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**CURATED & WRITTEN BY****Bharat Choudhary**

UPSC Educator &amp; Content Creator •

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# Current Affairs Today — March 16, 2026

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**WHY IN NEWS**

ISRO completed a landmark 165-second hot test of the CE20 cryogenic engine at 22-tonne thrust (March 10) for LVM3 upgrades; India dominated the World Para Athletics Grand Prix with 208 medals; the 98th Oscars ceremony (March 15) awarded *One Battle After Another* Best Picture, *KPop Demon Hunters* Best Animated Feature, and saw **Indian-origin filmmaker Alexandre Singh** win Best Live-Action Short Film in a historic tie; BCCI held its Naman Awards (March 15) honouring five World Cup teams; and environmental violations continued at the Kalshila wetland connected to Deepor Beel.

## ISRO TESTS CE20 CRYOGENIC ENGINE AT 22-TONNE THRUST FOR LVM3 UPGRADES

ISRO successfully conducted a **165-second sea-level hot test** of its **CE20 cryogenic engine** at the **IPRC (ISRO Propulsion Complex) Mahendragiri**, Tamil Nadu on March 10, 2026 — the engine’s **20th hot test**, a programme record.

### Key Technical Details

Parameter	Value
Engine	CE20 (Cryogenic Engine 20-tonne class)
Thrust tested	<b>22 tonnes</b> (uprated)
Test duration	<b>165 seconds</b>
Test facility	ISRO Propulsion Complex (IPRC), Mahendragiri, Tamil Nadu
Special feature	Nozzle Protection System
Application	Up-rated Cryogenic Stage <b>C32</b> for <b>LVM3</b>

The CE20 powers the **Cryogenic Upper Stage (CUS)** of **LVM3** (Launch Vehicle Mark-3, formerly GSLV Mk III) — ISRO’s heaviest operational rocket. The “C32” refers to the 32-tonne propellant capacity of the upgraded stage. This test validates higher thrust levels required for heavier payloads — relevant to **Gaganyaan** (India’s human spaceflight mission) and commercial heavy-payload launches.

### Cryogenic Technology Context

**Cryogenic engines** use propellants at extremely low temperatures — typically **liquid hydrogen (LH2)** as fuel and **liquid oxygen (LOX)** as oxidiser. This combination offers the highest specific impulse (fuel efficiency) of any chemical propellant pair. India mastered cryogenic technology indigenously after being

denied it by the US under **MTCR (Missile Technology Control Regime)** concerns in 1992.

**UPSC Angle — Prelims & GS-3:** IPRC Mahendragiri = ISRO’s propulsion testing facility (Tamil Nadu). CE20 = cryogenic engine; C25 = current stage; C32 = upgraded stage for LVM3. LVM3 also carries **OneWeb** satellite batches (commercial launches). Gaganyaan’s crew module is placed atop LVM3. MTCR (35 members) restricts transfer of missiles/rockets above 500 km range and 500 kg payload.

## INDIA TOPS MEDAL TABLE AT WORLD PARA ATHLETICS GRAND PRIX 2026

India dominated the **World Para Athletics Grand Prix 2026** held at **Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, New Delhi**, finishing first on the medal table with **208 medals — 75 Gold, 69 Silver, 64 Bronze** among 257 athletes from 8 countries over 3 days.

### Top Indian Performers

Athlete	Event	Medal	Classification
<b>Preeti Pal</b>	Women’s 200m	Gold	T35–T37 (coordination impairment)
<b>Sumit Antil</b>	Javelin throw	Gold	F64 (leg amputation)
<b>Praveen Kumar</b>	High jump	Gold	T64 (leg amputation)
<b>Shubham Juyal</b>	Men’s shot put	Gold (14.45 m)	F57 (wheelchair)
<b>Manojkumar Sabapathi</b>	Men’s 800m	Gold	T53–T54 (wheelchair racing)

Preeti Pal won a double Paralympic bronze at Paris 2024. Sumit Antil and Praveen Kumar are reigning **Paralympic gold medallists** (Paris 2024).

