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# Current Affairs Today — March 20, 2026

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## 📌 WHY IN NEWS

India secured hosting rights for the 2028 World Indoor Athletics Championships at Bhubaneswar. The World Happiness Report 2026 highlighted social media risks for youth. The government launched the RELIEF scheme for exporters and notified new toll compliance rules. The Indian Army conducted Exercise Amogh Jwala showcasing multi-domain warfare capabilities.

## WORLD HAPPINESS REPORT 2026 — FINLAND TOPS, INDIA RANKS 116TH

The **World Happiness Report 2026**, published by the **Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford** in partnership with **Gallup**, the **UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)** and an independent editorial board, ranked **Finland #1 for the ninth consecutive year**. India ranked

**116th out of 147 nations**, an improvement from 118th in 2025 (score: 4.536).

**Top 10 countries:** 1. Finland (7.764) → 2. Iceland (7.540) → 3. Denmark (7.539) → 4. Costa Rica (7.439) → 5. Sweden (7.255) → 6. Norway (7.242) → 7. Netherlands (7.223) → 8. Israel (7.187) → 9. Luxembourg (7.063) → 10. Switzerland (7.018)

**India's position:** 116th (up from 118th in 2025 and 126th in 2024); Nepal ranked 99th, Pakistan 104th — both ahead of India; Afghanistan ranked last (147th); Sierra Leone (146th) and Malawi (145th) in the bottom three. No English-speaking country featured in the top 10.

**Released on:** March 19, 2026 (ahead of the **International Day of Happiness — March 20**; first WHR published in 2012)

**Methodology:** Gallup World Poll surveys ~100,000 respondents globally using the **Cantril Life Satisfaction Ladder** (self-rating 0–10, averaged over a 3-year rolling window). Rankings are explained using six variables:

- GDP per capita (PPP)
- Social support
- Healthy life expectancy
- Freedom to make life choices
- Generosity
- Perceptions of corruption

**Key finding — Social Media Alert:**

- Youth in developed nations (US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand) reporting declining life satisfaction, linked to excessive social media use
- Teenagers using social media **5+ hours/day** reported significantly lower well-being, particularly girls
- Moderate usage (under 1 hour/day) correlated with higher life satisfaction
- Report calls for digital literacy policy and screen-time regulation

**Latin America milestone:** Costa Rica achieved its highest-ever ranking (4th) for any Latin American nation.

**UPSC Relevance:** GS1 (Society — well-being, gender), GS2 (International reports, social media regulation), GS4 (Ethics — social media impact on values). **UN Resolution 65/309 (2011)** mandated happiness measurement; Bhutan pioneered **Gross National Happiness (GNH)** in 1972.

## INDIA TO HOST 2028 WORLD INDOOR ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS — BHUBANESWAR

The **World Athletics Council** awarded India hosting rights for the **2028 World Indoor Athletics Championships**, to be held at the **Kalinga Stadium complex, Bhubaneswar, Odisha**. The decision was made at the Council's meeting in Torun, Poland.

### Key facts:

First time India hosts this championship; **22nd edition** of the meet

India becomes the **4th Asian nation** to host (after Japan 1999, Qatar 2010, China 2025)

**Dates:** March 3–5, 2028

The event features **26 competitions** (13 men's + 13 women's) held over **3 days**

Bhubaneswar previously hosted Hockey World Cup (2018, 2023) and multiple national championships

**Kalinga Stadium** has been developed into a world-class multi-sport facility; a two-member World Athletics team inspected the venue in January 2026

The 2026 edition was held in Torun, Poland (March 20–22)

**Athletics Federation of India (AFI) President:** Bahadur Singh Sagoo (former Asian Games gold medallist shot putter); succeeded Adille Sumariwalla

### Significance for India:

Follows India's growing track record as a sporting event host (Hockey WC, Khelo India, Commonwealth Games 2010)

Supports development of indoor athletics infrastructure

Aligns with **Khelo India** mission and National Sports Policy

**UPSC Relevance:** GS2 (Governance — sports policy, Khelo India), GS1 (Indian society — sports culture).

## EXERCISE AMOGH JWALA — INDIAN ARMY'S MULTI-DOMAIN WARFARE DEMONSTRATION

The **Indian Army's Southern Command** conducted **Exercise Amogh Jwala** at the **Babina Field Firing Ranges** (near Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh), demonstrating integrated multi-domain warfare capabilities.

