Visakhapatnam, Mangaluru, and Padur** hold approximately **5.33 million metric tonnes** (~9.5 days

of consumption), providing a limited buffer. For UPSC, the topic is a strong example of how international relations and economics cannot be separated.

## AI WILL RESHAPE JOBS THROUGH BOTH AUTOMATION AND AUGMENTATION

The discussion on **AI and the labour market** is often framed too narrowly as a story of job loss. The more accurate picture is that AI causes **task-level disruption**. Some roles become partially automated, some become more productive through augmentation, and entirely new functions emerge in data curation, model oversight, prompt engineering, and digital operations. The **International Labour Organization (ILO)** and the **World Economic Forum (WEF)** have emphasised that the net employment effect depends heavily on policy responses, not just technology.

For India, the issue is especially important because the economy combines a large services sector (contributing over **50% of GDP**), a young workforce (median age approximately **28 years**), major informal employment (over **90% of the workforce**), and a growing digital platform ecosystem. The policy challenge is therefore not only reskilling — through initiatives like **Skill India Mission** and the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** — but also redesigning education, vocational systems, and labour-market transitions for a world where work changes faster than curriculum.

## A HIGH-ENERGY PROTON ACCELERATOR WOULD STRENGTHEN INDIA'S RESEARCH ECOSYSTEM

The selection of **Visakhapatnam** for a **high-energy proton accelerator facility** is important because accelerator infrastructure supports cutting-edge work in **materials science, nuclear research, medical isotope production, beam physics**, and advanced instrumentation. The project is being developed by the **Raja Ramanna Centre for Advanced Technology (RRCAT), Indore**, which operates under the **Department of Atomic Energy (DAE)**.

The facility's primary purpose is to support India's **three-stage nuclear power programme** and help utilise India's vast **thorium reserves** (estimated at **~12 million tonnes**, among the world's largest) through **Accelerator-Driven Systems (ADS)**. The high-energy proton beam will be directed at a heavy metal target (such as lead or bismuth), triggering a **spallation reaction** that releases a large number of neutrons. These neutrons can convert **thorium-232** into fissile **uranium-233** fuel. A key safety advantage is that if the accelerator shuts down (due to power failure or malfunction), the neutron supply immediately ceases, and the nuclear reaction automatically stops — preventing a reactor meltdown.

Visakhapatnam was chosen for its strong technological ecosystem and proximity to the sea, ensuring adequate cooling water for high-energy systems.

## THE DANDI MARCH STILL DEFINES THE POLITICAL MEANING OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

The **Dandi March** (also called the **Salt March** or **Salt Satyagraha**) began on **12 March 1930** from **Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmedabad** under the leadership of **Mahatma Gandhi**. Gandhi set out with **78 trusted volunteers** and marched **387 kilometres (240 miles)** to the coastal village of **Dandi** in present-day **Gujarat**, reaching it on **6 April 1930**. By the time he arrived, over **50,000 people** had joined the march.

It was not just a protest against the **British salt tax** (which made it illegal to collect or sell salt independently). It was a masterclass in political communication, moral authority, and strategic mobilisation. By choosing salt — a basic necessity used by every Indian regardless of caste, religion, or region — Gandhi linked a universal everyday need with colonial injustice.

The march triggered the wider **Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-34)**, expanded mass participation across class and gender lines, attracted global media attention, and demonstrated how a disciplined non-violent campaign could challenge imperial legitimacy. The British responded with mass arrests — over **80,000 Indians** were jailed. The movement eventually led to the **Gandhi-Irwin Pact (1931)** and the **Second Round Table Conference**. Dandi remains central to modern Indian history and to UPSC answers on nationalism, mass movements, and non-violent resistance.

### UPSC RELEVANCE

Strait of Hormuz (20 million bpd, 20% of global oil); India's crude import dependence ~87%; SPR locations; AI and task-level disruption; proton accelerator at Visakhapatnam (RRCAT, DAE, ADS, thorium); Dandi March (12 March - 6 April 1930, 387 km, 78 volunteers).

#### MAINS GS-1:

Freedom struggle, mass mobilisation, civil disobedience.

#### MAINS GS-2:

Diaspora and geopolitical vulnerability.

#### MAINS GS-3:

Energy security, AI and jobs, scientific infrastructure, nuclear programme.

## ★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

### WEST ASIA AND INDIA'S ENERGY SECURITY:

India's crude oil import dependence: approximately **87%** (2024-25)

India's crude consumption: ~**5.5 million barrels per day**

**Strait of Hormuz:** ~**20 million barrels/day** transit; ~20% of global oil

~**50%** of India's crude imports traditionally passed through Hormuz

India imports from ~**40 countries**; Russian crude now ~one-third of imports

**Strategic Petroleum Reserve:** Visakhapatnam, Mangaluru, Padur (~5.33 MMT, ~9.5 days)

Indians in the Gulf: ~**9 million**; annual remittances: ~**USD 40 billion**

### AI AND JOBS:

AI causes **task-level disruption**, not only job elimination

Outcomes: automation, augmentation, and creation of new roles

India's services sector: over **50% of GDP**

Informal employment: over **90%** of the workforce

Median age of India: ~**28 years**

Key policies: Skill India Mission, NEP 2020

ILO and WEF emphasise policy-dependent outcomes

### HIGH-ENERGY PROTON ACCELERATOR (VISAKHAPATNAM):

Developed by: **RRCAT, Indore** (under DAE)

Purpose: support India's **three-stage nuclear programme** and thorium utilisation

Technology: **Accelerator-Driven Systems (ADS)** using spallation reactions

India's thorium reserves: ~**12 million tonnes** (among the world's largest)

Converts **Thorium-232** to fissile **Uranium-233** via neutron bombardment

Safety: automatic shutdown if accelerator stops (no meltdown risk)

Location rationale: proximity to sea for cooling water

### DANDI MARCH (SALT SATYAGRAHA):

Dates: **12 March to 6 April 1930** (25 days)

Route: **Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmedabad to Dandi, Gujarat**

Distance: **387 km (240 miles)**

Started with **78 volunteers**; over **50,000** joined by Dandi

Led by **Mahatma Gandhi**

Triggered the **Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-34)**

Over **80,000 Indians** arrested during the movement

Led to the **Gandhi-Irwin Pact (1931)** and Second Round Table Conference

### OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

Chabahar Port (Iran): India's gateway to Afghanistan and Central Asia — bypasses Hormuz

Operation Rahat (2015, Yemen): evacuated 4,640 Indians + 960 foreigners

India's three-stage nuclear programme: Stage 1 (PHWR), Stage 2 (FBR), Stage 3 (thorium-based)

Dandi March is observed as a national event; the route is now a heritage trail

Sources: [Ministry of External Affairs](#), [International Labour Organization](#), [Department of Atomic Energy](#), [National Portal of India](#), [PIB](#)

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