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WEEKLY ROUNDUP

Weekly Roundup — Week 11 (Mar 9–15, 2026)

15 March 2026

SUBJECTS COVERED**POLITY****ECONOMY****ENVIRONMENT****SOCIAL ISSUES****SCIENCE & TECH****CURATED & WRITTEN BY****Bharat Choudhary**

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WEEK OVERVIEW

Week 11 was dominated by the deepening West Asia conflict (US-Iran war two weeks in, UNSC vote, Strait of Hormuz fears continuing) and a rich mix of economic, scientific, and cultural developments: India became the largest cotton supplier to the US, Parliament approved a new Economic Stabilization Fund (₹57,381 crore), PM Modi inaugurated India's first fully automated bulk port terminal at Haldia, and Bharat-VISTAAR (AI agriculture) and Concentrated Solar Thermal policy moved forward. Biodiversity was in focus with new species discoveries, the Dandi March anniversary underlined historical memory, and R. Vairamuthu received the 60th Jnanpith Award.

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

Parliament Approves Economic Stabilization Fund — ₹57,381 Crore — Mar 14

Parliament approved Supplementary Demands for Grants worth ₹2 lakh crore, including ₹57,381 crore specifically allocated to a new Economic Stabilization Fund to buffer India against global shocks — rising crude oil prices, supply chain disruptions, and West Asia geopolitical instability. Supplementary Demands for Grants are governed by **Article 115** of the Constitution, which authorises additional expenditure beyond the original Union Budget when unforeseen needs arise. **UPSC angle:** Prelims: Article 115 (supplementary/additional grants); Article 112 (Annual Financial Statement); Article 116 (Votes on account). Mains GS-2: Parliamentary financial procedures; fiscal stabilisation mechanisms.

Chhattisgarh Freedom of Religion Bill — Mar 13

The Chhattisgarh government approved a draft Freedom of Religion Bill preventing conversions through coercion, inducement, fraud, or misrepresentation. Several states have enacted similar legislation (UP, MP, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand). The Supreme Court in *Rev. Stainislaus v. State of MP (1977)* upheld state anti-conversion laws, holding that the right to “propagate” religion does not include the right to convert

others. Critics argue these laws may restrict freedom of conscience and choice. **UPSC angle:** Prelims: Articles 25-28 (Right to Freedom of Religion); Rev. Stainislaus v. State of MP (1977). Mains GS-2: Freedom of religion; constitutional limits on state regulation of religion; GS-4: Ethics of state power over personal belief.

Raisina Dialogue 2026 – India’s Strategic Positioning – Mar 9

Raisina Dialogue (jointly associated with the Observer Research Foundation and Ministry of External Affairs) continued as India’s leading platform for geopolitics, geoeconomics, technology, security, and connectivity. The forum reflected India’s strategic logic: strategic autonomy, multi-alignment, issue-based coalitions, and the intent to shape global debates in areas including supply chains, maritime security, AI governance, and climate diplomacy. **UPSC angle:** Prelims: Raisina Dialogue; Observer Research Foundation (ORF); MEA. Mains GS-2: India’s foreign policy posture; multi-alignment; middle power diplomacy.

UNSC Resolution on Iran – India Votes in Favour – Mar 14

India supported a UN Security Council resolution condemning attacks linked to the Iran conflict, joining 130 nations. In the UNSC vote, 13 members supported while Russia and China abstained. India’s position was shaped by the safety of ~10 million Indian nationals in the Gulf and dependence on West Asian crude oil (India imports ~85% of crude). The Gulf Cooperation Council (founded 1981, HQ Riyadh) comprises Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, and Bahrain – India’s largest regional trading partner block with bilateral trade exceeding \$180 billion annually. **UPSC angle:** Prelims: UNSC (15 members, P5: USA, UK, France, Russia, China; 10 non-permanent); GCC (1981, Riyadh, 6 members); G4 (India, Germany, Japan, Brazil) seeking permanent UNSC seats. Mains GS-2: India’s multilateral diplomacy; West Asia policy; UNSC reform.

