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29 March 2026

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Current Affairs Today — March 29, 2026

A packed day of developments across diplomacy, defence, trade, and technology. India and Japan renewed their \$75 billion bilateral currency swap arrangement, strengthening forex stability. The WTO MC14 in Yaounde, Cameroon concluded its four-day ministerial with India pushing hard for a permanent solution on public stockholding. Meghalaya became the 12th state to sign the Jal Jeevan Mission 2.0 reform-linked MoU, while the Ministry of Defence inked Rs 858 crore in defence contracts for Tunguska missiles and P8I aircraft inspection.

INDIA-JAPAN RENEW \$75 BILLION BILATERAL CURRENCY SWAP ARRANGEMENT

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Bank of Japan (BoJ) renewed the Bilateral Swap Arrangement (BSA) worth up to USD 75 billion, effective from February 28, 2026, through the third Amendment and Restatement Agreement.

What is the BSA?

The Bilateral Swap Arrangement is a two-way currency swap facility between India and Japan. Under this arrangement, if India faces a shortage of US dollars, the RBI can provide Indian Rupees to the Bank of Japan and receive an equivalent amount of US dollars in return, up to the agreed limit of \$75 billion. The same facility is available to Japan in reverse.

Historical Timeline

YEAR	DEVELOPMENT
2008	Japan offered a \$3 billion currency swap to India
2013	Swap facility increased to \$50 billion
October 2018	PM Modi and PM Abe signed \$75 billion BSA during Tokyo visit (50% increase)
February 2019	BSA became effective after Union Cabinet approval (January 10, 2019)
October 2020	\$75 billion BSA renewed
February 2026	Third renewal at \$75 billion via Amendment and Restatement Agreement

How It Works

The BSA operates through a simple mechanism: the RBI provides INR to the BoJ (acting as agent for Japan's Ministry of Finance) and receives an equivalent amount in USD. The arrangement provides immediate access to foreign currency without tapping forex reserves or approaching international markets, acting as a financial safety net during currency volatility or balance of payments stress.

Significance for India

- **Forex stability:** Provides a \$75 billion backstop against sudden capital outflows or currency depreciation
- **Import cover:** Supplements India's forex reserves (~\$630 billion as of March 2026), adding cushion for oil and commodity import payments
- **Market confidence:** Signals strong bilateral financial cooperation, reassuring investors during global uncertainty

- **Strategic alignment:** Deepens India-Japan economic partnership under the Special Strategic and Global Partnership framework

UPSC Relevance

Bilateral Swap Arrangement, RBI forex reserves, India-Japan economic cooperation **Mains GS-2:** India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership; *GS-3: External sector — forex reserves, BoP management, currency stability mechanisms*

FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

INDIA-JAPAN BSA:

Current size: USD 75 billion (world's largest bilateral currency swap)

First signed: October 29, 2018 (PM Modi's Tokyo visit)

Effective from: February 28, 2019 (first); renewed 2020; renewed again February 28, 2026

Parties: RBI and Bank of Japan (acting as agent for Japan's Ministry of Finance)

Nature: Two-way arrangement (both countries can swap local currency for USD)

Increased from: \$50 billion (2013) to \$75 billion (2018) — 50% increase

INDIA'S FOREX POSITION:

India's forex reserves: ~\$630 billion (March 2026)

Import cover: ~10 months

India also has swap lines with SAARC nations (Framework on Currency Swap Arrangement, 2012)

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

India-Japan bilateral trade: ~\$22 billion (FY2025)

Japan is the 5th largest source of FDI for India

India-Japan CEPA (Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement): signed 2011, effective February 2011

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) funds major Indian infrastructure projects (Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail, Delhi Metro Phase IV)

INDIA AND FINLAND RENEW MOU ON ENVIRONMENTAL COOPERATION; WCEF 2026 ANNOUNCED

During the State Visit of Finnish President Alexander Stubb to India (March 4-7, 2026), India and Finland renewed their MoU on environmental cooperation. India was also confirmed as the host for the World Circular Economy Forum (WCEF) 2026, scheduled for autumn 2026.

