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CURATED & WRITTEN BY**Bharat Choudhary**

UPSC Educator & Content Creator •

[linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)

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Current Affairs Today — March 19, 2026

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WHY IN NEWS

The Union Cabinet approved four major economic decisions including the ₹33,660 crore BHAVYA industrial parks scheme and ₹2,584 crore Small Hydro Power scheme. Parliament passed ₹53 lakh crore Demands for Grants via the Guillotine procedure. The Cabinet also modified FDI rules for land-border countries (Press Note 3). The Supreme Court declared maternity leave for adoptive mothers a fundamental right. Dark fleet shadow tankers in Indian waters raised energy security and sanctions-compliance concerns.

CABINET APPROVES BHAVYA — ₹33,660 CRORE FOR 100 INDUSTRIAL PARKS

The Union Cabinet approved **Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojna (BHAVYA)**, a centrally-sponsored scheme with an outlay of **₹33,660 crore** to develop **100 plug-and-play industrial parks** across India.

Key features:

Plug-and-play model: Parks come pre-built with roads, power, water, drainage, and digital infrastructure — companies can start operations immediately without land/approval delays

Park size: 100–1,000 acres per park (depending on location and industrial demand)

Financial assistance: Up to ₹1 crore per acre for core infrastructure

Implementation: **National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation Limited (NICDC)** under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry; NICDC was formed in 2013 as DMICDC and renamed in February 2020

Single-window clearances: Pre-approved land + integrated approvals to reduce time-to-production

Employment: Expected to generate **~15 lakh direct jobs**

Green mandate: Renewable energy integration and water/waste management within parks

Vision: Advance *Atmanirbhar Bharat* manufacturing self-reliance and Viksit Bharat 2047

UPSC relevance: GS3 — Industrial policy, ease of doing business, manufacturing sector, NICDC, DPIIT, Atmanirbhar Bharat.

CABINET APPROVES SMALL HYDRO POWER DEVELOPMENT SCHEME — 1,500 MW BY 2031

The Union Cabinet approved the **Small Hydro Power (SHP) Development Scheme** for **FY 2026-27 to FY 2030-31** with a total outlay of **₹2,584.60 crore**, targeting installation of **~1,500 MW** of small hydro capacity.

Key features:

Scope: Small hydro projects of **1–25 MW** capacity (classic definition of “small hydro”)

Ministry: Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE)

Special focus: Hilly states and **North Eastern states** with high untapped small hydro potential

Financial assistance:

NE states + border districts: ₹3.6 crore/MW OR 30% of project cost, max ₹30 crore/project

Other states: ₹2.4 crore/MW OR 20% of project cost, max ₹20 crore/project

Pipeline development: ₹30 crore allocated to help states prepare **200 Detailed Project Reports (DPRs)** for future projects

Expected investment: ~₹15,000 crore of private + state investment leveraged

Target: Supports India’s **500 GW non-fossil fuel capacity by 2030** (NDC commitment)

UPSC relevance: GS3 — Renewable energy policy, small hydro, MNRE, India’s climate commitments, NDC targets, Northeast energy potential.

COTTON MSP SUPPORT — ₹1,718 CRORE FOR 60 LAKH FARMERS

The Cabinet approved **₹1,718.56 crore** in MSP-based cotton procurement support for **60 lakh cotton farmers** for the 2023-24 season, settling dues under the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) operations.

Key facts:

MSP for cotton: The Minimum Support Price guarantees farmers a floor price; when market prices fall below MSP, the government procures at MSP

Cotton Corporation of India (CCI): PSU under Ministry of Textiles; procures cotton at MSP when prices fall below support levels; operates 508+ procurement centres across 152 districts in 11 cotton-growing states; uses **Bale Identification and Traceability System (BITS)** and **Cott-Ally** mobile app

Cotton is India’s **top cash crop** (India is among the world’s largest producers of cotton, vying with China for the top spot; ~6 million farmers; ~11.4 million hectares under cultivation)

Price support mechanism: Prevents distress sales; stabilises farmer income during market downturns

India’s cotton: primarily grown in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab

UPSC relevance: GS3 — MSP system, cotton economy, Price Support Scheme, CCI, agricultural distress.