ECONOMY & DEVELOPMENT

India Becomes Largest Cotton Supplier to the United States – Mar 13

India surpassed China as the largest supplier of cotton products to the United States in 2025, according to USDA data. Indian cotton exports to the US reached ~0.6 million tonnes while Chinese exports fell to ~0.5 million tonnes. The shift is driven by US tariffs on Chinese goods (10-125%), incentivising American importers to diversify supply chains. India’s total textile exports contribute approximately \$44 billion/year; the US is India’s largest single export destination. **UPSC angle:** Prelims: USDA; US-China tariff war (began 2018); India’s textile exports ~\$44B/year. Mains GS-3: Supply chain de-risking; India as manufacturing alternative; trade diversion.

PM Modi Inaugurates Haldia Bulk Terminal – India’s First Fully Automated Dry Bulk Terminal – Mar 15

PM Modi inaugurated the Haldia Bulk Terminal at Haldia Dock Complex, Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port (formerly Kolkata Port Trust, renamed 2021), operated by APSEZ (Adani Ports and SEZ Ltd) through HDC Bulk Terminal Ltd. Capacity: 4 MMTPA (dry bulk: coal, bauxite, limestone). Built under a 30-year DBFOT

concession model (Design, Build, Finance, Operate, Transfer). This terminal handles coal for power plants and bauxite for the aluminium industry in eastern India — a region that accounts for ~60% of India's dry bulk imports. **UPSC angle:** Prelims: Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port (renamed 2021); APSEZ; DBFOT model; Hooghly (tributary of Ganga). Mains GS-3: Port infrastructure; PPP models; logistics for eastern India.

PM Modi Launches ₹23,550 Crore Projects in Silchar — Barak Valley as Trade Hub — Mar 15

PM Modi launched infrastructure projects worth ₹23,550 crore in Silchar, Assam, to transform Barak Valley into a trade and logistics hub for Northeast India. Barak Valley (districts: Cachar/Silchar, Karimganj, Hailakandi) borders Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, and Bangladesh. The Barak River flows into Bangladesh as the Surma. The Sutarkandi Land Port connects to Bangladesh. The projects align with India's Act East Policy and the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan. **UPSC angle:** Prelims: Barak Valley, Barak/Surma River, Sutarkandi Land Port; Act East Policy; PM GatiShakti. Mains GS-2/3: Northeast connectivity; India-Bangladesh trade; Act East Policy.

Essential Commodities Act — Market vs. Welfare Tension — Mar 9

The Essential Commodities Act, 1955 gives the state powers to intervene in production, supply, storage, and distribution of key commodities during shortages or price spikes. The 2020 amendments reduced routine controls, retaining them only for extraordinary circumstances (war, famine, extraordinary price rise). The debate continues between market freedom and welfare protection — a classic governance tension between consumer protection and discouraging private storage/investment. **UPSC angle:** Prelims: Essential Commodities Act 1955; 2020 amendment; extraordinary circumstances conditions. Mains GS-3: Agricultural marketing reform; commodity price management.

Chinese FDI Restrictions — Press Note 3, 2020 — Mar 11

The debate over easing or retaining restrictions on Chinese FDI (Press Note 3 of 2020, requiring government approval for land-border country investments) reflects the tension between capital needs, technology acquisition, and strategic security. India wants manufacturing depth and supply chain capacity but also protects critical sectors from strategic dependence. The question is how to differentiate by sector and risk level, not simply to open or close the door. **UPSC angle:** Prelims: Press Note 3, 2020; FDI routes (automatic vs. government); land-border countries. Mains GS-3: FDI policy; strategic autonomy vs. capital attraction.