MoU on Environmental Cooperation

Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav and Finnish counterpart Sari Multala signed the renewed MoU, which provides a structured framework for collaboration on:

- Prevention and control of air and water pollution (including contaminated soil remediation)
- Waste management (hazardous waste, waste-to-energy, recycling)
- Circular economy and low-carbon solutions in natural resource use

World Circular Economy Forum (WCEF) 2026

WCEF 2026 will be held in India in autumn 2026, co-hosted by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) under MoEFCC and the Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra. This will be the first time the global sustainability forum is held in continental Asia, positioning India as a Global South leader in circular economy practices.

India-Finland Strategic Partnership

PM Modi and President Stubb agreed to elevate bilateral ties into a strategic partnership focused on:

- Digitalisation and sustainability
- Clean energy and quantum computing
- Semiconductors and 6G technology
- Defence and security cooperation

What is the Circular Economy?

A circular economy replaces the traditional linear “take-make-dispose” model with one that designs out waste, keeps products and materials in use, and regenerates natural systems. India’s circular economy potential is estimated at \$2 trillion, capable of creating 10 million jobs by 2050.

UPSC Relevance

WCEF, CPCB, Sitra, circular economy concept **Mains GS-2: India-Finland bilateral relations; GS-3: Environmental conservation, waste management, circular economy**

FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA
WORLD CIRCULAR ECONOMY FORUM (WCEF):

Founded by: Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra

WCEF 2025: held in Brazil

WCEF 2026: India (autumn 2026) — first time in continental Asia

Co-hosts for 2026: CPCB (under MoEFCC) and Sitra (Finland)

INDIA-FINLAND RELATIONS:

Finnish President Alexander Stubb: State Visit to India, March 4-7, 2026

Partnership upgraded to: Strategic Partnership (digitalisation and sustainability focus)

MoU renewed on: Environmental cooperation (pollution control, waste management, circular economy)

CIRCULAR ECONOMY IN INDIA:

Potential value: \$2 trillion by 2050

Job creation potential: 10 million by 2050

Key policy: CPCB Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) rules for plastics, e-waste, tyres, used oil

NITI Aayog: Released 11 sectoral strategies for circular economy (2021)

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

CPCB: Statutory body under Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974

CPCB Chairman: appointed by Central Government

Finland ranks among top 5 globally in environmental performance indices

India's waste generation: ~62 million tonnes annually; recycling rate: ~30%

JAMMU AND KASHMIR WIN MAIDEN RANJI TROPHY TITLE

Jammu and Kashmir scripted history by winning their first-ever Ranji Trophy title, defeating eight-time champions Karnataka in the 2025-26 final held at the KSCA Hubli Cricket Ground, Hubballi (February 24-28, 2026), ending a 67-year wait since their debut in 1959-60.

Match Summary

DETAIL	J&K	KARNATAKA
1st Innings	584	293
2nd Innings	342/4 declared	—
Result	Won on first-innings lead (291 runs)	

J&K were declared champions on the basis of their massive 291-run first-innings lead, a margin Karnataka could not overcome.

Key Performances

- **Auqib Nabi:** 5 wickets for 54 runs in Karnataka’s first innings, dismantling their experienced batting lineup. Named Player of the Tournament with 245 runs and 60 wickets across the season
- **Shubham Pundir:** 121 runs, named Player of the Match in the final
- **Qamran Iqbal:** 160 not out off 311 balls in the second innings
- **Sahil Lotra:** 101 not out off 226 balls in the second innings

Historical Significance

J&K debuted in the Ranji Trophy in the 1959-60 season. For 67 years, the team had never reached a final, making their journey from perennial underdogs to champions one of the most remarkable stories in Indian domestic cricket. The victory is particularly significant given the challenges the team has faced, including playing most home matches at neutral venues due to security concerns in the region.

What is the Ranji Trophy?

The Ranji Trophy is India’s premier first-class cricket tournament, named after Ranjitsinhji Vibhaji Jadeja (Kumar Shri Ranjitsinhji), the Maharaja Jam Saheb of Nawanagar who played cricket for England. It was inaugurated in 1934-35 and is administered by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

UPSC Relevance

Ranji Trophy, BCCI, Ranjitsinhji Mains GS-1: Sports and society; GS-2: Governance challenges in J&K and their impact on sports infrastructure

FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA
RANJI TROPHY:

Inaugurated: 1934-35 season

Named after: Kumar Shri Ranjitsinhji (Maharaja Jam Saheb of Nawanagar)

