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Current Affairs Today – March 21, 2026

21 March 2026

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WHY IN NEWS

A comprehensive roundup of all major current affairs developments on March 21, 2026, covering institutional reforms, environmental concerns, cultural heritage, trade data, health alerts, scientific discoveries, and notable personalities.

NATIONAL DENTAL COMMISSION CONSTITUTED, REPLACES DENTAL COUNCIL OF INDIA

The Government of India formally constituted the **National Dental Commission (NDC)**, replacing the dissolved **Dental Council of India (DCI)**. The **Dentists Act, 1948** stands repealed and is replaced by the **National Dental Commission Act, 2023**.

KEY APPOINTMENTS

Dr. Sanjay Tewari — Chairperson, NDC

Dr. Mousumi Goswami — Part-Time Member

THREE AUTONOMOUS BODIES

Undergraduate and Postgraduate Dental Education Board — oversees dental curriculum and education standards

Dental Assessment and Rating Board — institutional accreditation and assessment

Ethics and Dental Registration Board — professional conduct, registration, and disciplinary matters

MANDATE

The NDC will frame regulations for dental education, conduct institutional rating and assessment, evaluate human resource needs, promote dental research, regulate fees in private dental colleges, and establish standards for community dental care.

UPSC ANGLE

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NATIONAL DENTAL COMMISSION:

Replaces: Dental Council of India (dissolved March 19, 2026)

Repealed Act: Dentists Act, 1948

Chairperson: Dr. Sanjay Tewari

Three autonomous boards: Education Board, Assessment & Rating Board, Ethics & Registration Board

Parallel reform: NMC replaced MCI in 2020 under NMC Act, 2019

TAMIL NADU LEADS INDIA IN TEXTILE EXPORTS

Tamil Nadu recorded textile exports of **USD 7,997.17 million** in **FY 2024-25**, accounting for **21.84%** of India's total textile exports of **USD 36,610 million**.

STATE RANKINGS (FY 2024-25)

Rank	State	Exports (USD million)
1	Tamil Nadu	7,997.17
2	Gujarat	5,646.01
3	Maharashtra	3,831.29

GROWTH TRAJECTORY

Tamil Nadu's textile exports grew by **29%** over four years — from USD 6,193 million in FY 2020-21 to USD 7,997 million in FY 2024-25.

DRIVERS

Strong industrial capacity in Tiruppur (knitwear capital), Coimbatore, and Erode; improved supply chains; policy support under state industrial policy; efficient port logistics via Chennai and Tuticorin; and a skilled workforce.

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INDIA TEXTILE EXPORTS FY 2024-25:

Total: USD 36,610 million

#1 Tamil Nadu: USD 7,997.17 million (21.84% share)

#2 Gujarat: USD 5,646.01 million

#3 Maharashtra: USD 3,831.29 million

Tamil Nadu 4-year growth: 29% (FY 2020-21 to FY 2024-25)

Tiruppur: India's knitwear export hub

GLOBAL METHANE SUPER-EMITTERS IDENTIFIED VIA SATELLITE MONITORING

A satellite-based study by **UCLA's Stop Methane Project** using **Carbon Mapper** data identified **4,400+ methane plumes** across nearly **2,500 oil and gas facilities** worldwide.

KEY FINDINGS

Turkmenistan hosts approximately 15 of the 25 highest-emitting oil and gas sites globally

Other hotspots: **Iran, Venezuela, Texas (USA), Sindh (Pakistan)**

Super-emitter range: **3.7 to 10.5 metric tonnes per hour**

A single 5 tonnes/hour leak has a warming impact comparable to a major coal power plant or ~1 million vehicles

METHANE FACTS

Atmospheric lifespan: **~12 years** (much shorter than CO₂'s centuries)

Heat-trapping potency: **28x more than CO₂** over a century; **86x more over 20 years**

Responsible for nearly **30% of global warming** since the Industrial Revolution

Root causes: equipment leaks, flaring inefficiencies, poor infrastructure maintenance

INDIA CONTEXT

Ghazipur landfill (Delhi) recorded extreme methane events exceeding **400 tonnes per hour**

India has **not signed** the **Global Methane Pledge** (COP26, Glasgow 2021) – which aims to reduce methane emissions by 30% below 2020 levels by 2030 – citing concerns over its large agricultural sector (livestock, rice paddies)

FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

METHANE SUPER-EMITTERS:

Study: UCLA Stop Methane Project + Carbon Mapper satellite data

4,400+ plumes across 2,500 oil and gas facilities

Turkmenistan: 15 of 25 highest-emitting sites

Methane: 28x more potent than CO₂ (100 years); 86x (20 years)

Methane lifespan: ~12 years

Responsible for ~30% of global warming since Industrial Revolution

Global Methane Pledge: COP26, Glasgow 2021; target: 30% reduction by 2030

India: Ghazipur landfill recorded >400 tonnes/hour

LEGIONNAIRES' DISEASE SURGE RAISES URBAN WATER SAFETY CONCERNS

Outbreaks of **Legionnaires' disease** in **London** and **New York City** (multiple deaths traced to contaminated cooling towers) have raised global urban water safety concerns.