Jal Jeevan Mission — Service Delivery vs. Asset Creation — Mar 11

Jal Jeevan Mission (launched 2019), targeting Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTC) in rural households, highlighted the distinction between infrastructure creation and sustained service delivery. Long-term success depends on water source sustainability, local maintenance capacity, water quality monitoring, electricity for pumping, and village-level institutions — not just installation numbers. **UPSC angle:** Prelims: Jal Jeevan Mission (2019), FHTC. Mains GS-2: Rural service delivery; governance gap between asset creation and service provision.

ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY

West Asia Conflict and India's Goeconomic Exposure — Mar 12-13

Two weeks into the US-Iran conflict (as of March 13), the US had spent over \$10 billion; over 1,000 Iranians and 7 US service members had died. UNESCO-listed heritage sites in Iran were damaged — implicating the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in Armed Conflict. For India, the conflict reinforced its structural vulnerability: ~85% crude import dependence, Strait of Hormuz risk, 10 million nationals in the Gulf, and IMEC corridor exposure through Israel. **UPSC angle:** Prelims: 1954 Hague Convention (cultural property in armed conflict; two protocols: 1954 and 1999); Strait of Hormuz; GCC-India trade (\$180B+). Mains GS-2/3: Energy security; diaspora management; India's West Asia policy.

Concentrated Solar Thermal (CST) Technology — Industrial Decarbonisation — Mar 14

Concentrated Solar Thermal (CST) technology — using mirrors or lenses to concentrate sunlight to generate steam for turbines or direct industrial process heat — is gaining policy attention. Ministry of MNRE estimates India's CST potential at **6.4 GW**. Unlike solar PV, CST generates process heat directly usable in textiles, ceramics, food processing, and chemical manufacturing — replacing coal and natural gas in industrial processes. **UPSC angle:** Prelims: CST (Parabolic Trough, Solar Power Tower, Fresnel Reflectors); 6.4 GW India potential; National Solar Mission (280 GW by 2030, under NAPCC). Mains GS-3: Industrial decarbonisation; solar energy diversification.

Green Ammonia and Green Methanol — Energy Carriers — Mar 10

Green ammonia and green methanol, produced via low-carbon hydrogen pathways, are gaining attention as fuels for hard-to-decarbonise sectors — shipping, fertiliser production, and industrial energy use. Both are linked to India's National Green Hydrogen Mission and the strategy of converting energy transition into industrial opportunity. The challenge remains affordable renewable power, electrolyser scale-up, and demand creation. **UPSC angle:** Prelims: Green hydrogen, green ammonia, green methanol; National Green Hydrogen Mission. Mains GS-3: Energy transition; hard-to-abate sectors; green industrial policy.

Renewable Energy — Grid and Transmission Bottlenecks — Mar 11

India's renewable energy expansion is constrained not by generation ambition but by transmission bottlenecks, evacuation delays, storage gaps, and DISCOM financial stress. Clean energy requires grid modernisation — the ability to move power across regions, manage intermittency, and stabilise frequency. The energy transition is as much a grid infrastructure story as a generation capacity story. **UPSC angle:** Prelims: DISCOM, Central Electricity Authority, transmission constraints. Mains GS-3: Energy transition; grid modernisation; renewable integration challenges.

New Species Discovered — Manas, Assam and Eastern Himalayas — Mar 13-15

The week yielded multiple biodiversity discoveries:

Two new lichen moth species — *Caulocera hollowayi* (Golitar, Sikkim) and *Asura buxa* (Panijhora, West Bengal, near Buxa Tiger Reserve) — discovered by ZSI (HQ: Kolkata). Lichen moths are bioindicators of air quality; their presence signals clean air and healthy ecosystems.

Osbeckia zubeengargiana — a new perennial shrub species (family Melastomataceae) discovered in grasslands of **Manas National Park** (Baksa district, Assam) by botanists from Gauhati University; named after Assamese singer Zubeen Garg; IUCN status: Data Deficient.