Administered by: Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI)

Most titles: Mumbai (41 titles)

Karnataka: 8 titles before the 2025-26 final

J&K CRICKET:

Ranji Trophy debut: 1959-60 season

First-ever Ranji final appearance: 2025-26

Champion: 2025-26 (maiden title)

Player of the Tournament: Auqib Nabi (245 runs, 60 wickets)

Player of the Final: Shubham Pundir (121 runs)

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

Final venue: KSCA Hubli Cricket Ground, Hubballi, Karnataka

J&K defeated Bengal in the semi-final (won by 6 wickets) to reach the final

The Ranji Trophy is the oldest cricket tournament in Asia

Duleep Trophy (inter-zonal) and Irani Cup (champion vs Rest of India) are related domestic tournaments

INDIA TESTS INDIGENOUS FLOATING LIDAR BUOY FOR OFFSHORE WIND ENERGY

The National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, successfully tested India's first indigenously developed Floating LiDAR Buoy System off the coast of Muttom, Tamil Nadu, marking a breakthrough in offshore wind energy assessment and ocean meteorology.

What is a Floating LiDAR Buoy?

A Floating LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) Buoy is a sophisticated oceanic platform that measures wind speed, direction, and turbulence at heights up to 300 metres above sea level using infrared laser pulses. The buoy remains stable on the ocean surface while its integrated LiDAR unit emits laser pulses that scatter off aerosols, dust, and water droplets, and the reflected signals are analysed to build precise vertical wind profiles.

Key Technical Specifications

PARAMETER	DETAIL
Developer	NIOT (autonomous institute under Ministry of Earth Sciences)
Testing location	Off Muttom coast, Tamil Nadu (high-wind zone near Gulf of Mannar)
Wind profiling range	Up to 300 metres above sea level
Data transmission	Real-time via INSAT satellite or 4G/5G to shore stations
Sensors	LiDAR core + met-ocean instruments (wind shear, turbulence, wave height, currents, atmospheric stability)
Data analysis centre	NIOT Chennai

Why It Matters

- **Cost reduction:** Reduces procurement costs by 30-40% compared to European-imported LiDAR buoys, aligning with Atmanirbhar Bharat
- **Offshore wind target:** India targets 30 GW offshore wind energy by 2030 (currently near zero); the buoy provides bankable wind data for auctions, Environmental Impact Assessments, and wind farm layout optimisation
- **Cyclone tracking:** Enhances real-time ocean weather monitoring for cyclone prediction and disaster preparedness
- **Blue Economy:** Supports India's Blue Economy initiatives by providing critical oceanic meteorological data

UPSC Relevance

NIOT, LiDAR technology, NIWE, offshore wind energy **Mains GS-3: Science and Technology** – indigenous innovation; *Infrastructure* – renewable energy targets; *Environment* – clean energy transition

FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA
FLOATING LIDAR BUOY:

Developer: National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT)

NIOT: Autonomous institute under Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), headquartered in Chennai

Testing site: Muttom coast, Tamil Nadu (near Gulf of Mannar)

Measurement range: Wind speed, direction, and turbulence up to 300 m above sea level

Technology: Optical Remote Sensing using infrared laser pulses

Cost advantage: 30-40% cheaper than European imports

INDIA'S OFFSHORE WIND ENERGY:

Target: 30 GW by 2030 (from near zero currently)

1 GW pilot projects: underway off Gujarat coast

National Institute of Wind Energy (NIWE): under MNRE, headquartered in Chennai

Offshore Wind Energy Policy: announced 2015 by MNRE

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

LiDAR stands for Light Detection and Ranging

India's total renewable energy capacity: ~209 GW (March 2026)

India's renewable energy target: 500 GW by 2030

Blue Economy contribution to India's GDP: ~4%

NIOT also operates deep-sea mining research and tsunami early warning systems

MOD SIGNS RS 858 CRORE DEFENCE CONTRACTS FOR TUNGUSKA MISSILES AND P8I AIRCRAFT

The Ministry of Defence signed two contracts worth a total of Rs 858 crore on March 27, 2026 at Kartavya Bhawan-2, New Delhi — one for Tunguska Air Defence Missile Systems (Rs 445 crore) and another for depot-level inspection of P8I maritime reconnaissance aircraft (Rs 413 crore).