BARABANKI–BAHRAICH NH-927 HIGHWAY — ₹6,969 CRORE

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved the **4-laning of National Highway 927** from **Barabanki to Bahraich** (101.5 km, Uttar Pradesh) at a cost of **₹6,969 crore** under the **Hybrid Annuity Mode (HAM)**.

Key features:

Length: 101.515 km; access-controlled 4-lane highway

Route: Barabanki (near Lucknow) → Bahraich (Nepal border region)

Mode: Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM) — Government funds 40% upfront; remaining 60% paid as annuity to private developer over 15 years

Significance: Connects Uttar Pradesh's Terai belt; improves access to Bahraich and the Dudhwa National Park region; boosts trade with Nepal

UPSC relevance: GS3 — Highway infrastructure, HAM model, NHAI, transport connectivity, UP development.

IOS SAGAR SECOND EDITION — INDIAN NAVY WITH 16 NATIONS

The **second edition of Indian Ocean Ship (IOS) SAGAR** commenced on **March 16, 2026**, with the Indian Navy leading a maritime training initiative with personnel from **16 IONS nations** of the Indian Ocean Region.

Key features:

IOS SAGAR: Indian Ocean Ship — Security and Growth for All in the Region; a unique programme enabling naval personnel from friendly foreign countries to **train and sail together on an Indian Naval Ship**

Commenced: Shore-based training at **Indian Naval establishments in Kochi** (seamanship, maritime security, naval operations) → followed by **sea deployment on an Indian Naval Ship**

16 participating nations: Drawn from the **Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS)** — IONS has 25 member navies and 9 observers; India assumed the IONS chair from the Royal Thai Navy in **February 2026** for the 2026–28 tenure

SAGAR doctrine: PM Modi's maritime vision — *Security and Growth for All in the Region*; articulated at Mauritius, March 2015

MAHASAGAR framework: Successor/broader framework — *Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions*; announced 2025

UPSC relevance: GS2 — India’s maritime strategy, SAGAR doctrine, IONS, Indian Navy diplomacy, Indian Ocean geopolitics.

BHARAT ELECTRICITY SUMMIT 2026 — NEW DELHI

The **Bharat Electricity Summit 2026**, a major international conference and exhibition for the power sector, opened on **March 19, 2026 at Yashobhoomi, New Delhi** (runs March 19–22, 2026).

Key features:

Hosted jointly by **POWERGRID** (nodal agency), **NTPC**, **NHPC**, **REC**, and **PFC** under the patronage of the **Ministry of Power**; **EEPC India** as lead coordinating agency

Theme: Clean energy transition, power sector infrastructure, smart grids, energy storage

India’s power sector milestones: **520.5 GW** installed capacity (as of January 2026); **~52.3%** from non-fossil fuels — India achieved the 50% non-fossil milestone ahead of its NDC target

Yashobhoomi (IICC): India International Convention and Expo Centre, Dwarka, New Delhi; Phase 1 inaugurated 17 September 2023 by PM Modi; India’s largest convention and exhibition centre

Theme: “Electrifying Growth. Empowering Sustainability. Connecting Globally”

Scale: 25,000+ visitors, 500+ exhibitors, 300+ speakers, delegates from 80+ countries

UPSC relevance: GS3 — Power sector, India’s clean energy transition, POWERGRID, NTPC, energy storage, smart grid.

SUPREME COURT COLLEGIUM — SEVEN HIGH COURTS UNREPRESENTED

Judicial governance concerns emerged in March 2026 as data revealed that **7 of India’s 25 High Courts** remain **unrepresented in the Supreme Court’s 34-judge bench**, highlighting the Collegium system’s challenges in ensuring regional diversity in apex court appointments.