Cave assassin bug (*Myiophanes kempi*, family Reduviidae) — rediscovered in Andaman limestone caves after ~100 years; a Lazarus species indicating intact cave habitat. **UPSC angle:** Prelims: ZSI (HQ Kolkata); Manas NP (UNESCO WHS 1985, Tiger Reserve 1973, Biosphere Reserve, Project Elephant; key species: Golden Langur, Pygmy Hog, Hispid Hare, Indian Rhinoceros); Buxa TR (West Bengal, India-Bhutan border); Lazarus species concept. Mains GS-3: Biodiversity monitoring; grassland ecosystem gaps; bioindicators.

State of the World's Migratory Species — Mar 9

Continuing discussion on migratory species conservation highlighted that biodiversity does not respect national borders — migratory fauna depend on flyways, marine routes, breeding grounds, and stopover habitats across multiple countries. India lies on major bird flyways and hosts key wetlands and coasts used by migratory species. Effective conservation requires international conventions (e.g., CMS — Convention on Migratory Species), domestic protected areas, and community-based approaches. **UPSC angle:** Prelims: CMS (Convention on Migratory Species); bird flyways; wetlands and migratory birds. Mains GS-3: Biodiversity governance; international environmental conventions.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Bharat-VISTAAR — AI Agricultural Advisory Platform — Mar 14

Bharat-VISTAAR (Virtually Integrated System to Access Agricultural Resources) — an AI-powered, voice-first, multilingual agricultural advisory platform — was announced in Union Budget 2026-27 with an allocation of **₹150 crore**. The platform delivers real-time, location-specific advisories integrating ICAR practices, government databases, weather data, and soil information. Its voice-first design makes it accessible to farmers with low literacy, addressing the last-mile delivery problem in agricultural extension services. **UPSC angle:** Prelims: Bharat-VISTAAR (₹150 crore, Budget 2026-27); ICAR (HQ New Delhi, under Ministry of Agriculture); e-NAM; Kisan Call Centres. Mains GS-3: Digital agriculture; agricultural extension services; AI in public service delivery.

High-Energy Proton Accelerator Proposed at Visakhapatnam — Mar 12

The proposal for a high-energy proton accelerator facility in Visakhapatnam underlined India's need for large-scale scientific research infrastructure supporting materials science, nuclear research, medical applications, and beam physics. Such facilities serve as platforms for multiple scientific disciplines and build technological depth — requiring sustained funding, specialised engineering, and long planning horizons. **UPSC angle:** Prelims: Proton accelerators; particle physics; Department of Atomic Energy. Mains GS-3: Scientific infrastructure investment; research capacity building.

AI Warfare — Doctrine Lagging Behind Technology — Mar 11

The debate on AI warfare highlighted that AI is no longer confined to analytics but encompasses surveillance, target recognition, swarming systems, logistics, electronic warfare, and information operations — changing the speed and uncertainty of conflict. India's security now depends as much on data, software, semiconductors, and cyber resilience as on traditional platform acquisition. Doctrine, ethics, and human control frameworks are struggling to keep pace. **UPSC angle:** Prelims: Swarming systems; autonomous weapons; AI warfare categories. Mains GS-3: AI and national security; ethics of autonomous weapons; human control in warfare.

Asteroid 2024 YR4 — NASA Confirms No Moon Collision — Mar 13

NASA confirmed asteroid 2024 YR4 will not hit the Moon in 2032, resolving earlier monitoring concerns. The asteroid was discovered by the ATLAS (Asteroid Terrestrial-impact Last Alert System) telescope in Chile. It is an Apollo-type asteroid (orbit crosses Earth's orbit), measuring ~174-220 feet (53-67m), originating from the Main Asteroid Belt between Mars and Jupiter. **UPSC angle:** Prelims: ATLAS telescope (Chile, NASA-funded); Apollo-type asteroids (orbit crosses Earth's); Main Asteroid Belt; NASA PDCO (Planetary Defense Coordination Office). Mains GS-3: Near-Earth Objects; planetary defence.

