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Trump demands 'surrender'; IRGC warns of 'long war'



The conflict involving Iran, United States and Israel continued to intensify as the war entered its seventh day, with heavy strikes and missile exchanges reported across the region. U.S. President Donald Trump stated that there would be no agreement with Iran except “unconditional surrender,” while Iranian leaders declared readiness for a prolonged conflict. U.S. and Israeli forces carried out widespread airstrikes inside Iran, where the reported death toll has risen to more than 1,300. At the same time, Iranian missile and drone attacks targeted multiple sites linked to U.S. and Israeli interests across the Middle East, including military facilities in Jordan and the Gulf region, while missiles were also reported to have struck southern Israel.

Iran's military leadership, including the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, stated that the country is prepared for a prolonged confrontation and warned that further waves of missile and drone strikes could follow. Iranian officials claimed that several strategic targets linked to U.S. military infrastructure in the region had been hit, including radar systems supporting missile defence batteries in Jordan. They also reported attacks targeting locations connected to American and Israeli interests in the Gulf region, while Iranian missile strikes were said to have reached southern parts of Israel. The IRGC announced plans for deployment of advanced missiles ahead.

Meanwhile, the conflict is widening geographically as Israeli military operations have also intensified in Lebanon, where Israeli forces are engaged in clashes with the Iran-backed militia Hezbollah. Iranian officials have also warned that continued military pressure could turn the conflict into a prolonged regional confrontation. While some countries have reportedly begun mediation efforts to de-escalate tensions, leaders in Tehran insist that any diplomatic process must address those responsible for initiating the conflict. With continued strikes, the situation across West Asia remains volatile with no immediate prospects for a ceasefire.



Lok Sabha to debate resolution on the removal of Speaker

What happened? A resolution seeking the removal of Om Birla from the office of Speaker has been listed for debate in the Lok Sabha during the second part of the Budget Session of the Indian Parliament from March 9 to 11. The motion has been signed by 118 Members of Parliament and will be discussed according to parliamentary rules governing the removal of a Speaker. Under the rules, the Speaker may remain present in the House during the debate and can participate in the proceedings, including voting on the motion, except in the event of a tie. If taken up, another member will preside over the House while the resolution is discussed.

Why it matters?

The development is important because it highlights an important accountability mechanism within parliamentary democracy. The process of removing a Speaker is provided under Constitution of India provisions and parliamentary rules, ensuring that the presiding officer of the lower house remains answerable to the members of the House. Such resolutions, though rare, demonstrate how legislatures maintain institutional checks within their own functioning and uphold the principle that key constitutional offices remain subject to parliamentary scrutiny.



Karnataka, A.P. plan social media ban for children



What happened? The governments of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh have announced plans to restrict children's access to social media in an effort to address concerns about the harmful effects of excessive mobile phone use. The Karnataka government has proposed banning social media for children under the age of 16, while Andhra Pradesh plans to impose restrictions on children below 13 within the next 90 days and is considering additional regulations for those aged 13–16. The proposals come amid growing public debate about the psychological and developmental impact of social media on young users. During the state budget presentation, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah also announced the reintroduction of student union elections in colleges and universities, a practice that had been discontinued for nearly four decades.

Why it matters? The move is significant because it reflects increasing government concern about the social and mental health effects of digital platforms on children. Similar regulations have recently emerged globally, such as the law passed in Australia in 2025 restricting social media access for users under 16 and imposing heavy penalties on platforms that fail to enforce age limits. The proposed restrictions in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh indicate a broader policy shift toward regulating digital spaces for minors while encouraging responsible technology use. At the same time, the revival of student union elections is intended to promote leadership, democratic participation, and civic engagement among students within educational institutions.

Dreams of aspiring Myanmar, Afghan scholars upended by U.K. study visa ban

What happened? The United Kingdom has announced a ban on education visas for students from countries affected by conflict and political instability, including Myanmar, Afghanistan, Sudan, and Cameroon. The decision was taken after authorities reported that asylum applications from visiting students had increased nearly 500% between 2021 and 2025. Many aspiring students who had already secured university admissions or scholarships now face uncertainty, forcing them to abandon plans for higher education abroad. For several applicants—especially Afghan women restricted by the Taliban government’s ban on girls’ education beyond the age of 12—the policy has closed one of the few remaining pathways to pursue higher studies and professional development.

