





Trump warns Iran not to harm protestors
The Hindu: 03/01/2026- Page 4



MeitY okays 22 projects under ECMS
The Hindu: Business 03/01/2026



VBSA bill pushes for AI in schools
The Indian Express: 03/01/2026- Page 10



Assam tribal body rejects GoM proposal
The Hindu: 03/01/2026- Page 1



eRare 'Galaxy Frogs vanished from' sight
The Indian Express: 03/01/2026- Page 1

“Locked and loaded and ready to go” warns Trump

U.S. President Donald Trump has warned of possible American intervention if Iran uses lethal force against protestors amid growing unrest in the country. Iranian officials responded by stating that U.S. troops and military bases in West Asia would become legitimate targets if Washington intervenes.



Protests erupted last Sunday in Tehran over worsening economic conditions, triggered by a sharp fall in the value of the Iranian rial. The demonstrations later spread to other areas, escalating into violent clashes between protestors and security forces. At least five people have been reported killed in the unrest.

Earlier this week, Israel’s intelligence agency, Mossad, publicly urged Iranians to continue protesting against the Iranian government, further intensifying tensions.

Implications for West Asia:

The standoff raises the risk of wider instability in West Asia, as any U.S. intervention could provoke retaliatory action by Iran, potentially drawing regional actors into the conflict and heightening security risks around American military installations in the region.

Background: How the Iran–U.S. Standoff Evolved

The current tensions between Iran and the United States are rooted in a prolonged power struggle shaped by diplomatic breakdowns and military escalation over the past decade.

- May 08, 2018: The Trump administration withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and reimposed economic sanctions on Tehran, sharply worsening relations between the two countries.
- June 2025: Israel bombed Iran’s nuclear facilities, triggering a 12-day war that escalated regional instability and deepened Iran’s confrontation with U.S. allies.
- June 23, 2025: Iran attacked an American military base in Qatar, marking a direct escalation involving U.S. assets and highlighting how years of strategic rivalry have culminated in open confrontation.

Disappearance of Rare ‘Galaxy Frogs’ Raises Conservation Concerns



The Galaxy frog (*Melanobatrachus indicus*), one of the world’s rarest amphibians, has raised fresh conservation concerns following the disappearance of a group of individuals in Kerala’s Western Ghats. The species is endemic to the region and is known to live exclusively under rotten logs in forested habitats.

A recent study titled “Unethical wildlife photography imperils the Western Ghats endemic galaxy frog (*Melanobatrachus indicus* Beddome, 1878)”, published in the journal *Herpetology Notes*, reported that a group of seven Galaxy frogs vanished after repeated disturbances caused by wildlife photographers. The study noted that frequent human interference disrupted the frogs’ breeding and feeding schedules, eventually leading to their disappearance.

The incident highlights broader threats to biodiversity conservation in the Western Ghats, including conversion of forest land for agriculture, firewood collection, landslides, and the growing problem of photo tourism.

GALAXY FROG (*Melanobatrachus indicus*)

- 2 – 3.5 cm in size
- Black skin with orange dashes
- IUCN Status: Vulnerable to Extinction
- Designated Flagship Species of Kerala’s Mathikettan Shola National Park

A.I in schools, job-oriented higher education : VBSA bill

The Centre is planning major reforms in India’s education system through the proposed Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhasthan (VBSA) Bill, 2025. The Bill aims to reshape the higher education sector to better match changing economic needs and new technological developments.

As part of this reform push, the government intends to liberalise the open schooling framework, which enables learners of all age groups to complete secondary and higher secondary education. This is expected to strengthen alternative learning pathways and improve access to higher education for working professionals, dropouts, and adult learners.

The proposed framework also includes guidelines to promote the use of artificial intelligence in schools and a revamp of technical education standards to better align curricula with entrepreneurship and employment requirements. The focus is on equipping students with future-ready skills rather than limiting learning to traditional degree structures.

Through these measures, the VBSA Bill seeks to address structural gaps in India’s existing higher education system by improving flexibility, skill relevance, and integration with the labour market. Together, these reforms signal a shift towards an inclusive, technology-driven, and outcome-oriented education ecosystem aligned with India’s long-term development goals. Considering this, central government hopes to bring the Bill for passage in the house by the end of this year’s Budget session.