International Day of Mathematics — Pi Day — Mar 14

March 14 is the International Day of Mathematics (UNESCO, declared 2019), coinciding with Pi Day ($\pi \approx 3.14$). The date is also Albert Einstein's birthday (1879) and the date of Stephen Hawking's death (2018). Pi (π) — the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter — appears across geometry, physics, engineering, probability, and statistics. **UPSC angle:** Prelims: IDM (UNESCO, 2019, March 14); Pi (π); Albert Einstein (born March 14, 1879); Stephen Hawking (died March 14, 2018). Mains GS-3: Role of mathematics in science and technology.

Digital India — Governance Architecture, Not Just Digitisation — Mar 10

Digital India (launched 2015) has evolved from internet access to a governance framework of digital public infrastructure, service delivery, identity, payments, and state capacity. The deeper policy challenge is inclusion, security, and accountability — digital systems can reduce leakages but create exclusion when access, language, authentication, or grievance redress fail. **UPSC angle:** Prelims: Digital India (2015); digital public infrastructure; DPI components (Aadhaar, UPI, DigiLocker). Mains GS-2: Digital governance; e-governance challenges; privacy and inclusion.

Zydus' Desidustat Gets China (NMPA) Approval — Mar 15

Zydus Lifesciences received China's NMPA (National Medical Products Administration) approval for Desidustat — an oral HIF-PHI class drug for anaemia in Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) patients not on dialysis. Desidustat (brand: Oxemia) has been marketed in India since 2022, with 1,00,000+ patients treated. India has approximately 17 crore CKD patients. This demonstrates Indian pharma competing in the innovation segment (not just generics) globally. **UPSC angle:** Prelims: NMPA (China's drug regulator); CDSCO (India's drug regulator); HIF-PHI drug class; Zydus Lifesciences (formerly Cadila Healthcare, rebranded 2022). Mains GS-3: Indian pharmaceutical innovation; global drug approval pathways.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

India-Finland Relations — Focused Middle-Power Partnerships — Mar 10

India-Finland relations reflect the value of issue-based middle-power diplomacy: Finland brings strength in clean technology, telecommunications, education, circular economy, and high-end manufacturing, while India offers scale, talent, digital public infrastructure, and markets. Such partnerships — building around specific complementary capabilities rather than grand alliance politics — characterise an important dimension of India's foreign policy. **UPSC angle:** Prelims: India-Finland bilateral areas. Mains GS-2: Multi-alignment; issue-based coalitions; innovation diplomacy.

White Phosphorus in Warfare — International Humanitarian Law — Mar 14

Human rights organisations condemned white phosphorus use in the Lebanon theatre of the West Asia conflict. White phosphorus ignites spontaneously at $\sim 30^{\circ}\text{C}$, burns intensely, and causes deep tissue burns. It is not banned under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC, 1993) but its use against civilians or in densely populated areas violates CCW Protocol III (Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, 1980) on incendiary weapons. The OPCW (Nobel Peace Prize 2013) enforces the CWC. **UPSC angle:** Prelims: CCW (1980), Protocol III (incendiary weapons); CWC (1993); OPCW (Nobel 2013); white phosphorus vs. chemical weapons classification. Mains GS-2: International humanitarian law; laws of war; civilian protection.

HISTORY, ART & CULTURE

Dandi March Anniversary — March 12, 1930 — Mar 12

The Dandi March began on **March 12, 1930** from Sabarmati Ashram under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership. By choosing salt — a universal daily necessity linked to colonial taxation — Gandhi connected mass mobilisation with economic injustice. The march triggered the wider Civil Disobedience Movement, expanded mass participation across caste and class lines, and demonstrated how disciplined non-violent action could challenge imperial legitimacy. The Dandi March remains one of the most significant events in the history of

the Indian freedom movement. **UPSC angle:** Prelims: Dandi March (March 12, 1930; Sabarmati Ashram; salt; Civil Disobedience Movement). Mains GS-1: Indian nationalist movement; mass mobilisation; role of symbols in political communication.