Why it matters? The move is significant because it reflects the growing political pressure around immigration in many developed countries. The decision by the Labour Party (UK) government comes amid rising support for anti-immigration politics represented by parties such as Reform UK, highlighting how domestic political considerations are increasingly shaping migration policies. More broadly, the policy signals a tightening global migration regime similar to earlier travel restrictions introduced under Donald Trump in the United States. Critics argue that such measures risk limiting educational opportunities for individuals from fragile states while reducing international academic exchange that could contribute to rebuilding war-affected societies.



House rejects resolution on Trump’s Iran war powers



What happened? The United States House of Representatives rejected a resolution aimed at stopping President Donald Trump from continuing U.S. military strikes against Iran without congressional authorization. The measure, introduced by Democrats, sought to require the president to obtain approval from Congress before engaging in hostilities. However, the resolution failed by a narrow vote of 219–212, largely along party lines. Meanwhile, both the U.S. and Israel have continued airstrikes against Iran since February 28, escalating the conflict in West Asia and causing over a thousand deaths. Although the resolution attempted to assert Congress’ constitutional authority over war decisions, even its passage would not have immediately halted the military campaign because it would still have required approval from the Senate and could have been vetoed by the president.

Why it matters? The development is significant because it highlights the ongoing debate in the U.S. over the balance of power between the executive and legislative branches in matters of war. The vote also brings attention to the provisions of the War Powers Resolution of 1973, which allows the president to deploy armed forces without congressional approval only in limited circumstances, such as responding to an imminent threat. Under this law, unauthorized military operations must end within 60 days unless Congress grants authorization. The episode therefore reflects broader tensions in democratic governance during wartime and underscores how domestic political divisions in the United States can shape the course of international conflicts and global security dynamics.

U.S. 'allows' India to buy Russian oil for 30 days

The United States Department of the Treasury has issued a temporary order allowing India to continue importing oil from Russia for a period of 30 days. The announcement, made by U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, is intended to ease immediate pressure on global energy markets amid disruptions caused by tensions in West Asia. The current crisis, including Iran's blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, has disrupted shipping routes and pushed global oil prices higher, with Brent crude rising to nearly \$88 per barrel. The temporary measure allows transactions involving Russian oil shipments already at sea, helping India manage potential supply delays and price spikes as a large import-dependent economy.

The development comes at a time when global oil supply chains are under stress and India's dependence on external energy sources is under scrutiny. More than half of India's crude imports pass through the Strait of Hormuz, making it vulnerable to geopolitical disruptions in the region. Data indicate that Russia's share in India's oil imports has declined in recent months, even as India has increased purchases from the United States. Analysts warn that sustained increases in crude prices could widen India's current account deficit, weaken the rupee, and raise inflation, highlighting the broader economic implications of global energy supply disruptions.



RSP heads for landslide victory in Nepal; rapper Balen set to become PM



Early results from the latest parliamentary elections in Nepal show a major surge for the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP), a relatively new political party founded in 2022. According to data from the Election Commission of Nepal, the RSP is leading in around 110 of the 165 constituencies counted so far, far ahead of traditional parties such as the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist–Leninist). The party is also ahead in the proportional representation vote count. If the trend continues, RSP leader Balendra Shah, popularly known as Balen, is set to become Nepal's youngest Prime Minister at the age of 35. The outcome suggests a major shift in Nepali politics, with the RSP on track to secure the majority mark of 138 seats in the 275-member House of Representatives of Nepal. If achieved, it would mark the first clear parliamentary majority in nearly three decades, potentially allowing a stable government to complete a full five-year term. The election took place after large youth-led protests last year that led to the fall of the government led by K. P. Sharma Oli, reflecting growing public dissatisfaction with long-established political parties and a shift toward new leadership.