**UPSC Angle — Prelims:** Classification system: **T** = Track/Field; **F** = Field only; numbers: 11–13 = visual impairment; 20 = intellectual impairment; 30s = cerebral palsy/coordination; 40s = limb deficiency with prosthesis; 50s = wheelchair users. India’s Paris 2024 Paralympic haul: **29 medals** (7 Gold, 9 Silver, 13 Bronze) — best ever. **World Para Athletics** is the governing body under World Athletics (formerly IAAF).

## DEEPOR BEEL-LINKED KALSHILA WETLAND UNDER THREAT FROM ILLEGAL EARTH CUTTING

Illegal large-scale earth cutting by JCB excavators has been destroying the **Kalshila wetland** in Satmile, Jalukbari, Guwahati — a wetland hydrologically connected to **Deepor Beel**, Assam’s only **Ramsar-listed wetland**.

## The Problem

Organised middlemen groups have been operating JCB machines at night (~8 PM) to extract soil commercially for over a month — defying a Gauhati High Court order, district administration prohibitory orders, and Assam Forest Department regulations. The extracted earth is transported by dumper trucks for commercial sale. The activity has been recurring every dry season since 2021.

## About Deepor Beel

**Deepor Beel** is located on the southwestern edge of Guwahati city, Assam. It is:

A **Ramsar Wetland** (listed 2002) — one of 98 Ramsar sites in India as of early 2026

A **Wildlife Sanctuary** under the Wildlife Protection Act

Critical habitat for migratory birds (winter home to Baer's Pochard, a critically endangered duck)

Connected to the **Brahmaputra river system**

The wetland faces multiple threats: encroachment, urban expansion of Guwahati, railway tracks bisecting the beel, and now illegal soil extraction from connected wetlands like Kalshila.

**UPSC Angle — Prelims & GS-3:** Ramsar Convention (1971, Iran): international treaty for wetland conservation; India has 98 Ramsar sites (most in South Asia). Deepor Beel = only Ramsar site in Assam. Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules 2017 govern wetland protection in India. Court orders being violated = governance failure theme for Mains GS-2.

## MUSI RIVER REJUVENATION — HERITAGE MAPPING OF 11 MONUMENTS IN HYDERABAD

The **Musi Riverfront Development Corporation Limited (MRDCL)** unveiled a **heritage concept map** linking **11 historic monuments** to the planned 55-km Musi River rejuvenation corridor in Hyderabad, Telangana.

## Monuments Identified

The 11 landmarks span Hyderabad's layered history — from medieval Qutb Shahi and Nizam-era structures to colonial-era buildings:

Golconda Fort | 2. Qutb Shahi Tombs | 3. Taramati Baradari | 4. Shri Veerabhadra Swami Devalayam | 5. Purana Pul | 6. Government City College | 7. Mecca Masjid | 8. **Charminar** | 9. Telangana High Court | 10. Osmania General Hospital | 11. British Residency at Koti

The Musi River flows through central Hyderabad and has historically been the city's lifeline. The project integrates ecological restoration (river cleaning, native tree planting), landscaped walkways, cultural zones, and heritage tourism circuits.

**UPSC Angle — GS-1 & GS-3:** Charminar (1591) — built by Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah, 5th sultan of Qutb Shahi dynasty. Golconda Fort — Kakatiya origin, expanded by Qutb Shahis. River rejuvenation + heritage = NMCG (National Mission for Clean Ganga) model applied to non-Ganga rivers. Urban heritage conservation aligns with HRIDAY (Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana) scheme.

## NEW CATFISH SPECIES *AMBLYCEPS VAYAVY* DISCOVERED IN NORTHERN WESTERN GHATS

Scientists have described a new catfish species — *Amblyceps vayavy* — from the **northern Western Ghats**, spanning **Goa and Maharashtra**. The species name “vayavy” means “northwest” in the local regional language, referencing its geographic distribution.