### What was showcased:

Coordinated use of **attack helicopters, fighter aircraft, drones, and counter-drone systems**

Operations across **land, air, cyber, and space domains simultaneously**

**Drone-enabled surveillance** and precision strikes

**Electronic Warfare (EW) systems**

**Night-fighting capabilities**

**Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) integration** for real-time battlefield awareness

**Duration:** March 6–18, 2026 (13 days) **Executed by:** **White Tiger Division** (armoured division under Southern Command) **Presided by:** GOC-in-C Southern Command **Lt Gen Dhiraj Seth**, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM (HQ: Pune) **Historic first:** First-ever integration of **Attack Helicopters with mechanised ground forces** in an Indian Army exercise

**Significance:**

Reflects India’s shift from traditional mechanised warfare to **network-centric, technology-driven operations**

Demonstrates jointness and integrated capabilities across services

Babina is a major armoured warfare training centre in Jhansi district, UP

**UPSC Relevance:** GS3 (Security – modernisation of armed forces, jointness, drone warfare, counter-drone policy).

## RELIEF SCHEME — GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR EXPORTERS AMID WEST ASIAN TENSIONS

The Government of India approved the **RELIEF (Resilience & Logistics Intervention for Export Facilitation)** scheme — a **Rs 497 crore** time-bound intervention under the **Export Promotion Mission (EPM)** — to support Indian exporters facing disruptions due to West Asian geopolitical tensions (US-Israel war with Iran, Strait of Hormuz security concerns).

**Key features:**

**Total outlay:** Rs 497 crore

**Nodal implementing agency:** **ECGC Ltd** (Export Credit Guarantee Corporation of India, est. 1957; wholly owned by Ministry of Commerce & Industry)

**Component I (Rs 282 crore):** Partial reimbursement (up to 50%) of extraordinary freight and insurance surcharges for MSME exporters (Feb 14–Mar 15, 2026)

**Component II (Rs 159 crore):** Government-supported ECGC cover with up to 95% risk coverage for future consignments (Mar 16–Jun 15, 2026)

**Component III (Rs 56 crore):** Up to 100% risk coverage for exporters already holding ECGC credit insurance

Focus sectors: Textiles, pharmaceuticals, engineering goods, marine products

### Context:

Escalating security concerns around the **Strait of Hormuz** due to the US-Israel war with Iran have led to vessel diversions, longer sailing routes, congestion at transshipment hubs and conflict-linked surcharges

In FY24, freight rates on key routes rose **90–100%** within a short period during the Red Sea crisis

India's exports to Europe via Suez Canal account for ~30% of total merchandise exports

**UPSC Relevance:** GS3 (Economy — export promotion, India's trade policy, supply chain disruptions, MSMEs, ECGC) + GS2 (IR — West Asia tensions, Strait of Hormuz, Red Sea geopolitics).

## NEW TOLL COMPLIANCE RULES — NATIONAL HIGHWAYS FEE RULES 2026

The Government of India notified amendments to the **National Highways Fee Rules** to enhance toll compliance and improve transparency on national highways.

### Key changes (effective March 17, 2026):

Introduces definition of “**unpaid user fee**” — toll applicable to a vehicle whose passage was digitally recorded but fee not received (insufficient FASTag balance, failed transactions, or evasion)

**E-notice system:** Electronic notices issued to registered vehicle owners specifying vehicle details, date/location of passage, and amount payable

**Penalty:** Unpaid toll fee payable via e-notice is **double the applicable toll**; however, if paid within **72 hours**, only the original fee applies (no penalty)

Integration with **VAHAN database** for seamless vehicle identification and enforcement

If unpaid beyond **15 days** (and no representation pending), dues recorded in VAHAN and vehicle-related services may be restricted

**Grievance redressal:** Representation via designated portal within 72 hours; must be resolved within 5 days, failing which the claim lapses