Key facts:

Collegium System: Evolved through three Supreme Court cases — the Three Judges Cases (1981, 1993, 1998); recommends appointments to SC and HCs

Composition: SC Collegium = 5 senior-most judges including CJI; HC Collegium = 5 senior-most judges of that HC

NJAC challenge: National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) — 99th Constitutional Amendment — struck down by SC in 2015 as violating “basic structure” (independence of judiciary)

Criticisms of Collegium: Opacity, regional imbalance, lack of diversity (gender, SC/ST, regional representation), delays in filling vacancies

India has **25 High Courts** (Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh HC established 2019)

UPSC relevance: GS2 — Judiciary, Collegium system, judicial appointments, NJAC, Three Judges Cases, basic structure doctrine, Article 124.

GUILLOTINE PROCEDURE — LOK SABHA PASSES ₹53 LAKH CRORE DEMANDS FOR GRANTS

The **Lok Sabha** passed **Demands for Grants exceeding ₹53 lakh crore** for FY 2026-27 using the **Guillotine procedure** (March 2026):

What is the Guillotine? A parliamentary mechanism where the **Speaker puts all undiscussed demands for grants to vote simultaneously** at the end of the allotted time — without debate. Named after the French execution device (swift, final).

Budget cycle flow:

Union Budget presented (February 1) → Parliament in recess for 3 weeks

Standing Committee review of ministry-wise demands

Parliament reconvenes → Discussion on demands

On the final day: Undiscussed demands are “guillotined” — voted en bloc without discussion

Finance Bill and **Appropriation Bill** then passed → money authorised from Consolidated Fund of India

Key facts:

Exclusive Lok Sabha power: The Rajya Sabha cannot vote on Money Bills / Demands for Grants (can only discuss and make recommendations)

Constitutional basis: Article 113 (Demands for Grants); Article 266 (Consolidated Fund of India)

Consequence: Large portions of public expenditure bypass parliamentary scrutiny — accountability concern

In practice, **Standing Committees** provide the substantive financial oversight that floor debates often cannot

UPSC Angle: GS-2 Polity — Parliamentary financial procedures; Lok Sabha’s exclusive money powers; Standing Committees; Appropriation Bill vs Finance Bill; Consolidated Fund of India.

FDI RULES MODIFIED FOR LAND-BORDER COUNTRIES — PRESS NOTE 3

The Union Cabinet approved modifications to **Press Note 3 (2020)** — the FDI policy for countries sharing land borders with India:

Press Note 3 (2020): Issued during COVID-19 pandemic; requires **prior government approval** for FDI from countries sharing land borders with India — aimed at preventing opportunistic takeovers of stressed Indian companies

Countries covered: China, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, and Afghanistan (7 land-border countries)

Background: Before 2020, FDI from these countries was on the automatic route (like all other countries)

March 2026 modification (Press Note 2 of 2026): Investments up to **10% non-controlling beneficial ownership** now allowed under **automatic route** (no prior approval needed); **60-day timeline** introduced for processing proposals in sectors like electronic components, capital goods, and solar cells; maintains security veto for strategic sectors

Context: India-China economic relations reset — India cautiously opening doors to Chinese investment in manufacturing (particularly electronics and semiconductors where China has capabilities India needs) while maintaining national security safeguards

UPSC Angle: GS-2 International Relations / GS-3 Economy — FDI policy evolution; India-China economic ties; national security in investment regulation; DPIIT; automatic vs approval route for FDI.

SC RULING — MATERNITY LEAVE FOR ADOPTIVE MOTHERS A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT

The **Supreme Court of India** declared **12-week maternity leave a fundamental right for all adoptive mothers** regardless of the child's age, striking down a provision of the Code on Social Security, 2020:

Provision struck down: Section 60(4) of **Code on Social Security, 2020** — which restricted maternity leave for adoption to children **below 3 months** of age only

Court's reasoning: India's legal adoption process typically takes more than 3 months; restricting leave to children under 3 months effectively denied the benefit to most adoptive mothers

Ruling: All adoptive mothers entitled to **12 weeks maternity leave** regardless of adopted child's age

Constitutional grounding: Right to equality (Article 14); Right to dignity and reproductive autonomy (Article 21)

Additional recommendation: Supreme Court recommended the Central Government introduce statutory **paternity leave** (India has no law mandating paternity leave)

Code on Social Security 2020: One of India's four new Labour Codes (the Code on Social Security alone consolidates 9 central laws; all four codes together replace 29 labour laws); came into force November 21, 2025; replaced Maternity Benefit Act, 1961

Maternity Benefit Act 1961: Previously provided 12 weeks (26 weeks post-2017 amendment for organisations with 10+ employees)

UPSC Angle: GS-2 Social Issues / GS-3 Economy — Labour codes reform; maternity benefit law; Article 21; judicial interpretation of fundamental rights; gender-inclusive labour policy.