Savitribai Phule — Pioneer of Women’s Education — Mar 14

Savitribai Phule (1831-1897) founded India’s first girls’ school in Pune in 1848 together with Jyotirao Phule, making her the country’s first female teacher. Born in Naigaon, Maharashtra, she also established the Bal Hatya Pratibandhak Griha (home for widows and unwed mothers) and worked in the Satyashodhak marriage movement opposing Brahminical rituals. She died on March 10, 1897, while tending to plague victims. Her literary works include *Kavya Phule* and *Bavan Kashi Subodh Ratnakar*. **UPSC angle:** Prelims: Savitribai Phule; India’s first girls’ school (Pune, 1848); Jyotirao Phule; Satyashodhak Samaj. Mains GS-1: 19th-century social reform; women’s education; Maharashtra reform movements.

Kurumba Art — Nilgiri Hills Tribal Tradition — Mar 14

Kurumba art is an ancient tribal painting tradition (3,000+ years old) from the Nilgiri Hills, practised by the Kurumba tribe across Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka, using natural pigments from forest materials and bamboo tools. The Kurumbas are one of the indigenous communities of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve — a UNESCO World Heritage Site (Western Ghats, inscribed 2012). The Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve was also India’s first UNESCO-designated biosphere reserve (1986). **UPSC angle:** Prelims: Kurumba art; Nilgiri Hills tribes (Toda, Kota, Badaga, Irula, Kurumba); Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (UNESCO WHS Western Ghats 2012; India’s first BR 1986). Mains GS-1: Tribal art traditions; intangible cultural heritage.

SOCIAL ISSUES

Purple Fest at Rashtrapati Bhavan — Divyangjan Celebration — Mar 13

Purple Fest at Rashtrapati Bhavan recognised the talent and achievements of Divyangjan (persons with disabilities) under the Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan). The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPwD Act) increased recognised disability categories from 7 (1995 Act) to 21. India is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The term “Divyangjan” replaced “Viklang” to reframe disability as a form of divine ability. **UPSC angle:** Prelims: RPwD Act 2016 (21 categories); UNCRPD; Accessible India Campaign; UDID (Unique Disability ID) portal. Mains GS-2: Disability inclusion; rights-based approach; social justice.

PMFME Incubation Centre at Tezpur University — Northeast Food Processing — Mar 13

Union Minister Chirag Paswan inaugurated a Common Incubation Centre at Tezpur University (Sonitpur, Assam) under the Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PMFME) Scheme. PMFME was launched in 2020 under AatmaNirbhar Bharat with an outlay of ₹10,000 crore over 5 years

(2020-25), operating on a One District One Product (ODOP) approach. Tezpur University is a central university established in 1994. **UPSC angle:** Prelims: PMFME Scheme (2020, ₹10,000 crore, ODOP); Tezpur University (central university, 1994). Mains GS-3: Food processing; MSME formalisation; Northeast industrial development.

PERSONS & AWARDS IN NEWS

R. Vairamuthu — Tamil poet and lyricist; conferred 60th Jnanpith Award (for 2025) on March 15, 2026; only third Tamil writer to receive the Jnanpith (after P.V. Akilan, 1975 and D. Jayakanthan, 2002); major works include *Kallikattu Ithikasam*, *Karuvachi Kaaviyam* — Mar 15

Shailesh Kumar (Bihar) — Won gold in Men's High Jump T63 (1.84m) at World Para Athletics Grand Prix, New Delhi — Mar 13

Madhu Malhotra (1955–2026) — Veteran Hindi film actress; known for “Lambi Judaai” (Hero, 1983); appeared in *Satte Pe Satta* (1982); passed away March 15, 2026 at 71 — Mar 15

Zubeen Garg — Assamese singer; new plant species *Osbeckia zubeengargiana* discovered in Manas NP named in his honour — Mar 15