### Background:

FASTag, mandatory since February 2021, covers ~98% of toll transactions

NHAI collects approximately **₹60,000 crore+ annually** from toll plazas

National Highway Network: ~1.46 lakh km (2025)

Ministry: **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH)**

NHAI: **National Highways Authority of India** (statutory body under NHAI Act, 1988)

**UPSC Relevance:** GS3 (Infrastructure — road transport, FASTag, NHAI, highway development policy).

## IIT JODHPUR DEVELOPS FLEXIBLE SEMICONDUCTOR SENSORS FOR HEALTH MONITORING

Researchers at **IIT Jodhpur** developed **flexible semiconductor sensors** capable of **continuous health monitoring and early disease detection**, placing them on the body like a patch.

### Key features:

**Flexible substrate:** Can conform to the human body, unlike rigid silicon chips

Technology basis: **Organic Electrochemical Transistor (OECT)** — a class of semiconductor devices suited for interfacing with biological signals and fluids

Monitors: Heart rate, muscle activity (EMG), body temperature, skin pressure in real-time

**Biochemical sensing:** Detects clinically relevant biomarkers in biofluids (saliva, serum, blood) — enables **early cancer detection** and point-of-care diagnostics

Applications: Elderly care, chronic disease management, rural health camps, dental clinics, mobile healthcare units

**Lab:** HESTECH (Hybrid Electronic Sensor Technologies) Lab, led by **Dr Akshay Moudgil**, Assistant Professor, Department of Electrical Engineering, IIT Jodhpur

### Significance:

Addresses India's growing non-communicable disease (NCD) burden

Enables preventive healthcare — continuous monitoring rather than periodic check-ups

Reduces healthcare system load by enabling remote patient monitoring

Supports **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)** goals of connected health data

**UPSC Relevance:** GS3 (Science & Technology — health tech, semiconductors, OECT, biomedical devices, Make in India in healthcare).

## YOGA 365 CAMPAIGN — MINISTRY OF AYUSH FOR DAILY YOGA PRACTICE

The **Ministry of Ayush** launched **Yoga 365**, a nationwide campaign encouraging Indians to adopt yoga as a **daily practice**, not just on International Yoga Day (June 21).

### Key features:

Unveiled at **Yoga Mahotsav 2026** at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi — marks **100-day countdown** to International Day of Yoga (June 21, 2026)

**Year-round umbrella initiative** (unlike the annual June 21 event)

Digital platform for daily yoga routines, guided sessions, and progress tracking

**Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga (MDNIY)** signed MoU with wellness platform Habuild for free daily online yoga sessions

Integration with **FIT India Mission** and **Ayushman Bharat**

Partnerships with schools, workplaces, communities, and panchayats

Ministry of Ayush established in **November 2014** (AYUSH = Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Homeopathy)

Despite **95%+ awareness** of yoga across India, consistent daily practice remains low — Yoga 365 aims to bridge this gap

### International Yoga Day context:

First International Day of Yoga: **June 21, 2015** (declared by UN in December 2014 on India's initiative)

**21 June** chosen as it is the longest day of the year (summer solstice) in the Northern Hemisphere

Theme-based annual celebrations held globally

**UPSC Relevance:** GS2 (Governance — health policy, soft power, Ayush ministry), GS1 (Culture — yoga as intangible heritage).

## GAU-TECH 2026 EXHIBITION — PROMOTING COW-BASED ECONOMY

The **Maharashtra Goseva Commission** is organising **Gau-Tech 2026** from **March 20–23** at the **Agriculture College, Pune** in partnership with the **Global Confederation of Cow-Based Industries (GCCBI)**, showcasing products derived from indigenous cattle.

### What is Gau-Tech:

Exhibition of cow-based products: organic fertilisers, bio-energy, dairy products, cow dung and urine-based innovations, natural farming, veterinary sciences, fodder industries, startups and research-based products

Over **300 stalls**, 10+ thematic conferences, B2B meetings, international participation; expected footfall exceeding **5 lakh visitors**

Promotes the **Gau-Adharit Arthvyavastha** (Cow-Based Economy) concept — aims to move gaushalas from donation-based dependency toward **financial autonomy**

Aligns with **Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog (RKA)** mandate — set up in 2019 under MoFAHD

### Maharashtra Goseva Commission:

Statutory body under **Maharashtra Goseva Aayog Act**

Mandate: Welfare of indigenous cattle, promotion of cow-based livelihoods

**UPSC Relevance:** GS3 (Economy — animal husbandry, bio-economy, rural livelihoods, organic farming), GS1 (Culture — cow in Indian tradition).