DARK FLEET / SHADOW TANKERS — INDIA'S RUSSIAN CRUDE IMPORTS

India's Russian crude oil imports via **shadow tankers** raised energy security and compliance concerns:

Aqua Titan incident: A sanctioned Russian tanker was redirected mid-route from China to India — highlighting India's role as the primary buyer of Russia's dark fleet crude

India's dark fleet crude (Jan–Sep 2025): 5.4 million tonnes of Russian crude imported via shadow tankers on 30 false-flagged vessels — **55% of Russia's crude sold through the dark fleet globally**

Dark fleet size: ~600–800 vessels operating outside normal shipping norms; average age: 20+ years vs industry norm of 10 years

Tactics:

AIS (Automatic Identification System) disabling — ghost ships evade tracking

Ship-to-ship (STS) transfers — crude switched between vessels mid-ocean to obscure origin

Flags of convenience: Registered in Panama, Gabon, Palau — minimal regulatory oversight

Shell company ownership: Layered corporate structures hide ultimate beneficiaries

Legal framework gaps: UNCLOS provides limited enforcement on high seas beyond territorial waters; flag state jurisdiction is primary

India's position: India imports ~4.8 million barrels/day (nearly 90% imported); Russia has become India's largest oil supplier (~35% of imports) since 2022 sanctions; India has not joined Western sanctions on Russia

UPSC Angle: GS-2 IR / GS-3 Economy — India-Russia energy ties; UNCLOS; energy security; Western sanctions architecture; India's strategic autonomy doctrine in energy policy.

TRANSGENDER PERSONS (PROTECTION OF RIGHTS) AMENDMENT BILL, 2026

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment introduced the **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026**, proposing significant changes to the 2019 Act:

Proposed changes:

Remove Section 4(2) of the 2019 Act which gave the **right to self-identify gender** — replacing it with mandatory **Medical Board certification** headed by the Chief Medical Officer

Narrow the definition of “transgender” to specific socio-cultural identities (hijra, kinner, aravani, jogta) or medically-certified conditions

New penalties: Minimum 10 years rigorous imprisonment for kidnapping adults to force transgender identity; **life imprisonment + minimum ₹5 lakh fine** for forcing children

Background:

NALSA v. Union of India (2014): Landmark Supreme Court judgment affirming transgender persons' right to self-identify gender without medical/surgical requirement — basis of the 2019 Act's self-identification provision

Transgender Persons Act 2019: Certificates issued: **32,424** (as of 2026); Census 2011 counted ~4.88 lakh transgender persons

Criticism: The amendment bill is widely seen as contradicting the NALSA judgment and violating constitutional rights to dignity (Article 21) and equality (Articles 14-15)

UPSC Angle: GS-2 Social Issues / Polity — Transgender rights; NALSA judgment; Article 21 (dignity, privacy); Article 14-15 (equality); legislative vs judicial evolution of rights.

KALINJAR FORT REGION DECLARED NATIONAL GEO-HERITAGE SITE

The **Geological Survey of India (GSI)** designated the **Kalinjar Fort hill region** (Banda district, Uttar Pradesh) as a **National Geo-Heritage Site** (notified on March 16, 2026):

GSI's role: India's premier geological survey organisation (est. 1851); under Ministry of Mines; manages geological survey, mineral resource assessment, and now geo-heritage conservation

Kalinjar Fort: Historic fort on a plateau of the **Vindhyan Range**; Banda district, UP; significant in medieval Indian history (fought over by Chandelas, Sher Shah Suri died here, Mughal sieges)

Geological significance: Vindhyan Supergroup rocks — among India's oldest sedimentary formations (~1,600–600 million years old); significant for understanding Pre-Cambrian Earth history

National Geo-Heritage Sites: GSI designates sites of unique geological significance for conservation and scientific study; currently ~34 sites notified nationally

Also in UP: Sona Patthar — river pebbles used in building (natural curiosity)

UPSC Angle: GS-1 History / GS-3 Environment — Kalinjar Fort history; GSI mandate; geological heritage; Vindhyan Range; Pre-Cambrian geology; geo-heritage conservation.