ABOUT THE DISEASE

Pathogen: *Legionella pneumophila* bacterium (first identified in **1976** at an American Legion convention in Philadelphia)

Severe form of **pneumonia**; **NOT contagious** (no person-to-person transmission)

Transmission: inhaling contaminated water droplets/aerosols from cooling towers, HVAC systems, fountains, plumbing

Incubation period: 2-14 days

Mortality rate: approximately **5-10%**

SYMPTOMS

High fever, cough, breathlessness, muscle pain, confusion (in severe cases)

RISK FACTORS

Warm, stagnant water favours bacterial growth

Rising global temperatures increase risk

Vulnerable: elderly, smokers, immunocompromised persons

INDIA CONTEXT

Sporadic cases reported in India; large outbreaks rare but possibly underdiagnosed. High-risk facilities include hospitals, hotels, and large residential complexes with centralised water/AC systems.

FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

LEGIONNAIRES' DISEASE:

Pathogen: *Legionella pneumophila* (discovered 1976, Philadelphia)

Type: severe pneumonia; NOT contagious

Transmission: contaminated water aerosols (cooling towers, HVAC, plumbing)

Incubation: 2-14 days

Mortality: 5-10%

Vulnerable: elderly, smokers, immunocompromised

Current outbreaks: London, New York City (2026)

NOT spread person-to-person

ALMM FRAMEWORK EXTENDED TO SOLAR INGOTS AND WAFERS

The **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE)** announced **ALMM List-III** (for solar ingots and wafers) via Office Memorandum on **March 17, 2026**.

ALMM STRUCTURE

List	Component	Status
List-I	Solar PV Modules	Operational
List-II	Solar PV Cells	Operational
List-III	Ingots and Wafers	Effective June 1, 2028

KEY CONDITIONS FOR LIST-III

Will only be published if at least **3 independent wafer manufacturing units** exist with combined capacity of **at least 15 GW**

Companies applying for wafer list must also have matching **ingot manufacturing capacity**

All ALMM-covered projects must use modules from List-I, made from List-II cells, using List-III wafers

CURRENT SCALE

ALMM solar module capacity surpassed **173,144 MW (173 GW)** in March 2026 after adding 11,035 MW.

UPSC ANGLE

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ALMM (APPROVED LIST OF MODELS AND MANUFACTURERS):

Nodal ministry: MNRE

List-I: Solar PV Modules; List-II: Solar PV Cells; List-III: Ingots & Wafers (from June 2028)

List-III threshold: minimum 3 units with combined 15 GW capacity

Current ALMM module capacity: 173+ GW (March 2026)

Part of India's solar self-reliance push under PLI Scheme for Solar PV

CHAPCHAR KUT FESTIVAL SHOWCASES MIZORAM'S CULTURAL HERITAGE

Chapchar Kut, Mizoram's major spring festival, was celebrated with week-long festivities in **Aizawl**.

KEY DETAILS

2026 theme: "Zo nun ze mawi — Inremna" (Mizo Ethics — Reconciliation)

Agricultural significance: celebrated after **jhum (shifting cultivation)** — specifically after forest clearing and burning, before the sowing season

Primary dance: Cheraw (bamboo dance) — performed with pairs of bamboo poles tapped rhythmically on the ground

Also features: folk music, group performances, art exhibitions, textile displays, handicraft showcases, food festivals, flower shows

CULTURAL VALUES

Promotes: respect for elders, community service, mutual support, social harmony, gratitude, and connection with nature.

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CHAPCHAR KUT:

State: Mizoram; celebrated in March annually in Aizawl

Type: spring/harvest festival linked to jhum cultivation

Primary dance: Cheraw (bamboo dance)

2026 theme: “Zo nun ze mawi — Inremna”

OTHER NE INDIA FESTIVALS (FOR COMPARISON):

Bihu — Assam (harvest, April)

Hornbill Festival — Nagaland (December)

Wangala — Meghalaya (Garo post-harvest, November)

Sangai Festival — Manipur (November)

AYUSH MINISTRY LAUNCHES IN-FLIGHT YOGA ROUTINE

The **Ministry of Ayush** introduced a **five-minute in-flight yoga routine** during **Yoga Mahotsav 2026**, developed by the **Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga (MDNIY)**.