## KAVEH MADANI WINS 2026 STOCKHOLM WATER PRIZE

**Kaveh Madani**, Director of the **UN University Institute for Water, Environment and Health (UNU-INWEH)**, received the prestigious **2026 Stockholm Water Prize**, awarded by the **Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI)**.

### About Kaveh Madani:

Iranian-American water scientist and environmental policy expert; also Research Professor at **City College of New York (CCNY)**

**Age 44** — youngest laureate in the prize's **35-year history**

First **UN official** and first **former politician** to receive the honour

Former Deputy Head of Iran's Department of Environment

Introduced the concept of "**water bankruptcy**" — long-term systemic water shortage, not just temporary crisis

Applied **game theory and decision analysis** to water resource management

Announced on **March 18, 2026** at UNESCO headquarters, Paris, ahead of **World Water Day (March 22)**

### About the Stockholm Water Prize:

Often called the "Nobel Prize for Water"

Formally presented by **Sweden's King Carl XVI Gustaf** in August during Stockholm World Water Week

Includes a cash prize of **1 million SEK** and a crystal sculpture

Awarded by the **Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI)**

**UNU-INWEH:** Based in Hamilton, Canada; focuses on water sustainability, water security and governance in developing nations

**UPSC Relevance:** GS3 (Environment — water security, transboundary water management, international water governance).

## GHADC TERM EXTENDED — MEGHALAYA'S GOVERNANCE ROW

The **Meghalaya government** extended the term of the **Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (GHADC)** by **six months** amid a controversy over delayed elections.

## What is GHADC:

One of three **Autonomous District Councils (ADCs)** in Meghalaya (others: Khasi Hills ADC, Jaintia Hills ADC)

Governed under the **Sixth Schedule** of the Indian Constitution

Sixth Schedule provides for autonomous governance of tribal areas in **Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram**

ADCs have legislative, judicial, and executive powers over tribal subjects (land, forests, use of waterways, shifting cultivation, etc.)

## Garo Hills:

Region in western Meghalaya, home to the **Garo tribe** (one of the major tribes of the Northeast)

Majority Christian population; distinct cultural identity from Khasi-dominated Shillong

## Why term was extended:

Extension for **six months from April 18 to October 18, 2026**

Tensions and **violence in parts of Garo Hills** over the issue of **participation of non-tribal candidates** in GHADC elections

Government will hold stakeholder consultations over six months to resolve concerns surrounding candidate eligibility

**Dormonarth Ch. Sangma** elected as new Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the GHADC

**UPSC Relevance:** GS2 (Polity — Sixth Schedule, ADCs, tribal governance, Northeast India federalism, Article 244, tribal-non-tribal tensions).

## **FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA**

### World Happiness Report 2026:

Publisher: Wellbeing Research Centre, University of Oxford (in partnership with Gallup, SDSN)

First edition: 2012; released annually on/around International Day of Happiness (March 20)

Finland: #1 for the 9th consecutive year (score: 7.764)

India rank: 116th (out of 147 nations; score: 4.536); up from 118th in 2025 and 126th in 2024

Nepal: 99th; Pakistan: 104th (both ahead of India); Afghanistan: Last (147th)

Costa Rica: 4th — highest ever for Latin America; no English-speaking country in top 10

Methodology: Cantril Life Satisfaction Ladder (Gallup World Poll), 3-year rolling average

UN Resolution 65/309 (2011) mandated happiness measurement

**2028 World Indoor Athletics Championships:**

Host city: Bhubaneswar, Odisha; Venue: Kalinga Stadium complex

Dates: March 3–5, 2028; 22nd edition of the meet

India: 4th Asian nation to host (after Japan 1999, Qatar 2010, China 2025)