India and Nepal share long-standing ties through an open border, strong trade links and deep people-to-people connections. Political developments in Nepal are therefore closely followed in India. The formation of a new government in Kathmandu will remain relevant for ongoing cooperation in areas such as cross-border movement, regional connectivity and economic engagement between the two neighbours.

Centre directs refiners to maximise LPG production

What happened? The Government of India has invoked the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 to direct domestic oil refineries to prioritise the production of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG). Refineries have been ordered to maximise the use of propane and butane streams for LPG production and supply it to the public sector oil marketing companies such as Indian Oil Corporation and Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited. The order also prohibits refineries from diverting propane and butane for petrochemical production. LPG, mainly a mixture of propane and butane, will be prioritised specifically for domestic household cooking use.

Why it matters?

This situation holds key significance in international relations and global governance. It highlights the risk of genocide, a grave crime under international law that demands urgent civilian protection. The Mission stresses accountability for perpetrators and those aiding them. As fighting spreads to areas like Kordofan, it underscores the need for coordinated global action through bodies like the UN. Such crises test the effectiveness of international mechanisms in preventing atrocities and upholding human rights. For polity, it emphasises the role of fact-finding missions in documenting evidence for justice.

The Essential Commodities Act, 1955

The Essential Commodities Act, 1955 gives the Central government powers for the control of production, supply, distribution etc. of essential commodities for maintaining or increasing supplies and for securing and their equitable distribution and availability at fair prices. The centre is also monitoring the action taken by State Governments and UT Administrations to implement the provisions of the Essential Commodities Act 1955.

The items declared as essential commodities under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 are reviewed from time to time in the light of liberalised economic policies in consultation with the concerned Ministries/Departments administering these commodities.

Morbi's ceramic industry stares at a shutdown as West Asia conflict escalates



What happened? The ceramic industry in Morbi, Gujarat—one of India's largest ceramic manufacturing hubs—is facing the threat of a shutdown due to disruptions in gas supplies from the Gulf region. The industry relies heavily on propane and natural gas for firing kilns and drying processes, making fuel supply crucial for daily operations. With Iran closing the Strait of Hormuz amid the ongoing conflict involving Iran, Israel, and the United States, shipments of petroleum products from the Gulf have been disrupted. Industry representatives report that propane stocks in most units may last only two to four days, while compressed natural gas supplies could sustain operations for about a week to ten days. If the disruption continues, the roughly 600 ceramic units in Morbi—employing two to four lakh workers—may be forced to suspend operations.

Why it matters?

This situation highlights how regional conflicts can rapidly affect global supply chains and industrial production. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz—a critical chokepoint for global energy transport—demonstrates the vulnerability of industries that depend on imported fuel. The crisis illustrates the interconnected nature of the current global order, where geopolitical tensions in West Asia can trigger economic consequences across distant regions. It also reflects broader strategic realities: energy security, maritime chokepoints, and geopolitical rivalries increasingly shape economic stability and industrial resilience worldwide.

Prelims 2026 Most Probable High-Yield Topics

Animals of the Nilgiri Hills

The Nilgiri Hills are part of the Western Ghats biodiversity hotspot and fall within the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. The region contains shola forests, montane grasslands and evergreen forests, supporting several endemic and threatened species.

Indian Gaur

Scientific name: *Bos gaurus*

Type: Mammal (Wild cattle)

Endemism / Distribution: Native to the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia; largest population found in India.

Habitat: Forest clearings, tropical forests and grasslands of the Western Ghats.

IUCN Status: Vulnerable

- Largest wild bovine in the world.
- The domesticated Gayal (Mithun) originated partly from the gaur.

Why in News

- Death of a female gaur during an animal exchange operation between zoos in 2025.



Nilgiri Tahr

Scientific name: *Nilgiritragus hylocrius*

Type: Mammal (Mountain ungulate)

Endemism: Endemic to the Western Ghats.

Habitat: High-altitude montane grasslands and cliffs.

IUCN Status: Endangered

Legal Protection

- Protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

Key Identification Feature

- Curved horns and strong climbing ability on steep cliffs.
- State animal of Tamil Nadu.

