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The Pala Civil Times special feature



## Educated, empowered women pillars of progressive nation, says Droupadi Murmu

### Railways launches app for women staff to report harassment

Indian Railways launched the Sexual Harassment Incident Notification for Empowerment (SHINE) app for women employees to report workplace sexual harassment. The app, accessible through the HRMS Employee Self Service system, complements the Vishakha Guidelines and allows complaints to be filed on behalf of outsiders while ensuring confidentiality. It aims to provide a safe and accessible digital platform for timely reporting and redressal of harassment cases.

### Himachal plans quota for women in Class 3 jobs

Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh, announced that the State government will introduce a law providing 25% reservation for women in recruitment to Class III government posts. The government will also conduct a special recruitment drive for women sub-inspectors to strengthen women's participation in public services. This initiative is expected to increase women's participation in the labour force and improve their access to stable government employment.

## West Asia crisis triggers panic sale of seafood products by aqua farmers in Andhra Pradesh

The escalating conflict between Israel and Iran has created fears of disruptions in global shipping routes and port operations. These concerns have triggered panic among aquaculture farmers in Andhra Pradesh, a major hub of India's seafood exports. Rumours that international shipments could be delayed or halted have led many shrimp farmers to harvest their produce prematurely and sell it quickly in the domestic market.

As a result, the sudden surge in supply has pushed down shrimp prices significantly. Farmers who usually receive around ₹300 per kg for shrimp are now forced to sell at much lower prices due to fears that export channels to global markets — including the United States, Japan, and China — might be affected. Although authorities state that the actual impact on shipments is minimal, the geopolitical uncertainty has already triggered market panic, demonstrating how international conflicts can quickly influence agricultural markets and farmer incomes.

## T.N. govt. forms panel to frame rules to ban hostile dog breeds



The Tamil Nadu government has formed an expert committee to draft “Pet and Community Dog Bylaws” aimed at regulating or banning aggressive and dangerous dog breeds to ensure public safety. The move follows recommendations from a committee set up by the Government of India which identified certain breeds as potentially dangerous to human life. The panel will review existing rules, suggest guidelines for ownership and handling, and propose measures such as restricting the breeding, sale, or possession of such dogs. The initiative was taken following proposals from the Department of Animal Husbandry and the Greater Chennai Corporation after reports of attacks by aggressive breeds.

### Goa's Earlier Decision

In 2025, the Goa government approved the Goa Animal Breeding and Domestication Regulation and Compensation Bill 2025, which proposes to ban the import, sale, and breeding of certain “ferocious” dog breeds such as Rottweiler and Pit Bull in the state.

### What does the Data say?

In a reply to an RTI filed by OpIndia in connection with dog bite data across the country, the Union Government has informed that in 2025 alone, so far, there were over 26 lakh cases reported.



## Gen Z protest deaths in Nepal: Inquiry panel for action against those behind crackdown

A high-level commission in Nepal has submitted its report to the interim government investigating the violent crackdown on the September 8 Gen Z anti-corruption protests. The report recommends criminal investigation and legal action against officials who ordered, executed, or failed to stop the use of excessive force during the protests in which 77 people were killed, including 19 on the main protest day. Although the commission did not directly name individuals for prosecution, it suggested accountability could extend to leaders of the previous government, including former Prime Minister K. P. Sharma Oli, the then Home Minister, senior police officials, and members of the Kathmandu security administration. The report was submitted shortly after elections in which rapper-turned-politician Balendra Shah and the Rastriya Swatantra Party secured a major victory, reflecting strong public demand for political reform. Interim Prime Minister Sushila Karki stated that the government will review the report before deciding whether to release it publicly or initiate legal action.

### Democratic Accountability & Rule of Law

The commission's findings highlight the importance of holding state authorities accountable for the use of force against civilians. Investigating whether political leaders or security forces abused their power reinforces core democratic principles such as transparency, human rights protection, and rule of law. If proper legal action follows, it could strengthen democratic institutions in Nepal.



## Iran vows not to attack neighbours



The conflict between Iran and the U.S.–Israel alliance has entered a new phase as Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian announced that Tehran will not target neighbouring West Asian countries unless attacks originate from their territory. The statement appears aimed at reassuring regional states amid growing fears that the conflict could expand across the Gulf. However, Iran warned that U.S. and Israeli military bases and interests in the region will remain legitimate targets if they are involved in attacks against Iran.