Contract 1: Tunguska Air Defence Missile System (Rs 445 crore)

DETAIL	INFORMATION
Value	Rs 445 crore
For	Indian Army
Supplier	JSC Rosoboronexport, Russia
Purpose	Procurement of Tunguska Air Defence Missile Systems
Capability	Multi-layered air defence against aircraft, drones, and cruise missiles
Signed in presence of	Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh

The Tunguska (NATO designation: SA-19 Grison) is a Russian-made self-propelled anti-aircraft weapon system combining short-range surface-to-air missiles and anti-aircraft guns. It provides integrated air defence cover for mechanised formations on the move.

Contract 2: P8I Aircraft Inspection (Rs 413 crore)

DETAIL	INFORMATION
Value	Rs 413 crore
For	Indian Navy
Category	Buy Indian (100% indigenous content)
Contractor	Boeing India Defense
Purpose	Depot-level inspection and MRO (Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul)
Significance	In-country MRO facility — Aatmanirbhar Bharat and Make in India

What is the P8I Aircraft?

The P8I (Poseidon-8I) is the Indian Navy variant of the Boeing P-8A Poseidon long-range maritime patrol and anti-submarine warfare aircraft. India operates 12 P8I aircraft, which are critical for maritime domain awareness, anti-submarine warfare, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) missions across the Indian Ocean Region.

UPSC Relevance

*P8I Poseidon, Tunguska system, Rosoboronexport, Buy Indian category **Mains GS-3: Defence procurement policy, Aatmanirbhar Bharat in defence, India-Russia defence cooperation***

FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

TUNGUSKA AIR DEFENCE SYSTEM:

Full name: 2K22 Tunguska (NATO: SA-19 Grison)

Origin: Russia

Type: Self-propelled anti-aircraft system (missiles + guns)

Contract value: Rs 445 crore

Supplier: JSC Rosoboronexport (Russia's sole state-owned arms export agency)

P8I POSEIDON:

Manufacturer: Boeing

Based on: Boeing 737-800ERX airframe

Role: Long-range maritime patrol, anti-submarine warfare, ISR

India's fleet: 12 aircraft (8 ordered in 2009 + 4 additional in 2016)

MRO contract: Rs 413 crore with Boeing India Defense (Buy Indian, 100% indigenous)

DEFENCE PROCUREMENT CATEGORIES:

Buy Indian (IDDM): Indigenously Designed, Developed, and Manufactured

Buy Indian: Minimum 50% indigenous content (revised to higher thresholds)

Buy and Make (Indian): Technology transfer with Indian production

Buy (Global): Direct foreign procurement

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

India's defence budget FY 2026-27: Rs 6.81 lakh crore

Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020: governs all defence procurement

Kartavya Bhawan-2: MoD office in New Delhi (formerly Sena Bhawan)

India is the world's largest arms importer (SIPRI data)

WTO MC14 CONCLUDES IN YAOUNDE, CAMEROON (MARCH 26-29, 2026)

The WTO's 14th Ministerial Conference (MC14) concluded on March 29, 2026 in Yaounde, Cameroon, with trade ministers from 164 member nations deliberating on agriculture, fisheries subsidies, e-commerce, and WTO reform. India pushed strongly for a permanent solution on Public Stockholding (PSH) for food security.

Key Issues at MC14

1. Agriculture — Public Stockholding (PSH) India demanded a permanent solution to protect its domestic food procurement system, including the Minimum Support Price (MSP) mechanism, from being challenged as trade-distorting under WTO rules. The US and EU opposed broad exemptions, citing trade distortion risks. India currently operates under a temporary “peace clause” (since Bali MC9, 2013) that shields its food security programmes from legal challenge.

2. Fisheries Subsidies The WTO Fisheries Subsidies Agreement entered into force on September 15, 2025. At MC14, negotiations continued on extending disciplines to cover subsidies contributing to overcapacity and overfishing. India insisted on protecting the livelihoods of small and artisanal fishers through Special and Differential Treatment (SDT).

3. E-Commerce Moratorium The US pushed to make the e-commerce customs duty moratorium permanent. India resisted this, arguing that developing countries need policy space to impose customs duties on electronic transmissions to protect domestic digital industries and tax revenues.