KEY DETAILS

Launched by **Prataprao Jadhav**, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Ayush

Routine includes: centering techniques, joint movements (shoulder rotations, ankle stretches), seated spinal twists, breathing exercises (Anulom Vilom and Bhramari)

Addresses: stiffness, fatigue, poor circulation, increased stress, and **Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)** risk from prolonged sitting

No special equipment required

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IN-FLIGHT YOGA ROUTINE:

Ministry: Ayush

Institute: Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga (MDNIY), New Delhi

MoS (I/C) Ayush: Prataprao Jadhav

Event: Yoga Mahotsav 2026

International Day of Yoga: June 21 (since 2015, UNGA Resolution 69/131)

BLUE VOICE APP FOR COASTAL FISHER SAFETY

Pondicherry University launched the “**Blue Voice**” mobile application to improve safety and disaster preparedness for coastal fishing communities.

FEATURES

Real-time, location-specific weather updates in simplified, accessible format

Alerts for storms, wind patterns, and sea conditions

Participatory model — fishers can share experiential/traditional knowledge integrated with modern weather data

Designed for users with **limited digital literacy**; addresses language barriers

UPSC ANGLE

Aligns with **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030** and India’s **National Disaster Management Plan** emphasis on community-based early warning systems.

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

BLUE VOICE APP:

Developer: Pondicherry University

Purpose: coastal fisher safety + disaster preparedness

Key feature: participatory model integrating traditional + modern weather data

Sendai Framework: 2015-2030, adopted at 3rd UN World Conference on DRR, Sendai, Japan

EARTHQUAKE HITS SOUTH SHETLAND ISLANDS NEAR ANTARCTICA

A **magnitude 6.7** earthquake struck the **South Shetland Islands**, reported by the **German Research Centre for Geosciences (GFZ)**. No tsunami threat was reported.

ABOUT SOUTH SHETLAND ISLANDS

Remote archipelago ~**120 km north of the Antarctic Peninsula**, in the Southern Ocean

First discovered in **1819** by British mariner **William Smith**

Formed through **volcanic activity**; some islands remain volcanically active, especially **Deception Island** (has a large flooded caldera)

Over **80% covered by permanent ice**; no permanent human population

Multiple countries operate seasonal research stations (glaciology, marine biology, climate)

Wildlife: four penguin species — **Gentoo, Chinstrap, Adelie, Macaroni**; seals; whales

FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

SOUTH SHETLAND ISLANDS:

Location: ~120 km north of Antarctic Peninsula, Southern Ocean

Discovered: 1819 by William Smith (British)

Geology: volcanic origin; Deception Island has active flooded caldera

Ice cover: >80%; no permanent population

Penguin species: Gentoo, Chinstrap, Adelie, Macaroni

Earthquake: M6.7 (March 21, 2026); reported by GFZ; no tsunami

MAHARASHTRA SIGNS MOU UNDER JAL JEEVAN MISSION 2.0

The Government of Maharashtra signed a reform-linked **MoU** with the **Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Ministry of Jal Shakti** on **March 19, 2026**, presided over by **CM Devendra Fadnavis**.

KEY INITIATIVES

Jal Seva Aankalan — community feedback at Gram Panchayat level

Meri Panchayat app — transparency and accountability platform

Three-tier Jal Utsav awareness campaign

Digital Decision Support System for data-driven planning

Jal Arpan process — handover of completed water schemes to local bodies for sustainability

PROGRESS

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JAL JEEVAN MISSION:

Launched: August 15, 2019 by PM Modi

Goal: Functional Household Tap Connection (FHTC) to every rural household by 2024 (extended)

Current coverage: ~80% of rural households

Ministry: Jal Shakti (Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation)

Budget: Rs 3.60 lakh crore (total outlay)

JJM 2.0: reform-linked approach with state MoUs

IRULA TRIBE — PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TRIBAL GROUP

The **Irula (Irul)** people, a **Dravidian ethnic group** primarily in **Tamil Nadu**, were in news.

KEY FACTS

Live mainly in the **Nilgiri Mountains** of the Western Ghats (also in Kerala and Karnataka)

One of India's **oldest indigenous communities**

Classified as a **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG)** in Tamil Nadu

Speak the **Irula language** (related to Tamil and Kannada)

Traditionally skilled in **hunting, herbal medicine, and snake-catching**

SNAKE VENOM CONTRIBUTION

The **Irula Snake Catchers' Industrial Cooperative Society** (near Chennai) supplies **80% of the venom** used to produce anti-snake venom serum in India — a critical public health contribution.