*Amblyceps* is a genus of **torrent catfish** (family Amblycipitidae) — small, bottom-dwelling fish adapted to fast-flowing rocky streams. The Western Ghats is a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** (2012) and one of the world’s **36 biodiversity hotspots**.

**UPSC Angle — Prelims:** Western Ghats = one of 4 biodiversity hotspots in India (along with Himalaya, Indo-Burma, Sundaland). There are 36 biodiversity hotspots globally (concept by Norman Myers, 1988). UNESCO Natural World Heritage Site (2012 — serial nomination of 39 properties across 7 sub-clusters). Western Ghats spans 6 states: Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu.

## 98TH ACADEMY AWARDS (OSCARS 2026) — KEY WINNERS

The **98th Academy Awards** were held at **Dolby Theatre, Los Angeles** on March 15, 2026, hosted by **Conan O’Brien** (second consecutive year).

## Key Winners

Category	Winner
Best Picture	<b><i>One Battle After Another</i></b> (dir. Paul Thomas Anderson)
Best Actor	<b>Michael B. Jordan</b> — <i>Sinners</i>
Best Actress	<b>Jessie Buckley</b> — <i>Hamnet</i>
Best Animated Feature	<b><i>KPop Demon Hunters</i></b> (Sony Animation / Netflix; dir. Maggie Kang & Chris Appelhans)
Best Live-Action Short Film (TIE)	<i>“Two People Exchanging Saliva”</i> — <b>Alexandre Singh</b> & Natalie Musteata
Best Live-Action Short Film (TIE)	<i>“The Singers”</i> — Sam A. Davis & Jack Piatt
Best Animated Short	<i>“The Girl Who Cried Pearls”</i>
Best Supporting Actress	Amy Madigan — <i>Weapons</i>
Best Original Screenplay	<b>Ryan Coogler</b> — <i>Sinners</i>
Best Cinematography	<b>Autumn Durald Arkapaw</b> — <i>Sinners</i> (first woman to win)
Most Nominated (16)	<i>Sinners</i> (dir. Ryan Coogler) — won 4 awards

**KPop Demon Hunters** (Sony Animation, distributed by Netflix) won the Golden Globe and Critics Choice before the Oscar. Directors Maggie Kang and Michelle L.M. Wong (producer) made history as the first female Asian winners in Best Animated Feature. Its win reflects the growing global reach of **Korean Wave (Hallyu)** — South Korea’s cultural soft power.

**Alexandre Singh — Indian-Origin Oscar Winner:** A Franco-Indian Brit, **Indian-origin** contemporary artist of Punjabi descent, Singh (born 1980, Bordeaux, raised in Manchester) co-directed *“Two People Exchanging Saliva”* with co-director Natalie Musteata. The French-language film is set in a dystopian Paris where kissing is outlawed, shot in black-and-white at Galeries Lafayette. The Best Live-Action Short Film award resulted in a **tie** — only the **7th tie in 98 years of Oscar history**. This was Singh’s first Oscar nomination and first win. His father migrated from Punjab to the UK in the 1960s.

**Indian Connection:** Alexandre Singh (Punjabi-origin, French national, Oscar winner); Priyanka Chopra Jonas served as presenter; filmmaker Geeta Gandbhir received dual documentary nominations (Best Documentary Feature for *The Perfect Neighbor* and Best Documentary Short for *The Devil Is Busy*) — the first woman in Oscar history to be nominated in both documentary categories in the same year.

**UPSC Angle – Prelims (Persons in News):** AMPAS (Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences) – presents Oscars since 1929. First ceremony: 1929, Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel. Oscar statuette represents a knight holding a crusader’s sword on a film reel. India’s Oscar history: *RRR*’s “Naatu Naatu” (Best Original Song, 2023); *The Elephant Whisperers* (Best Documentary Short, 2023). *One Battle After Another* won Best Picture and a leading 6 awards. *Sinners* won 4 Oscars from a record 16 nominations.