NATIONAL

Assam Tribal Body Opposes Proposal to Grant ST Status to Six Communities

The Coordination Committee of Tribal Organisations of Assam (CCTOA) has rejected the Assam government's proposal to grant Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to six communities, calling the move illegal and unconstitutional. The CCTOA represents 14 recognised tribal groups in the State.

The proposal was recommended by a Group of Ministers (GoM) and seeks to extend ST status to the Koch-Rajbongshi, Chutia, Matak, Moran, Tai Ahom communities and the Tea Tribes (Adivasis). The State government has argued that the move would address long-standing demands for social justice and inclusion



However, the CCTOA has raised strong objections on constitutional and governance grounds. It argued that expanding the ST list would dilute the political and reservation rights of existing Scheduled Tribes, particularly in education, employment and political representation.

The organisation also pointed out that Assam's existing reservation level stands at about 59%, which already exceeds the 50% ceiling on reservations laid down by the Supreme Court. Granting ST status to additional groups, it warned, would further violate this constitutional limit.

Further, the CCTOA cited the Lokur Committee (1965), which laid down criteria for recognising a community as a Scheduled Tribe, including primitive traits, distinct cultural identity, geographical isolation, shyness of contact with the larger society, and social and economic backwardness. According to the organisation, the proposed communities do not uniformly meet these criteria.

Governance Significance: The controversy highlights the complex balance in Indian governance between affirmative action, constitutional limits, and the protection of existing rights. It also underscores the political and administrative challenges involved in revising the Scheduled Tribes list, which requires careful adherence to constitutional principles, judicial precedents, and evidence-based criteria. This issue is relevant for understanding reservation policy, Centre-State relations, and social justice governance in India.

HISTORY

Savitribai Phule: Remembering India's First Woman Teacher on Her 194th Birth Anniversary



Savitribai Phule, a pioneering social reformer and India's first woman teacher, continues to inspire generations as the nation marks her 194th birth anniversary. Born on January 3, 1831, in Satara, Maharashtra, into the marginalised Mali community, she emerged as a leading force in the fight for education and social equality in 19th-century India.

Trained as a teacher under American missionary Cynthia Farrar in Ahmednagar and later at a Normal School in Pune, Savitribai broke social barriers at a time when educating women was considered unacceptable. She faced intense opposition from orthodox sections of society and was frequently abused and stoned while walking to school, yet remained undeterred in her mission.

In 1848, along with her husband Jyotirao Phule, she established India's first school for girls in Pune. The couple went on to start and run 18 schools, opening the doors of education to girls and children from oppressed castes. Their reformist efforts extended to the Dalit community through institutions such as the Native Male School, Pune, and the Society for Promoting the Education of Mahar and Mang.

Savitribai's work also addressed deep-rooted gender injustices. In 1863, she co-founded the Balhatya Pratibandhak Griha, India's first home aimed at preventing female infanticide and supporting pregnant widows and survivors of sexual violence.

A prolific writer, Savitribai authored *Kavya Phule* (1854) and *Bavan Kashi Subodh Ratnakar* (1892), using poetry as a tool for social awakening. Her famous exhortation, "Go, Get Education," remains a powerful call for empowerment through learning.

Nearly two centuries later, Savitribai Phule's legacy endures in India's ongoing pursuit of inclusive education and social justice, reminding society that access to learning is both a right and a catalyst for lasting change.

India's Technical Textile Exports Dip in 2025

India's exports of technical textiles recorded a 1.2% decline during April–October 2025, reflecting the impact of U.S. tariff measures on the sector. Exports during this period stood at \$1.95 billion, marginally lower than \$1.97 billion in the corresponding period of 2024–25. Products such as geotextiles, medical textiles and packaging materials form a major share of India's technical textile exports. In 2025, flexible intermediate bulk container (FIBC) bags, slings, ropes, gauze and wipes together accounted for about 60% of sectoral exports, followed by technical fabrics. The United States remains the largest market for Indian technical textiles, accounting for 25.9% of total exports. However, exports to the U.S. declined by 15% in 2025 compared to 2024, highlighting the sector's vulnerability to trade policy changes.