TRIBAL PAINTINGS — TRIBES ART FEST 2026 AND GI TAGS

The **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** organised **Tribes Art Fest 2026** featuring 75+ tribal artists demonstrating 30+ distinct painting traditions, highlighting those with **Geographical Indication (GI) tags**:

Art Form	State	GI Tag	Key Features
Warli	Maharashtra	2014	Geometric (circle, triangle, square); white on red ochre; rice-flour paste
Sohrai & Khovar	Jharkhand	2020	Sohrai = harvest mural; Khovar = bridal chamber art; comb-cut technique
Pithora	Gujarat + MP	2021	Ritualistic; mandatory horse depiction; by Rathwa community
Gond	Madhya Pradesh	2023	Intricate dots/lines; Tree of Life motifs
Saura	Odisha	2024	Elongated geometric figures; italon/ikon style

Other notable traditions (no GI yet):

Bhil (MP, Rajasthan): Large uneven dots; each artist has unique pattern

Mandana (Rajasthan, MP): Meena community; Lakshmi footprints; prosperity symbolism

UPSC Angle: GS-1 History/Culture — Tribal art forms; GI tags; intangible cultural heritage; Ministry of Tribal Affairs; cultural diversity of India.

XI-CC-PLUS BARYON DISCOVERY — CERN'S LHCb EXPERIMENT

The **LHCb experiment at CERN** (Geneva) announced the discovery of the **Ξ_{cc}^{++} baryon**:

Particle: Ξ_{cc}^{++} baryon

Composition: 2 charm quarks + 1 down quark (3 quarks total = baryon)

Mass: ~4 times heavier than a proton

Significance: The **isospin partner** of the Ξ_{cc}^{++} (2 charm + 1 up quark, charge +2) discovered by LHCb in 2017; this 2026 particle (2 charm + 1 down quark, charge +1) is a distinct species; mass measured at ~3620 MeV/c² with a signal exceeding 7 sigma; unstable (decays rapidly)

First new particle observed after LHCb's 2023 detector upgrades; based on proton-proton collision data from LHC Run 3 (2024); also resolves a 20-year-old mystery from the SELEX experiment

Theory tested: Quantum Chromodynamics (QCD) — the theory describing the **strong nuclear force** that binds quarks into hadrons

CERN full form: European Organisation for Nuclear Research (French: Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire); headquarters: Geneva; India is an associate member

Key definitions:

Quark: Elementary particle with fractional electric charge; 6 types (up, down, strange, charm, bottom, top)

Baryon: Composite particle of 3 quarks (proton = 2 up + 1 down quark)

Hadron: Any particle composed of quarks; includes baryons (3 quarks) and mesons (quark + antiquark)

UPSC Angle: GS-3 S&T – Particle physics; CERN; fundamental forces; LHC; India-CERN collaboration; Standard Model of particle physics.

KRISHI SAKHI — UN 2026 INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE WOMAN FARMER

The **Agriculture Insurance Company of India Limited (AIC)** launched the **Krishi Sakhi Initiative** in the context of the United Nations designating **2026 as the International Year of the Woman Farmer**:

Krishi Sakhi Initiative (AIC): A nationwide campaign empowering women farmers through crop insurance awareness, training, and community engagement – aligning with the UN International Year of the Woman Farmer

Krishi Sakhi Convergence Programme (KSCP): A separate ongoing programme under DAY-NRLM training rural women as **para-extension workers in agriculture** – certified, skilled agricultural facilitators who advise other farmers on crop practices, soil health, MSP operations; target: **70,000 Krishi Sakhis** (over 30,000 certified as of June 2024 by PM Modi in Varanasi)

Link to Lakhpati Didi: Krishi Sakhi is one of the pathways under the PM's **Lakhpati Didi** programme (target: 3 crore rural women earning ₹1 lakh+ annually from livelihoods)

Women in Indian agriculture: Women constitute **~42% of India's agricultural labour force** but hold <14% of agricultural land ownership

UN designation: General Assembly Resolution designating 2026 as International Year of the Woman Farmer – draws attention to women's role in food security, gender gap in land rights, financial services access

UPSC Angle: GS-2 Social Issues / GS-3 Economy – Women in agriculture; Lakhpati Didi; SHG movement; land rights for women; food security; SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality).