Prataprao Jadhav — Union Minister of State (IC), AYUSH; inaugurated Yoga Mahotsav 2026 (100-day countdown to 12th International Day of Yoga) — Mar 14

UPSC RELEVANCE
PRELIMS:

Raisina Dialogue (ORF + MEA); Essential Commodities Act 1955 (amended 2020); Jal Jeevan Mission (2019, FHTC); Press Note 3, 2020 (Chinese FDI); India-cotton (0.6 MT, No.1 US supplier, USDA); ZSI — lichen moths (*Caulocera hollowayi*, *Asura buxa*, bioindicators); asteroid 2024 YR4 (ATLAS Chile, Apollo-type); Chhattisgarh Freedom of Religion Bill (Arts. 25-28, Stainislaus 1977); Shailesh Kumar (T63 gold); Purple Fest (RPwD Act 2016, 21 categories, UNCRPD); PMFME (ODOP, ₹10,000 crore); Joha rice (GI, Assam, exported to UK/Italy); Article 115 (Supplementary Grants); GCC (1981, Riyadh, 6 states, \$180B India trade); White phosphorus (CCW Protocol III, OPCW CWC); IDM March 14 (UNESCO 2019, Pi Day);

Myiophanes kempii (cave assassin bug, Andaman, Lazarus species); Bharat-VISTAAR (₹150 crore, ICAR, voice-first); Haldia Bulk Terminal (APSEZ, Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port, DBFOT, 4 MMTPA); Desidustat (Zydus, HIF-PHI, NMPA, Oxemia); Barak Valley (Sutarkandi, Act East Policy); Jnanpith Award (Bharatiya Jnanpith, 1965, Eighth Schedule, Vagdevi); Vairamuthu (60th, Tamil, third Tamil winner); Manas NP (UNESCO 1985, Tiger 1973, Baksa, Golden Langur, Pygmy Hog); Dandi March (March 12, 1930, Sabarmati); Savitribai Phule (1831-97, first girls' school Pune 1848); CST technology (6.4 GW India potential).

MAINS GS-1:

Dandi March and Civil Disobedience Movement; Savitribai Phule and 19th-century social reform; tribal art traditions — Kurumba art of Nilgiri Hills.

MAINS GS-2:

UNSC voting and India's West Asia policy; fiscal federalism and Supplementary Demands for Grants (Art. 115); disability rights and RPwD Act 2016; Raisina Dialogue and India's strategic posture; Chhattisgarh Freedom of Religion Bill and constitutional limits on religion.

MAINS GS-3:

India as No.1 US cotton supplier — supply chain diversification; port infrastructure and PPP models (Haldia DBFOT); digital agriculture and Bharat-VISTAAR; industrial decarbonisation via CST technology; renewable energy grid bottlenecks; AI in warfare and autonomous weapons ethics; pharma innovation — Desidustat global approval; FDI policy (Press Note 3); West Asia energy security and Strait of Hormuz.

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

WEEK 11 — KEY NUMBERS:

- India cotton exports to US (2025): **~0.6 million tonnes** (No.1 supplier, displacing China at 0.5 MT)
- India total textile exports: **~\$44 billion/year**
- US tariffs on China: **10-125%** (driver of supply chain diversification)
- Haldia Bulk Terminal capacity: **4 MMTPA** (coal, bauxite, limestone); DBFOT 30 years
- Barak Valley projects: **₹23,550 crore** (PM Modi, Silchar, Mar 15)
- Economic Stabilization Fund: **₹57,381 crore** (within Supplementary Grants of ₹2 lakh crore)
- Bharat-VISTAAR budget allocation: **₹150 crore** (Budget 2026-27)
- India CST potential: **6.4 GW** (Ministry of MNRE)
- India-GCC trade: **\$180+ billion/year**; Indian diaspora in Gulf: **~10 million**
- Desidustat (Zydus): India brand **Oxemia** (approved 2022); 1,00,000+ Indian patients; CKD patients in India: **~17 crore**
- US-Iran conflict (as of Mar 13, 2026): 2 weeks old; US spent **>\$10 billion**; deaths: **1,000+ Iranians, 7 US service members**
- PMFME Scheme outlay: **₹10,000 crore** (2020-25); approach: **ODOP**