In the absence of a clear resolution to the tariff issue, the outlook for India's technical textile exports remains uncertain, underlining the need for market diversification and trade policy engagement.

CBAM : A trade test for India



The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has approved 22 new projects worth ₹22,919 crore under the Electronics Component Manufacturing Scheme (ECMS), reinforcing India's push to strengthen its electronics value chain. Combined with the earlier approval of 24 projects worth ₹12,704 crore, the total projected investment under ECMS now stands at ₹41,863 crore.

These projects are expected to generate production worth ₹2.58 lakh crore and create 33,791 direct jobs. With the latest clearances, a total of 46 projects across 11 states have been approved so far, involving investments of ₹54,567 crore and direct employment for about 51,000 people.

ECMS offers differentiated fiscal incentives linked to turnover, capital expenditure, or a hybrid of both, depending on the target product segment. Incentives are tied to incremental production and employment, enabling both small firms and large manufacturers to compete on performance.

The approved projects cover 11 critical components, including bare components such as printed circuit boards, capacitors, connectors, enclosures and lithium-ion cells; sub-assemblies like camera modules, display modules and optical transceivers; and key supply-chain items such as aluminium extrusion, anode material and copper-clad laminates.

PRELIMS CORNER :

1) Which one of the following statements is correct as per the Constitution of India? (2024)

- (a) Inter-State trade and commerce is a State subject under the State List.
- (b) Inter-State migration is a State subject under the State List.
- (c) Inter-State quarantine is a Union subject under the Union List.
- (d) Corporation tax is a State subject under the State List.

2) Consider the following statements: (2016) The Mangalyaan launched by ISRO:

- 1. It is also called the Mars Orbiter Mission
- 2. Made India the second country to have a spacecraft orbit the Mars after USA
- 3. Made India the only country to be successful in making its spacecraft orbit the Mars in its very first attempt

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Case Study

The Indian Army recently trained around 150 Village Defence Guards (VDGs) at a government school in Jammu and Kashmir, underscoring the importance of community participation in internal security. The three-day training camp concluded on December 30. The VDGs were drawn from 17 remote villages in a hilly district of the Chenab Valley region, located nearly 90 km from Doda town. The training focused on handling firearms, including automatic weapons, along with practical skills such as constructing sandbag bunkers and conducting forest patrols. Special emphasis was placed on jungle warfare techniques, as villagers routinely travel through dense forest terrain in their daily lives. Instructors actively involved trainees in hands-on exercises, including asking two VDGs—one of them a woman—to disassemble and reassemble weapons, reflecting inclusive participation and confidence-building.



Prelims Corner: Explanations

1) option c is the correct answer.

(a) Inter-State trade and commerce is a State subject under the State List: This statement is Incorrect. Inter-State trade and commerce falls under the Union List (Entry 42), as the Constitution grants the Union Government authority over trade and commerce between states.

2. (b) Inter-State migration is a State subject under the State List: This statement is Incorrect. Inter-State migration is covered under Entry 81 of the Union List, which relates to inter-state migration and inter-state quarantine.

3. (c) Inter-State quarantine is a Union subject under the Union List: This statement is Correct. Entry 81 of the Union List specifically mentions "Inter-state quarantine." It is the responsibility of the Union Government to handle such matters to ensure uniformity across states.

4. (d) Corporation tax is a State subject under the State List: This statement is Incorrect. Corporation tax is a Union subject under Entry 85 of the Union List. States do not have jurisdiction over corporation tax.



2. Option (c)

Statement 1: Mangalyaan, launched by ISRO, is also called the Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM). This statement is correct. It was India's first interplanetary mission, aimed at studying the Martian surface and atmosphere.

Statement 2: The claim that India became the second country to have a spacecraft orbit Mars after the USA is incorrect. Other countries, including the former Soviet Union and the European Space Agency (ESA), had successfully sent missions to Mars before India.

Statement 3: Mangalyaan made India the only country to be successful in making its spacecraft orbit Mars on its very first attempt. This statement is correct. India achieved this milestone in its maiden attempt, a feat not accomplished by any other nation.



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