UPSC RELEVANCE

BHAVYA (Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojna; ₹33,660 crore; 100 parks; NICDC; DPIIT; up to ₹1 cr/acre; Challenge Mode); SHP scheme (₹2,584 crore; FY2026-31; 1–25 MW; MNRE; NE ₹3.6 cr/MW; other ₹2.4 cr/MW); CCI (Cotton Corporation; Ministry of Textiles; ₹1,718.56 crore; 60 lakh farmers); Guillotine procedure (₹53 lakh crore FY27; Lok Sabha exclusive; Article 113/266); Press Note 3 (2020; prior approval for FDI from 7 land-border countries incl. Afghanistan; modified March 2026 via PN2/2026); Code on Social Security 2020 (Section 60(4) struck down; 12 weeks maternity for adoptive mothers; Article 21); Transgender Amendment Bill 2026 (removes self-identification; Medical Board; NALSA 2014; 32,424 certificates); Kalinjar Fort Geo-Heritage (GSI; Banda UP; Vindhyan Range); Xi-cc-plus baryon (2 charm + 1 down quark; 80th LHC hadron; QCD; CERN associate member India); Dark Fleet (AIS disabling; STS transfers; India 55% Russia dark fleet crude 5.4 MT 2025); Krishi Sakhi (90,000 para-extension workers; Lakhpati Didi; UN 2026 Year of Woman Farmer); GI tribal art (Warli 2014; Sohrai-Khobar 2020; Pithora 2021; Gond 2023; Saura 2024); IOS SAGAR (16 IONS nations; Kochi shore + sea deployment; IONS chair India Feb 2026); Collegium (Three Judges Cases 1981/1993/1998; NJAC 99th Amendment 2014; struck down 2015)

MAINS GS-2:

Guillotine and parliamentary financial accountability | Transgender rights amendment — NALSA judgment conflicts | Women's political representation (13.6% Lok Sabha vs 44% local bodies) | Collegium system opacity and reform | FDI policy and national security: Press Note 3

MAINS GS-3:

Dark fleet crude imports — India's energy security vs sanctions compliance | Labour codes and gender-inclusive maternity rights | BHAVYA plug-and-play parks — manufacturing ecosystem | India's maritime crude import dependence and UNCLOS gaps

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA
BHAVYA SCHEME:

Full form: Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojna
 Outlay: ₹33,660 crore; 100 plug-and-play industrial parks
 Park size: 100–1,000 acres; financial support: up to ₹1 crore/acre
 Implementing agency: NICDC (National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation Ltd)
 Ministry: DPIIT, Ministry of Commerce and Industry
 Jobs expected: ~15 lakh direct
 Based on: Atmanirbhar Bharat + Viksit Bharat 2047 vision

SMALL HYDRO POWER (SHP) DEVELOPMENT SCHEME:

Outlay: ₹2,584.60 crore; Period: FY 2026-27 to 2030-31
 Target capacity: ~1,500 MW; Project size: 1–25 MW
 Ministry: MNRE (Ministry of New and Renewable Energy)
 NE/border: ₹3.6 cr/MW or 30% cost (max ₹30 cr/project)
 Other states: ₹2.4 cr/MW or 20% cost (max ₹20 cr/project)
 DPR pipeline: 200 projects; ₹30 crore support for state agencies
 Expected private investment: ₹15,000 crore

COTTON MSP — CCI:

Approved: ₹1,718.56 crore for 2023-24 procurement; 60 lakh farmers
 CCI: Cotton Corporation of India; under Ministry of Textiles
 India: world's largest cotton producer; ~6 million farmers
 Major states: Gujarat (top), Maharashtra, Telangana, AP, Rajasthan, Punjab
 CCI network: 508+ procurement centres across 152 districts in 11 states; BITS + Cott-Ally app
 Cotton sector employment: 400–500 lakh people (ginning, processing, textiles, trade)

BARABANKI–BAHRAICH NH-927:

Length: 101.515 km; Cost: ₹6,969 crore; Mode: HAM
 HAM: 40% upfront by govt + 60% annuity over 15 years to developer
 Significance: UP Terai belt connectivity + Nepal border

IOS SAGAR:

Full form: Indian Ocean Ship — Security and Growth for All in the Region
 Edition: 2nd (commenced March 16, 2026); 1st edition: 2025
 Participants: 16 IONS (Indian Ocean Naval Symposium) nations
 IONS chair: India (assumed from Royal Thai Navy, Feb 2026; tenure 2026–28; 25 members + 9 observers)
 Training: Kochi (shore-based) → sea deployment on Indian Naval Ship
 SAGAR doctrine: PM Modi; Mauritius 2015; “Security and Growth for All in the Region”
 MAHASAGAR: PM Modi; Mauritius March 2025; broader successor framework; AIKEYME + IOS SAGAR launched under it

BHARAT ELECTRICITY SUMMIT 2026 / YASHOBHOOMI:

Venue: Yashobhoomi (India International Convention and Expo Centre), Dwarka, New Delhi
 Inaugurated: 17 September 2023 by PM Modi (Phase 1); India's largest convention and exhibition centre
 Summit hosted by: POWERGRID (nodal), NTPC, NHPC, REC, PFC; under Ministry of Power
 Theme: "Electrifying Growth. Empowering Sustainability. Connecting Globally"

COLLEGIUM SYSTEM – KEY FACTS:

Three Judges Cases: 1981 (S.P. Gupta), 1993 (SCAORA), 1998 (Presidential Reference)
 NJAC: 99th Constitutional Amendment 2014; struck down 2015 (4th Judges Case)
 SC bench strength: 34 (1 CJI + 33 judges); 25 High Courts in India
 HC established latest: Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh HC (2019)

GUILLOTINE PROCEDURE:

Constitutional basis: Article 113 (Demands for Grants); Article 266 (Consolidated Fund of India)
 Amount guillotined FY 2026-27: ₹53 lakh crore
 Process: Undiscussed demands put to vote en bloc by Speaker at end of allotted time
 Budget timeline: Budget presented Feb 1 → 3-week recess → Standing Committee review → Guillotine on final day → Finance Bill → Appropriation Bill
 Rajya Sabha: Cannot vote on money matters (only Lok Sabha); Rajya Sabha can only discuss and make recommendations

PRESS NOTE 3 (2020) – FDI FROM LAND-BORDER COUNTRIES:

Issued: April 2020 (during COVID-19 pandemic)
 Requirement: Prior government approval for FDI from countries sharing land border with India
 Countries covered: China, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, Afghanistan (7 countries)
 Modified: March 2026 (Press Note 2 of 2026) – up to 10% non-controlling stake under automatic route; 60-day processing timeline for select sectors
 Ministry: DPIIT, Ministry of Commerce and Industry

MATERNITY LEAVE – CODE ON SOCIAL SECURITY 2020:

SC struck down: Section 60(4) – restriction of adoption benefit to children < 3 months (case: Hamsaanandini Nanduri v. Union of India, March 17, 2026)
 Ruling: 12 weeks maternity leave for ALL adoptive mothers regardless of child's age
 Constitutional basis: Article 14 (right to equality) and Article 21 (right to dignity, reproductive autonomy)
 Labour Codes 2020: 4 codes consolidate 29 central labour laws (Code on Social Security consolidates 9 laws; Industrial Relations Code; Code on Wages; Occupational Safety Code)
 Code on Social Security: Effective 21 November 2025; replaced Maternity Benefit Act 1961, ESI Act 1948, EPF Act 1952, Payment of Gratuity Act 1972, among others
 Maternity Benefit Act 1961: Previously gave 26 weeks for <2 children births (post-2017 amendment)