KEY PERSONS IN NEWS:

- R. Vairamuthu** — 60th Jnanpith Award (2025); Tamil; 37+ books; *Kallikattu Ithikasam, Karuvachi Kaaviyam*; third Tamil Jnanpith winner
- Shailesh Kumar** — Bihar; Men's High Jump T63 gold (1.84m); World Para Athletics Grand Prix, New Delhi
- Prataprao Jadhav** — MoS (IC) AYUSH; inaugurated Yoga Mahotsav 2026
- Madhu Malhotra (1955-2026)** — Hindi actress; Hero (1983); Satte Pe Satta (1982); died Mar 15, 2026 at 71
- Zubeen Garg** — Assamese singer; *Osbeckia zubeengargiana* named after him
- Mahatma Gandhi** — Led Dandi March from Sabarmati Ashram, March 12, 1930
- Savitribai Phule (1831-1897)** — Founded India's first girls' school, Pune, 1848; first female teacher

KEY PLACES IN NEWS:

- Haldia (Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port, Kolkata)** — India's first fully automated dry bulk terminal on Hooghly; APSEZ DBFOT
- Silchar/Barak Valley, Assam** — ₹23,550 crore projects; Sutarkandi Land Port (India-Bangladesh); borders Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Bangladesh
- Manas National Park (Baksa, Assam)** — New species *Osbeckia zubeengargiana*; UNESCO WHS 1985; Tiger Reserve since 1973; key species: Golden Langur, Pygmy Hog (world's smallest wild pig), Hispid Hare, Indian Rhinoceros
- Andaman Islands** — *Myiophanes kempfi* cave assassin bug rediscovered; limestone caves; part of Indo-Burma biodiversity hotspot
- Buxa Tiger Reserve (West Bengal)** — *Asura buxa* moth found nearby (Panijhora); also Project Elephant; on India-Bhutan border
- Sabarmati Ashram (now Ahmedabad, Gujarat)** — Starting point of Dandi March, March 12, 1930
- Nilgiri Hills (Tamil Nadu/Kerala/Karnataka)** — Kurumba tribe; Kurumba art; Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (UNESCO WHS Western Ghats 2012; India's first BR 1986)
- Naigaon, Maharashtra** — Birthplace of Savitribai Phule (1831)

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia — HQ of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC, founded 1981)

KEY SCHEMES/LAWS/REPORTS:

Article 115 — Supplementary/Additional Demands for Grants (constitutional basis)

Essential Commodities Act, 1955 — amended 2020; routine controls removed except for extraordinary circumstances

Press Note 3, 2020 — Government approval required for FDI from land-border countries (including China)

Jal Jeevan Mission (2019) — Functional Household Tap Connection (FHTC) in rural India

Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 — 21 disability categories (up from 7 in 1995 Act)

CCW Protocol III (1980) — Restricts incendiary weapons (incl. white phosphorus) against civilians

1954 Hague Convention — Protection of cultural property in armed conflict; two protocols

DBFOT model — Design, Build, Finance, Operate, Transfer; standard PPP model for Indian port infrastructure

Bharat-VISTAAR — Full form: Virtually Integrated System to Access Agricultural Resources; ₹150 crore, Budget 2026-27

PMFME Scheme (2020) — Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises; ODOP approach; ₹10,000 crore (2020-25)

Jnanpith Award — India's highest literary honour; by Bharatiya Jnanpith (est. 1944); first awarded 1965; 22 Eighth Schedule languages + English; prize: ₹11 lakh + citation + bronze Vagdevi statuette

GI Act, 1999 — Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act; Joha rice (Assam) first internationally exported to UK and Italy (March 2026)

Sources: Daily editions The Hindu, PIB, GKToday

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