4. Investment Facilitation for Development (IFD) India expressed support for initiatives to ease investment flows to developing countries but maintained that the WTO is not the right forum for binding investment rules.

India's Core Positions at MC14

ISSUE	INDIA'S POSITION
Agriculture PSH	Permanent solution for food security programmes (MSP, PDS)
Fisheries Subsidies	SDT for developing nations; protect small fishers
E-Commerce	Oppose permanent moratorium on customs duties
IFD	Support facilitation, not binding rules at WTO
WTO Reform	Member-driven, inclusive, consensus-based reform

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal led India's delegation and stated that WTO reforms must be inclusive and member-driven.

UPSC Relevance

WTO MC14, Public Stockholding, Peace Clause, Fisheries Subsidies Agreement **Mains GS-2: International organisations – WTO reform; GS-3: Agriculture subsidies, food security, e-commerce regulation**

FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGE PEDIA

WTO MC14:

Venue: Yaounde, Cameroon

Dates: March 26-29, 2026

Members: 164 member nations

DG: Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (Nigeria; term until August 2029)

India's delegation led by: Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal

PUBLIC STOCKHOLDING (PSH) ISSUE:

Peace Clause: agreed at MC9, Bali (2013) — temporary shield for food security programmes

India's argument: MSP + PDS are food security measures, not trade-distorting subsidies

AoA (Agreement on Agriculture): limits domestic support under Aggregate Measurement of Support (AMS)

India's AMS calculated on 1986-88 reference prices — outdated and disadvantageous

WTO FISHERIES SUBSIDIES AGREEMENT:

Adopted: MC12, Geneva (June 2022)

Entry into force: September 15, 2025

Prohibits subsidies for: IUU fishing, overfished stocks, unregulated high seas fishing

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

WTO established: January 1, 1995 (replaced GATT)

Headquartered: Geneva, Switzerland

Dispute Settlement Body (DSB): Currently non-functional due to Appellate Body vacancies

MC13: Abu Dhabi (February 2024); MC12: Geneva (June 2022); MC11: Buenos Aires (2017)

E-commerce moratorium: first agreed in 1998; extended at every MC since

INDIA TARGETS GLOBAL SKILLS CAPITAL BY 2047; MSDE SIGNS MOU WITH GATI FOUNDATION

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the GATI (Global Access to Talent from India) Foundation on March 13, 2026 to strengthen India's global skills mobility ecosystem and accelerate the country's journey toward becoming the Global Skills Capital by 2047.

Key Features of the MoU

- **Project Management Unit (PMU):** GATI Foundation will establish a PMU at Kaushal Bhawan, New Delhi to design and implement global skill mobility initiatives
- **Data-driven roadmap:** Development of evidence-based strategy for overseas skilling programmes
- **Skill India International Centres (SIICs):** Support for SIICs to provide structured global employment pathways
- **Centre-State coordination:** Strengthen alignment between Central and State skilling efforts

What is the GATI Foundation?

GATI (Global Access to Talent from India) Foundation works to deepen coordination in India's global skills mobility ecosystem. This MoU marks GATI Foundation's first Central government partnership.

Why Global Skills Mobility Matters

India has the world's largest youth population (median age ~28 years). With employability rising to 56.35% in 2026 (from 54.81% in 2025 per the India Skills Report 2026), the focus is on channelling this demographic dividend into global labour markets through structured skilling and placement pathways. India commands 16% of global AI talent, projected to reach 1.25 million professionals by 2027.

UPSC Relevance

MSDE, GATI Foundation, Skill India International Centres, Kaushal Bhawan **Mains GS-2: Government policies for skill development; GS-3: Employment, demographic dividend, human resource development**

FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

MSDE-GATI MOU:

Signed: March 13, 2026

MSDE Secretary: Smt. Debashree Mukherjee

Additional Secretary: Shri Niranjan Kumar Sudhansu

PMU location: Kaushal Bhawan, New Delhi

GATI: Global Access to Talent from India Foundation

INDIA'S SKILLING ECOSYSTEM:

India Skills Report 2026: Employability at 56.35% (up from 54.81% in 2025)

Hiring intent FY 2026-27: 40% (up from 29% previous year)

India's AI talent: 16% of global AI talent pool

Vision: Global Skills Capital by 2047 (aligned with Viksit Bharat)

KEY SKILL DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES:

Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY): flagship skilling scheme

Skill India Mission: launched July 15, 2015 (World Youth Skills Day)

National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC): PPP model for skilling

Skill India International Centres (SIICs): overseas employment pathways

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

India's median age: ~28 years (one of the youngest populations globally)

Working-age population (15-64): ~68% of total population

Top sectors for hiring: Technology, BFSI, Healthcare, Renewable Energy

India's demographic dividend window: 2020-2055 (approximately)

MEGHALAYA SIGNS JAL JEEVAN MISSION 2.0 MOU; BECOMES 12TH STATE

Meghalaya signed a reform-linked Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Union Government under Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) 2.0 on March 27, 2026, becoming the 12th state to join the reformed framework aimed at providing 100% tap water access to all rural households.

What is JIM 2.0?

Jal Jeevan Mission 2.0 is the extended phase of the flagship programme launched in August 2019, with the goal of providing Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTCs) to every rural household. The mission has been extended with an additional outlay of Rs 1.51 lakh crore, targeting 100% tap water access and sanitation by December 2028.

Key Features of the Reform-Linked MoU

The MoU represents a shift from infrastructure-focused implementation to a service delivery model emphasising:

- **Governance reforms:** Institutional restructuring for water service delivery
- **Digital monitoring:** Real-time tracking of water supply and quality
- **Water quality surveillance:** Regular testing and reporting mechanisms
- **Source sustainability:** Protection and augmentation of water sources
- **Community participation:** Village Water and Sanitation Committees (VWSCs)
- **Capacity building:** Training of local operators and maintenance staff

Meghalaya's Current Progress

Meghalaya has already achieved over 83% household tap water coverage. The Union Minister urged the state to accelerate efforts to achieve full coverage within the extended mission timeline of December 2028.

UPSC Relevance

Jal Jeevan Mission 2.0, FHTC, 12th state MoU **Mains GS-2:** Government schemes for rural development;
GS-1: Water resource management; **GS-3:** Infrastructure

FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA
JAL JEEVAN MISSION (JJM):

Launched: August 15, 2019 (Independence Day) by PM Modi

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

JJM 1.0 target: Every rural household gets FHTC by 2024

JJM 2.0 extended target: 100% tap water access and sanitation by December 2028

Additional outlay for JJM 2.0: Rs 1.51 lakh crore

Supply standard: 55 litres per capita per day (lpcd)

MEGHALAYA AND JJM 2.0:

MoU signed: March 27, 2026

State number: 12th state to sign reform-linked MoU

Current tap water coverage: Over 83%

Target: 100% FHTC by December 2028

JJM PROGRESS (NATIONAL):

Total rural households: ~19.4 crore

FHTCs provided (cumulative): ~15 crore+

Coverage at launch (August 2019): ~17% (3.23 crore households)

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

Har Ghar Jal: slogan of Jal Jeevan Mission

Goa: first state to achieve 100% FHTC under JJM

VWSC: Village Water and Sanitation Committee — gram panchayat-level body for JJM implementation

Water quality testing: BIS 10500 standards for drinking water quality

Paani Samiti/VWSC manages 10% operation and maintenance costs at village level

CERT-IN AND SIA-INDIA RELEASE JOINT CYBER SECURITY GUIDELINES FOR SPACE SECTOR

The Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) and the Satcom Industry Association of India (SIA-India) jointly released comprehensive cyber security guidelines for India's space ecosystem at the DefSat Conference and Expo 2026 held in New Delhi (February 24-26, 2026).

Scope of the Guidelines

The guidelines cover the entire space value chain:

- Satellite operators and ground station controllers
- Equipment manufacturers and private space firms
- Government space agencies
- Communication networks and software systems
- Vendor infrastructure and supply chains

Key Principles

Defence in Depth: The central principle emphasises multiple layers of cyber protection across satellites, communication networks, software systems, and supply chains. Even if one protective barrier fails, other layers prevent full system compromise.

Whole-of-Ecosystem Approach: The guidelines extend beyond satellites to encompass terrestrial control systems, communication networks, vendor infrastructure, and user interfaces.

Adaptive Model: The guidelines will be periodically refined through structured industry consultation to remain responsive to emerging threats and technological advancements.