## BCCI NAMAN AWARDS 2026 — FIVE WORLD CUP TEAMS AND CRICKET HONOURS

The **BCCI** held its **Naman Awards 2026** in New Delhi on March 15, honouring five World Cup-winning Indian cricket teams and individual achievers.

### Key Awards

Award	Recipient
<b>Polly Umrigar Award</b> (Best International Cricketer – Men)	<b>Shubman Gill</b> (2024-25 season)
<b>Polly Umrigar Award</b> (Best International Cricketer – Women)	<b>Smriti Mandhana</b> (5th time; first woman to score 1,000 ODI runs in a calendar year, 2025)
<b>Col. C.K. Nayudu Lifetime Achievement</b> (highest BCCI honour)	<b>Roger Binny</b> and <b>Rahul Dravid</b>
<b>BCCI Lifetime Achievement – Women</b>	<b>Mithali Raj</b>

The five World Cup teams honoured: Under-19 Women’s World Cup, ICC Champions Trophy, Under-19 Men’s World Cup, Women’s ODI World Cup, ICC Men’s T20 World Cup.

**UPSC Angle – Prelims (Persons in News):** Roger Binny = 36th BCCI President (2022-2025); was a key member of India’s 1983 World Cup-winning squad. Rahul Dravid = former India head coach (2021-2024). Mithali Raj = India’s highest-ever women’s cricket run-scorer (7,805 ODI runs; retired 2022). Smriti Mandhana = first woman to score 1,000 ODI runs in a calendar year (2025); 5th time Polly Umrigar Award winner (equalling Virat Kohli’s record).

## PERSONS IN NEWS

### Chandrika Pujari Wins Gold at World Boxing Futures Cup 2026

Indian boxer **Chandrika Pujari** won the **gold medal in women’s 51 kg** at the **World Boxing Futures Cup 2026** in **Bangkok, Thailand** (March 8–15). She defeated Uzbekistan’s Mardonova Nazokat by unanimous decision. India finished with **5 medals (1 gold, 3 silver, 1 bronze)**. The event used **Youth**

**Olympic weight categories**, serving as preparation for the **2026 Summer Youth Olympics in Dakar, Senegal**.

### **KV Ramana Murty – SEBI Whole-Time Member**

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**KV Ramana Murty**, a 1991-batch **Indian Defence Accounts Service (IDAS)** officer, was appointed as a **Whole-Time Member (WTM)** of **SEBI (Securities and Exchange Board of India)** for a three-year term. SEBI's board comprises 1 Chairman + 4 Whole-Time Members + 4 part-time members.

### **Jose Antonio Kast – 38th President of Chile**

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**Jose Antonio Kast** was sworn in as the **38th President of Chile** at the National Congress, Valparaíso. India was represented at the inauguration by Union MoS (External Affairs) **Kirti Vardhan Singh**.

## **NATIONAL CHAMBAL SANCTUARY — IN FOCUS**

The **National Chambal Gharial Wildlife Sanctuary** is located at the **tri-junction of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan** along the **Chambal River**. It is India's primary conservation zone for the **Gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*)** — the world's most critically endangered crocodilian. Other protected species: **Red-crowned roof turtle** and **Ganges river dolphin** (India's national aquatic animal).

The Chambal is one of India's least polluted rivers — no major industrial town on its banks — making it critical habitat for freshwater species that cannot survive in polluted waters.

**UPSC Angle — Prelims:** Gharial: IUCN Critically Endangered; Schedule I (WPA 1972); snout with bulbous growth at tip (called “ghara” — hence name); found only in Chambal, Girwa, Son, Gandak rivers. Ganges river dolphin (*Platanista gangetica*): India's National Aquatic Animal (declared 2009); Schedule I; IUCN Endangered. Chambal River: originates Vindhya Range (MP); tributary of Yamuna (not directly of Ganga).