Primary deity: **Kanniamma** (associated with the cobra)

Important festival: **Masi Magam** (Tamil calendar)

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IRULA TRIBE:

Region: Tamil Nadu (Nilgiri Mountains), Kerala, Karnataka
 Classification: PVTG in Tamil Nadu
 Language: Irula (Dravidian family)
 Skills: snake-catching, herbal medicine, hunting
 Irula Snake Catchers' Cooperative: supplies 80% of India's anti-snake venom
 Deity: Kanniamma; Festival: Masi Magam

PVTGS IN INDIA:

Total: 75 PVTGs across 18 states and 1 UT (Andaman & Nicobar)
 Criteria: pre-agriculture technology, stagnant/declining population, low literacy
 Identified by: Ministry of Tribal Affairs (Dhebar Commission, 1960s)

GOBI DESERT FOSSIL DISCOVERY — RAVJAA ISHIII

A **1-centimetre fossil** discovered in Mongolia's **Gobi Desert** (Ukhaa Tolgod region) has been identified as a new species of early mammal named **Ravjaa ishiii**.

KEY DETAILS

Belongs to the **Zhelestidae family** (early eutherian/placental mammals)
 Lived approximately **90 million years ago** (Late Cretaceous period)
 Recovered in **2019** from the **Bayanshiree Formation**
 Distinctive feature: unusually **tall and robust molars**, differing from known relatives
 First of its kind; expands understanding of early mammalian evolution and diversification during the age of dinosaurs

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

RAVJAA ISHIII:

Location: Gobi Desert, Mongolia (Ukhaa Tolgod, Bayanshiree Formation)
 Age: ~90 million years (Late Cretaceous)
 Family: Zhelestidae (early eutherian mammals)
 Size: ~1 cm fossil
 Significance: new species, expands early mammalian evolutionary record

PERSONS IN NEWS

LIONEL MESSI SCORES 900TH CAREER GOAL

Lionel Messi scored his **900th official career goal** on **March 18, 2026**, playing for **Inter Miami CF** in a 1-1 draw against Nashville SC in the **CONCACAF Champions Cup**. He scored with his left foot in the 7th minute across **1,142 matches**. He is the **second male player** to achieve 900 goals after **Cristiano Ronaldo** (who reached 900 in September 2024 in 1,236 matches; currently at 965 goals). **Pele** ranks third with 765 official goals.

JEFF WEBB DIES AT 75

Jeff Webb, who transformed cheerleading into a structured competitive sport, died on **March 20, 2026**, at age 75. He founded the **Universal Cheerleaders Association (UCA)** in **1974** and the **Universal Dance Association (UDA)**, and created **Varsity Spirit** as a major competition organiser. He facilitated ESPN broadcasting of cheerleading events.

CHUCK NORRIS DIES AT 86

Chuck Norris (Carlos Ray Norris), American martial arts champion and action film star, died on **March 19-20, 2026**, at age 86. Best known for the TV series **“Walker, Texas Ranger”**, he held black belts in multiple martial arts disciplines and rose to fame in 1980s action films.

UPSC RELEVANCE

NDC replacing DCI (NDC Act), ALMM List-III (MNRE, June 2028), Chapchar Kut (Mizoram), Irula tribe (PVTG, Tamil Nadu), South Shetland Islands (Antarctic), Legionnaires' disease (*Legionella pneumophila*), methane potency (28x/86x CO₂), Blue Voice app (Pondicherry University), MDNIY (Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga).

MAINS GS1:

Chapchar Kut and NE tribal culture; Irula tribe and PVTG framework.

MAINS GS2:

NDC as institutional reform parallel to NMC; Jal Jeevan Mission 2.0 — federalism and rural governance.

MAINS GS3:

Methane super-emitters and climate change; ALMM and solar manufacturing self-reliance; Tamil Nadu textile exports; Legionnaires' disease and urban health infrastructure.

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CROSS-CUTTING FACTS:

NDC replaces DCI (Dentists Act 1948 repealed); parallel: NMC replaced MCI (2020)

Tamil Nadu textile exports: USD 7,997 million (FY 2024-25); 21.84% of India's total

Methane: 28x more potent than CO₂ (100 yrs); 86x (20 yrs); ~30% of global warming

Legionnaires' disease: *Legionella pneumophila*; mortality 5-10%; NOT contagious

ALMM List-III (wafers): effective June 2028; threshold: 3 units, 15 GW capacity

Chapchar Kut: Mizoram spring festival; Cheraw bamboo dance; linked to jhum cultivation

Irula tribe: PVTG in Tamil Nadu; supply 80% of India's anti-snake venom

South Shetland Islands: 120 km north of Antarctic Peninsula; Deception Island (active volcano)

Jal Jeevan Mission: launched Aug 15, 2019; 80% rural coverage; Rs 3.60 lakh crore outlay

Blue Voice app: Pondicherry University; for coastal fisher disaster preparedness

Messi: 900th goal (2nd male player after Ronaldo); 1,142 matches

Total PVTGs in India: 75 across 18 states + 1 UT

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

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