TRANSGENDER PERSONS AMENDMENT BILL 2026:

Original Act: Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019
 Key change proposed: Remove Section 4(2) (self-identification right); introduce Medical Board headed by CMO
 NALSA v. Union of India (2014): SC affirmed right to self-identify gender; basis of 2019 Act
 Certificates issued under 2019 Act: 32,424
 Census 2011 transgender count: ~4.88 lakh
 Top states (transgender population): UP, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra

KALINJAR FORT AND GEO-HERITAGE:

GSI designation: National Geo-Heritage Site (notified March 16, 2026)

Location: Kalinjar Fort hill region, Banda district, Uttar Pradesh

GSI: Geological Survey of India; est. 1851; under Ministry of Mines

Geological significance: Vindhyan Supergroup (~1,600–600 million years old); Pre-Cambrian sedimentary formations

Kalinjar history: Chandela kings; Sher Shah Suri died during siege (1545); Mughal battles

XI-CC-PLUS BARYON (CERN):

Particle: Ξ^{++} (Xi-cc-plus); charge = +1; composition: 2 charm quarks + 1 down quark

Mass: ~4x heavier than proton

1st doubly-charmed baryon: Ξ^{++} (2 charm + 1 up quark; charge +2) — discovered 2017

Isospin partner: Ξ^{+} (2 charm + 1 down quark; charge +1) — discovered 2026; mass ~3620 MeV/c²; signal >7 sigma

First new particle observed after LHCb 2023 detector upgrades; based on Run 3 data (2024)

Theory tested: QCD (Quantum Chromodynamics) — strong nuclear force

CERN: European Organisation for Nuclear Research; Geneva; India = associate member

DARK FLEET / SHADOW TANKERS:

India's dark fleet crude (Jan–Sep 2025): 5.4 million tonnes on 30 false-flagged vessels; 55% of Russia's dark fleet crude sales

Tactics: AIS disabling, STS (ship-to-ship) transfers, flags of convenience (Panama, Liberia, Gabon), shell company ownership

UNCLOS: Limited enforcement on high seas; flag state has primary jurisdiction

India's oil import dependence: ~90%; Russia = ~35% of India's imports (since 2022 sanctions)

GI-TAGGED TRIBAL ART FORMS:

Warli (Maharashtra): 2014 — geometric; white on red ochre; rice flour paste

Sohrai + Khovar (Jharkhand): 2020 — harvest mural + bridal chamber art

Pithora (Gujarat, MP): 2021 — ritualistic; horse motif; Rathwa community

Gond (MP): 2023 — dots/lines; Tree of Life motif

Saura (Odisha): 2024 — elongated geometric figures

KRISHI SAKHI:

AIC Initiative: Agriculture Insurance Company of India launched Krishi Sakhi campaign for women farmer empowerment and crop insurance awareness

KSCP (Krishi Sakhi Convergence Programme): DAY-NRLM; target 70,000 para-extension workers; 30,000+ certified by PM in Varanasi (June 2024); linked to Lakhpati Didi (3 crore women; ₹1 lakh+ income)

UN Year of Woman Farmer: 2026 (UN General Assembly designation)

Women in Indian agriculture: ~42% of labour force; <14% land ownership

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

India's installed power capacity (Jan 2026): 520.5 GW; ~52.3% from non-fossil fuels (271.96 GW non-fossil; solar alone: 140.60 GW)

India's NDC commitment: 500 GW non-fossil fuel capacity by 2030

NICDC previously known as DMICDC (Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor Dev. Corp.); renamed February 2020

BHAVYA selection: Challenge Mode (competitive state selection)

BHAVYA also covers: 25% of external connectivity costs (roads to nearest NH/expressway)

Women MPs in 18th Lok Sabha: 74 out of 543 (13.6%); global average: ~26%

Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (2023): 33% reservation in Lok Sabha + State Assemblies post-delimitation (post-Census 2027)

Sources: [PIB](#), [GKToday](#), [Insights IAS](#), [DD News](#), [Drishiti IAS](#)

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CURATED & WRITTEN BY

Bharat Choudhary

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

 [linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)

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