**UPSC RELEVANCE**

ISRO CE20 (22 tonne, 165 sec, IPRC Mahendragiri, C32, LVM3); Deepor Beel (Ramsar 2002, Assam, only Ramsar site in Assam, 98 total in India); Kalshila wetland; Para Athletics T/F classification; India 208 medals (75 gold); Oscars 2026 (AMPAS, Dolby Theatre, Best Picture: *One Battle After Another*, KPop Demon Hunters — Sony Animation); BCCI Naman Awards (Roger Binny — 36th President, Rahul Dravid, Mithali Raj, Shubman Gill, Smriti Mandhana); Amblyceps vayavy (Western Ghats, Goa-Maharashtra, 36 global hotspots); National Chambal Sanctuary (Gharial, Gangetic dolphin, MP-UP-Rajasthan tri-junction); Jose Antonio Kast (Chile, 38th President); SEBI WTM (KV Ramana Murty, IDAS).

**MAINS GS-1:**

Medieval Hyderabad — Qutb Shahi monuments, Musi River history.

**MAINS GS-3:**

Cryogenic technology, MTCR (35 members); wetland conservation governance failures; biodiversity hotspots (36 globally, 4 in India).

**★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA**
**ISRO CE20 CRYOGENIC ENGINE:**

Engine type: **CE20** — cryogenic (LH<sub>2</sub> + LOX propellants)

Thrust: **22 tonnes** (uprated from CE20's standard 20-tonne class)

Test duration: **165 seconds** at sea level | Test facility: **ISRO Propulsion Complex (IPRC), Mahendragiri, Tamil Nadu**

Programme milestone: **20th hot test** (record)

Application: **C32 stage** (uprated Cryogenic Upper Stage) for **LVM3** rocket

LVM3 current stage: C25; upgraded stage: C32

LVM3 missions: Chandrayaan-3, OneWeb (commercial), Gaganyaan (upcoming)

Cryogenic = sub-minus 150°C propellants; LH<sub>2</sub> (-253°C), LOX (-183°C)

MTCR: Missile Technology Control Regime — India joined June 2016 (35th member); 35 members; controls rocket tech transfer

**INDIA PARA ATHLETICS — WORLD PARA ATHLETICS GRAND PRIX 2026:**

Venue: **Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, New Delhi**

India's tally: **208 medals — 75 Gold, 69 Silver, 64 Bronze** (ranked 1st)

Runners-up: Russia (35 medals), Bosnia and Herzegovina (3 medals)

Preeti Pal: T35-37; Paris 2024 double bronze medallist

Sumit Antil (F64 Javelin) + Praveen Kumar (T64 High Jump): Paris 2024 Paralympic gold medallists

India Paris 2024 Paralympics: **29 medals** (7G, 9S, 13B) — best ever

World Para Athletics = governing body under World Athletics (formerly IAAF)

**DEEPOR BEEL:**

Location: Southwest Guwahati, **Kamrup (Metro) district, Assam**

Status: **Ramsar Wetland** (listed **2002**); **Wildlife Sanctuary**

Only Ramsar site in Assam; one of 98 Ramsar sites in India (early 2026)

Key species: Baer's Pochard (Critically Endangered migratory duck), Gangetic dolphin

Threat: Illegal earth extraction from connected **Kalshila wetland**; urban encroachment; railway track bisecting beel

Ramsar Convention: signed **1971, Ramsar, Iran**; entered force 1975; India joined 1982

**NATIONAL CHAMBAL SANCTUARY:**

Location: **Tri-junction of MP, UP, Rajasthan** along Chambal River

Full name: **National Chambal Gharial Wildlife Sanctuary**

Key species: **Gharial** (IUCN Critically Endangered, Schedule I), Red-crowned Roof Turtle, **Gangetic Dolphin** (National Aquatic Animal)

Gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*): Only species in family Gavialidae; "ghara" = bulb on male's snout

Chambal River: originates Vindhya Range (MP); flows into Yamuna (not directly into Ganga)