Why Space Cyber Security Matters

India's space ecosystem supports:

- National security operations and military communications
- Disaster response mechanisms (cyclone tracking, flood mapping)
- Navigation (NavIC/IRNSS) and broadcasting services
- Connectivity across remote and strategic regions
- A rapidly growing private space sector (150+ startups under IN-SPACE)

UPSC Relevance

*CERT-In, SIA-India, DefSat 2026, defence-in-depth **Mains GS-3: Science and Technology** — cyber security challenges in space; Internal Security — cyber threats to critical infrastructure*

FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA
CERT-IN:

Full form: Indian Computer Emergency Response Team

Established: 2004

Parent body: Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)

Mandate: Cyber security incident response, vulnerability disclosure, advisories

Legal basis: Section 70B of the IT Act, 2000 (inserted by IT Amendment Act, 2008)

SPACE CYBER SECURITY GUIDELINES:

Released at: DefSat Conference and Expo 2026, New Delhi (February 24-26, 2026)

Joint release: CERT-In and SIA-India

Core principle: Defence in depth (layered security)

Nature: Advisory (not mandatory compliance), adaptive model

INDIA'S SPACE ECOSYSTEM:

ISRO: Indian Space Research Organisation (DoS)

IN-SPACe: Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (regulatory body for private space)

Private space startups: 150+ registered with IN-SPACe

Indian Space Policy 2023: opened space sector to private participation

NavIC (IRNSS): India's regional navigation satellite system (7 satellites)

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

SIA-India: Satcom Industry Association — represents satellite communication industry

DefSat: India's premier defence and space technology expo

Space-based cyber threats: jamming, spoofing, data interception, ground station hacking

ISRO has 54 operational satellites in orbit (as of 2026)

NAGALAND RECORDS HIGHEST GST GROWTH IN INDIA AT 37%

Nagaland Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla announced that the state has recorded the highest Goods and Services Tax (GST) growth in the country at 37% during FY 2025-26, far surpassing the national average of 6.8%.

Key Data Points

PARAMETER	DETAIL
GST growth rate	37% (highest in India)
National average	6.8%
GST collections (up to January 31, 2026)	Rs 987.38 crore
FY 2025-26 target	Rs 949 crore (already surpassed)

Factors Behind the Growth

- **Taxpayer education:** Intensive outreach and awareness campaigns improved voluntary compliance
- **Enhanced enforcement:** Stricter monitoring and anti-evasion measures
- **Digitalisation:** Online tax processes improved transparency and simplified filing
- **Destination-based tax:** GST's destination-based nature benefits consumer-focused states like Nagaland, which has a limited industrial base but significant consumption spending
- **GST 2.0 reforms:** Growth achieved despite rate cuts on 375+ goods and services under GST 2.0 reforms (September 2025)

What is Destination-Based Taxation?

Under GST, tax revenue accrues to the state where goods or services are consumed (destination), not where they are produced (origin). This structural advantage benefits net-consuming states like Nagaland, ensuring higher tax accruals and strengthening their fiscal position despite having limited manufacturing capacity.

UPSC Relevance

GST, GST Council, destination-based taxation, Nagaland Mains GS-3: Indian Economy — taxation reforms, fiscal federalism, GST impact on states

FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGE PEDIA
NAGALAND GST PERFORMANCE:

FY 2025-26 growth: 37% (highest in India)

National average GST growth: 6.8%

Collections (up to January 31, 2026): Rs 987.38 crore

Target for FY 2025-26: Rs 949 crore (exceeded)

Governor: Ajay Kumar Bhalla (former Union Home Secretary)

GST IN INDIA:

Introduced: July 1, 2017

Constitutional basis: 101st Amendment Act, 2016 (Article 246A)

Replaced: 17 Central and State taxes (excise, service tax, VAT, etc.)

GST Council: Article 279A — Union Finance Minister as Chairman

GST 2.0 reforms (September 2025): Rate cuts on 375+ goods and services

GST REVENUE (NATIONAL):

Average monthly collection FY 2025-26: ~Rs 1.87 lakh crore

Highest single-month collection: Rs 2.10 lakh crore (April 2024)

Compensation cess: ended June 2022 (5-year guaranteed period)

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

Nagaland: 16th state of India (statehood: December 1, 1963)

Capital: Kohima; largest city: Dimapur

Article 371(A): Special provisions for Nagaland (customary law, land, resources)

GST does not apply to: petroleum crude, natural gas, aviation turbine fuel, diesel, petrol (kept outside GST ambit)

PERSONS IN NEWS

No major obituary or person-in-news item reported for March 29, 2026.