Indian Pangolin

Scientific name: *Manis crassicaudata*

Type: Mammal (Scaly anteater)

Endemism / Distribution: Native to the Indian subcontinent.

Habitat: Forests, scrublands and grasslands.

IUCN Status: Endangered

- Covered with large protective keratin scales.
- Nocturnal and solitary animal.
- Insectivore feeding mainly on ants and termites.

Defence Mechanism

- Rolls into a tight ball to protect itself from predators.

Major Threat

- Illegal wildlife trade; one of the most trafficked mammals globally.

Nilgiri Marten

Scientific name: *Martes gwatkinsii*

Type: Mammal (Carnivore)

Endemism:

Endemic to the Western Ghats.

Habitat:

Dense evergreen and montane forests.

IUCN Status: Vulnerable

Key Identification Feature

- India's only marten species.

Behavior

- Rare, elusive and rarely sighted.



Prelims 2026 Most Probable High-Yield Topics

Extraordinary Animals of the Nilgiri Hills

Nilgiri Laughingthrush

Scientific name: Montecincla spp.

Type: Bird

Endemism: Endemic to the Western Ghats.

Habitat: Shola forests (montane forests) above 1600 m elevation.

IUCN Status: Endangered

Other Names - Nilgiri Sholakili, Nilgiri Chilappan

Key Ecological Feature

- Found in “sky island” shola habitats surrounded by grasslands.



Prelims model questions

1. With reference to the Indian Gaur, consider the following statements:

1. It is the largest wild bovine species in the world.
2. It is endemic to the Western Ghats.
3. The domesticated gayal (mithun) is believed to have originated partly from this species.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: (b)

2. Consider the following statements regarding the Indian Pangolin:

1. It is an insectivorous mammal feeding mainly on ants and termites.
2. It protects itself from predators by rolling into a tight ball.
3. It is primarily a diurnal species.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: (a)

Prelims model questions

3. Which of the following species are endemic to the Western Ghats?

1. Lion-tailed Macaque
2. Nilgiri Tahr
3. Indian Pangolin
4. Nilgiri Marten

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1, 2 and 4 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2, 3 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: (a)

4. Which of the following animals are typically associated with high-altitude grasslands or montane habitats of the Western Ghats?

1. Nilgiri Tahr
2. Nilgiri Laughingthrush
3. Indian Pangolin

Select the correct answer:

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

Answer: (b)

PRELIMS CORNER :

1) Consider the following statements:
(2018)

1. The Earth's magnetic field has reversed every few hundred thousand years.
2. When the Earth was created more than 4000 million years ago, there was 54% oxygen and no carbon dioxide.
3. When living organisms originated, they modified the early atmosphere of the Earth.

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

2) Consider the following statements:
(2020)

1. Jet streams occur in the Northern Hemisphere only.
2. Only some cyclones develop an eye.
3. The temperature inside the eye of a cyclone is nearly 10°C less than that of the surroundings.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

PRELIMS 2026 COUNTDOWN



78 DAYS TO GO

Reforms

Women Enter Fire and Emergency Services in Telangana



Telangana is set to recruit its first batch of women firefighters, marking a significant step toward expanding women's participation in traditionally male-dominated emergency services. The move follows the introduction of the Telangana Fire, Disaster Response, Emergency and Civil Defence Subordinate Service Rules, 2025, which opened operational posts such as Fire Fighter and Station Fire Officer to women for the first time. The recruitment process will follow procedures similar to police recruitment, including physical tests, written examinations and background verification. The new rules also provide a 33.33% reservation for women in direct recruitment to these posts, ensuring that women can enter and build careers within the department.

To support this transition, the government has also replaced earlier gender-specific designations such as "Fireman" with gender-neutral titles like "Fire Fighter," reflecting a shift toward more inclusive institutional practices. Women candidates will be required to meet the same eligibility standards, physical criteria and training requirements as other recruits, reinforcing the principle of equal capability and responsibility. The decision represents a broader trend in India toward opening previously restricted professions to women and strengthening their presence across diverse sectors of the workforce. By enabling women to participate in critical public safety and disaster response roles, the initiative highlights the growing recognition that gender inclusion strengthens institutions.