**OSCARS 2026 (98TH ACADEMY AWARDS):**

Date: **March 15, 2026** | Venue: **Dolby Theatre, Los Angeles** | Host: **Conan O'Brien** (2nd consecutive year)

Best Picture: **One Battle After Another** (dir. Paul Thomas Anderson) — won a leading 6 awards

Best Actor: **Michael B. Jordan** — *Sinners*

Best Animated Feature: **KPop Demon Hunters** (Sony Animation / Netflix; dir. Maggie Kang & Chris Appelhans)

Best Actress: **Jessie Buckley** — *Hamnet* (based on Maggie O’Farrell novel)

Best Original Screenplay: **Ryan Coogler** — *Sinners*

Best Cinematography: **Autumn Durald Arkapaw** — *Sinners* (first woman to win this category)

Best Live-Action Short Film (TIE): “*Two People Exchanging Saliva*” (Alexandre Singh & Natalie Musteata) + “*The Singers*” (Sam A. Davis & Jack Piatt)

Historic tie: only the **7th tie in 98 years** of Oscar history

Alexandre Singh: Indian-origin (Punjabi descent), Franco-Indian Brit, born Bordeaux 1980, raised Manchester

Most nominations: **Sinners** — **16 nominations** (record-breaking; won 4)

Indian connection: Alexandre Singh (Punjabi-origin Oscar winner); Priyanka Chopra Jonas (presenter); Geeta Gandbhir (first woman with dual documentary nominations — *The Perfect Neighbor* + *The Devil Is Busy*)

AMPAS founded: 1927; first Oscars: 1929 (Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel)

Oscar = knight on film reel; officially “Academy Award of Merit”

#### BCCI NAMAN AWARDS 2026:

Polly Umrigar Award (Best Intl. Cricketer Men): **Shubman Gill** (2024-25)

Polly Umrigar Award (Best Intl. Cricketer Women): **Smriti Mandhana** (5th time; equals Virat Kohli’s record)

Col. C.K. Nayudu Lifetime Achievement: **Roger Binny** (36th BCCI President, 2022-2025) + **Rahul Dravid**

BCCI Lifetime Achievement (Women): **Mithali Raj**

5 World Cup teams honoured: U-19 Women’s WC, ICC Champions Trophy, U-19 Men’s WC, Women’s ODI WC, ICC Men’s T20 WC

#### AMBLYCEPS VAYAVY — NEW CATFISH SPECIES:

Family: Amblycipitidae (torrent catfish)

Location: **Northern Western Ghats** — across Goa and Maharashtra

Name meaning: “vayavy” = northwest (regional language)

Western Ghats: UNESCO World Heritage Site (2012; 39 properties, 7 sub-clusters); biodiversity hotspot (one of 4 in India)

India’s 4 biodiversity hotspots: Western Ghats, Himalaya, Indo-Burma, Sundaland (Nicobar Islands)

Total global biodiversity hotspots: **36** (concept by Norman Myers, 1988; 36th added in 2016)

#### OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

SEBI structure: 1 Chairman + 4 Whole-Time Members + 4 part-time members; KV Ramana Murty (IDAS, 1991 batch) appointed WTM

IDAS = Indian Defence Accounts Service (Group A Central Service under Ministry of Defence)

Jose Antonio Kast = **38th President of Chile** (sworn in March 11, 2026, at National Congress, Valparaiso);

India’s representative: Kirti Vardhan Singh (MoS External Affairs)

Gold Hallmarking Phase VI (effective March 2, 2026): 7 new districts added; total coverage = **380 districts**

Sujal Gaon ID: unique digital ID for rural piped water supply assets under **Jal Jeevan Mission** (Ministry of Jal Shakti); 31 states/UTs covered

Gangetic/Ganges River Dolphin: **National Aquatic Animal of India** (declared 2009); IUCN Endangered; Schedule I

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

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CURATED & WRITTEN BY

## Bharat Choudhary

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

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