UPSC RELEVANCE

India-Japan BSA (\$75 billion), WTO MC14 (Yaounde), Ranji Trophy (J&K maiden title), Floating LiDAR Buoy (NIOT), Tunguska missile system, P8I Poseidon, JJM 2.0 (12th state Meghalaya), CERT-In space cyber guidelines, GATI Foundation (MSDE MoU), Nagaland GST growth (37%), WCEF 2026 (India host)

MAINS GS-1:

Sports — J&K Ranji Trophy; Society — water access (JJM)

MAINS GS-2:

India-Japan relations, India-Finland strategic partnership, WTO reform and agriculture negotiations, government schemes (JJM 2.0, Skill India), governance

MAINS GS-3:

Defence procurement (Tunguska, P8I), renewable energy (offshore wind, LiDAR), GST and fiscal federalism, cyber security in space, circular economy, e-commerce taxation, skills and employment

FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA (COMBINED)
INDIA-JAPAN BSA:

Size: USD 75 billion (world's largest bilateral currency swap)

First signed: October 2018; renewed February 2026 (third renewal)

Parties: RBI and Bank of Japan

WTO MC14:

Venue: Yaounde, Cameroon (March 26-29, 2026)

DG: Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala; Members: 164

India's demand: Permanent solution on Public Stockholding (PSH) for food security

Peace Clause: since MC9 Bali (2013) — temporary shield

RANJI TROPHY 2025-26:

Champion: Jammu and Kashmir (maiden title; debut 1959-60, 67-year wait)

Final: J&K beat Karnataka at Hubballi (first-innings lead of 291 runs)

Player of Tournament: Auqib Nabi (245 runs, 60 wickets)

FLOATING LIDAR BUOY:

Developer: NIOT (Ministry of Earth Sciences)

Tested: Off Muttom, Tamil Nadu

Range: Wind profiling up to 300 m above sea level

India's offshore wind target: 30 GW by 2030

MOD CONTRACTS (RS 858 CRORE):

Tunguska missiles: Rs 445 crore (Rosoboronexport, Russia) — Indian Army

P8I inspection: Rs 413 crore (Boeing India Defense, Buy Indian 100% indigenous) — Indian Navy

JAL JEEVAN MISSION 2.0:

Meghalaya: 12th state to sign reform-linked MoU (March 27, 2026)

Current coverage: Over 83%

JJM 2.0 outlay: Rs 1.51 lakh crore; target: 100% by December 2028

MSDE-GATI FOUNDATION MOU:

Signed: March 13, 2026

Goal: India as Global Skills Capital by 2047

PMU: at Kaushal Bhawan, New Delhi

India's employability: 56.35% (2026); AI talent share: 16% globally

CERT-IN SPACE CYBER GUIDELINES:

Joint release: CERT-In + SIA-India at DefSat 2026 (February 24-26, New Delhi)

Core principle: Defence in depth

Nature: Advisory, adaptive model

NAGALAND GST GROWTH:

Growth: 37% (FY 2025-26) — highest in India

National average: 6.8%

Collections: Rs 987.38 crore (exceeded Rs 949 crore target)

Governor: Ajay Kumar Bhalla

INDIA-FINLAND COOPERATION:

President Stubb's State Visit: March 4-7, 2026

MoU renewed: Environmental cooperation (pollution, waste, circular economy)

WCEF 2026: India to host (autumn 2026); co-hosted by CPCB and Finnish Sitra

Partnership: Elevated to Strategic Partnership (digitalisation + sustainability)

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

GST introduced: July 1, 2017 (101st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2016)

ISRO operational satellites: 54 (as of 2026)

India's renewable energy capacity: ~209 GW

Mumbai holds record 41 Ranji Trophy titles

WTO Fisheries Subsidies Agreement: entered into force September 15, 2025

Sources: [PIB](#) , [RBI](#) , [WTO](#) , [ESPNricinfo](#) , [Business Standard](#) , [DD News](#) , [GKToday](#) , [Insights on India](#) , [Down to Earth](#) , [ANI News](#)

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