Awarded by: World Athletics Council (at meeting in Torun, Poland)

26 competitions (13M + 13W) over 3 days

AFI President: Bahadur Singh Sagoo (succeeded Adille Sumariwalla)

**Exercise Amogh Jwala:**

Meaning: “Unerring Flame”; Duration: March 6–18, 2026

Conducted by: White Tiger Division, Southern Command (HQ: Pune)

Location: Babina Field Firing Ranges, Jhansi district, Uttar Pradesh

GOC-in-C Southern Command: Lt Gen Dhiraj Seth, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM

Historic first: First-ever integration of Attack Helicopters with mechanised ground forces

Domains: Land, Air, Cyber, Space

**RELIEF Scheme:**

Full form: Resilience & Logistics Intervention for Export Facilitation

Total outlay: Rs 497 crore (under Export Promotion Mission)

Implementing agency: ECGC Ltd (Export Credit Guarantee Corporation, est. 1957; under Ministry of Commerce & Industry)

Component I (Rs 282 cr): 50% freight reimbursement for MSMEs (Feb 14–Mar 15, 2026)

Component II (Rs 159 cr): 95% risk coverage via ECGC (Mar 16–Jun 15, 2026)

Component III (Rs 56 cr): 100% risk coverage for existing ECGC-insured exporters

**National Highways Fee Rules 2026 (Second Amendment):**

Effective: March 17, 2026; Ministry: MoRTH

Unpaid toll: Double the applicable amount; waived if paid within 72 hours

Integration with VAHAN database; restrictions on vehicle services if unpaid beyond 15 days

NHAI annual toll revenue: ~Rs 60,000 crore+

National Highway Network: ~1.46 lakh km; FASTag mandatory since February 2021

**IIT Jodhpur Flexible Sensors:**

Technology: Organic Electrochemical Transistor (OECT) on flexible substrate

Lab: HESTECH Lab, led by Dr Akshay Moudgil

Capabilities: Heart rate, EMG, temperature, skin pressure, early cancer detection

Applications: Point-of-care diagnostics, rural health camps, wearable ECG patches

### **Yoga 365 — Ministry of Ayush:**

Launched at: Yoga Mahotsav 2026, Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi (100-day countdown to IDY)

Ministry of Ayush est. November 2014; First IDY: June 21, 2015

MDNIY signed MoU with Habuild for free daily online yoga sessions

Yoga awareness in India: 95%+ but consistent daily practice remains low

### **Gau-Tech 2026:**

Dates: March 20–23, 2026; Venue: Agriculture College, Pune

Organiser: Maharashtra Goseva Commission + GCCBI

300+ stalls, 10+ conferences, expected footfall: 5 lakh+

Related body: Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog (est. 2019, under MoFAHD)

### **Stockholm Water Prize 2026:**

Winner: Kaveh Madani (Director, UNU-INWEH; age 44 — youngest laureate in 35 years)

First UN official and first former politician to receive the prize

Announced: March 18, 2026, UNESCO HQ, Paris; presented by King Carl XVI Gustaf in August

Prize: 1 million SEK + crystal sculpture; awarded by SIWI

Key concept: “Water bankruptcy” — systemic long-term water shortage

### **GHADC — Meghalaya:**

Full form: Garo Hills Autonomous District Council

Constitutional basis: Sixth Schedule, Article 244

Extension: 6 months (April 18–October 18, 2026) amid non-tribal participation controversy

New CEM: Dormonarth Ch. Sangma

Three ADCs in Meghalaya: Garo Hills, Khasi Hills, Jaintia Hills

Sixth Schedule states: Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram

### **Other Relevant Facts:**

International Day of Yoga: June 21 (UN declared December 2014; first celebrated 2015)

Babina: Major armoured warfare training centre in Jhansi district, UP

ECGC Ltd: Wholly owned by GoI; under Ministry of Commerce & Industry

NHAI established under: National Highways Authority of India Act, 1988

Bhutan pioneered Gross National Happiness (GNH) in 1972 — predates WHR

OEET: Organic Electrochemical Transistor — suited for biological signal and fluid interfacing

Sources: [GKToday](#), [PIB](#), [The Hindu](#)

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