Prelims Corner: Explanations

1) Answer is option c

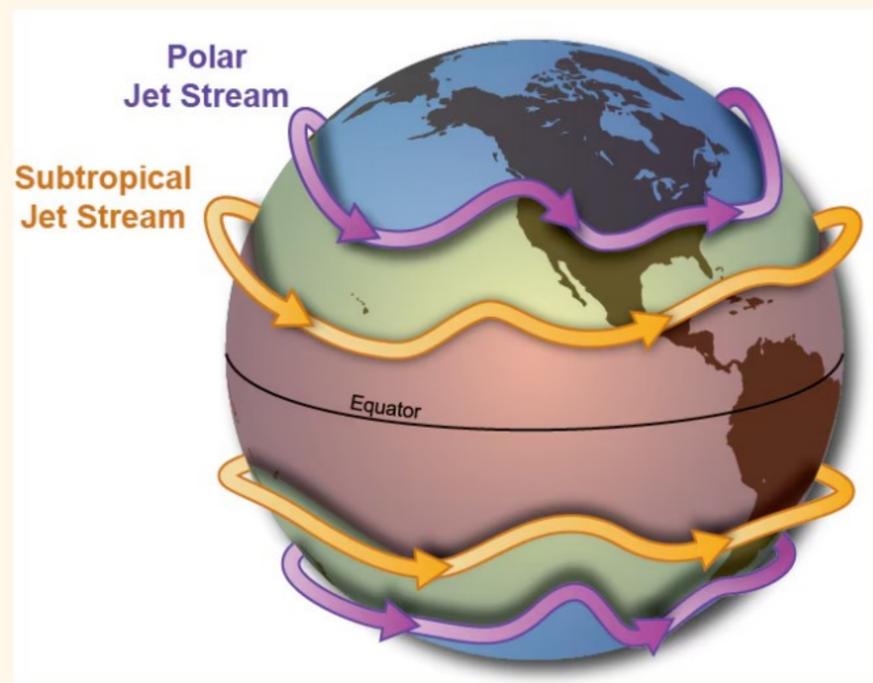
The Earth's Magnetic field has reversed every few hundred thousand years. This has been proved through Sea-Floor spreading. When Earth was created there was no oxygen in the atmosphere. Oxygen makes up about one-fifth the volume of Earth's atmosphere today and is a central element of life as we know it. But that wasn't always the case. Oxygen, although always present in compounds in Earth's interior, atmosphere, and oceans, did not begin to accumulate in the atmosphere as oxygen gas (O₂) until well into the planet's history. Carbon dioxide, water vapor, and methane played an important role in Earth's subsequent development. By 2.7 billion years ago, a new kind of life had established itself: photosynthetic microbes called cyanobacteria, which were capable of using the Sun's energy to convert carbon dioxide and water into food with oxygen gas as a waste product. They lived in shallow seas, protected from full exposure to the Sun's harmful radiation. These organisms became so abundant that by 2.4 billion years ago the free oxygen they produced began to accumulate in the atmosphere.

2) Answer is option C

Statement 1 : Jet streams occur in the Northern Hemisphere only: This statement is incorrect. Jet streams are fastflowing, narrow air currents that occur in both the Northern and Southern Hemispheres.

Statement 2 : Only some cyclones develop an eye: This statement is correct. Only well-developed tropical cyclones have a distinct eye, which forms due to the intense central low-pressure system.

Statement 3 : The temperature inside the eye of a cyclone is nearly 10°C less than that of the surroundings: This statement is incorrect. The eye of a cyclone is relatively warm compared to the surrounding areas due to descending air. Thus, only statement 2 is correct, making the answer c) 2 only.



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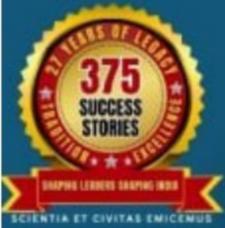
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