The war continues to escalate. The United States Central Command reported striking more than 3,000 targets under Operation Epic Fury, while Israel claimed to have destroyed several aircraft belonging to Iran's Quds Force. In response, Iran launched multiple missile barrages toward Israel and claimed to have inflicted casualties on U.S. forces in the region. U.S. President Donald Trump stated that Iran was "being beaten to hell" and demanded unconditional surrender, a demand Tehran firmly rejected. Despite Iran's assurances to neighbouring states, the conflict has begun affecting the wider region. Missile and drone activity disrupted air traffic in the Gulf, briefly closing operations at Dubai's airport, while Iran also accused the U.S. of attacking civilian infrastructure, including a desalination plant on Qeshm Island. With both sides continuing strikes and rejecting de-escalation, the war risks spreading across West Asia.

## Amid West Asia crisis, cooking gas prices raised

Domestic LPG prices in India were increased by ₹60 per cylinder for household consumers and ₹114.50 for commercial cylinders, citing a sharp rise in global energy prices. Officials said the increase was linked to disruptions in tanker movement through the Strait of Hormuz due to the ongoing West Asian conflict, which has pushed up international oil and gas prices.

The hike will also affect beneficiaries of the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, though they continue to receive subsidies for up to 12 refills annually. After subsidy support, eligible households will pay around ₹613 for a 14.2-kg cylinder. Meanwhile, non-subsidised LPG used by most households in Delhi will now cost about ₹913, while commercial cylinders have risen to ₹1,883.

Opposition leaders including Mallikarjun Kharge and Mamata Banerjee criticised the move, arguing that it increases the financial burden on households already facing inflation. The government, however, said the increase translates to only a small per-person daily cost and was necessary due to global price pressures.

Officials also stated that petrol and diesel prices are unlikely to rise immediately, as state-owned oil companies currently have the financial capacity to absorb short-term fluctuations. However, India remains vulnerable to global supply disruptions because nearly half of its crude oil imports and around 40% of natural gas shipments pass through the Strait of Hormuz, making the region strategically important for the country's energy security.



## India's renewable transition caught between stranded power and institutional inertia



India's renewable energy sector is expanding rapidly, positioning the country as a major global clean-energy player. However, a key challenge has emerged in the form of transmission grid congestion. In Rajasthan, more than 4,000 MW of commissioned renewable capacity cannot supply electricity during peak hours because the grid cannot evacuate all the power generated. Although the state has around 23 GW of renewable capacity, the available transmission margin is only about 18.9 GW, leading to frequent curtailment of renewable power.

The burden of this curtailment is unevenly distributed. Projects with Temporary General Network Access (T-GNA) often face complete shutdown during peak solar hours, while projects with Permanent GNA continue operating. At the same time, expensive transmission corridors, such as 765 kV lines designed to carry around 6,000 MW, are sometimes used at less than 20% of their capacity, meaning publicly funded infrastructure is underutilised while renewable electricity remains stranded.

The situation reflects deeper institutional issues, including a mismatch between transmission planning and real-time grid operations. Grid operators tend to prioritise stability, sometimes operating networks too conservatively even when technologies such as STATCOMs and advanced reactive-power systems could allow higher utilisation without compromising safety.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY SPECIAL FEATURE

## Assam and Manipur announce financial incentives for women



On International Women's Day, the governments of Assam and Manipur announced major financial assistance programmes aimed at strengthening women's welfare and economic security.

In Assam, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced that around 40 lakh families will receive ₹9,000 each under the Orunodoi Scheme through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT). Launched in 2020, the scheme focuses on supporting poor households by transferring financial assistance directly to women beneficiaries. The latest disbursement, amounting to about ₹3,600 crore, includes a Bihu bonus and four months of instalments, making it one of the largest single-day financial transfers in the State's history.

In Manipur, Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh announced ₹350 crore in assistance for women affected by the ethnic conflict, which will benefit around 3.5 lakh women. The initiative aims to support women who have been economically and socially affected by the crisis and help displaced families rebuild their lives.

Overall, these programmes highlight how targeted welfare schemes and direct financial transfers are being used as practical tools for women's empowerment, improving economic security, supporting vulnerable families, and promoting social stability at the grassroots level.

## Punjab rolls out monthly stipend for women

The government of Punjab has announced a major welfare initiative aimed at improving women's financial security. While presenting the 2026–27 State Budget, Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema introduced the Mukh Mantri Mawan Dhian Satikar Yojana, under which ₹1,000 per month will be transferred directly to the bank accounts of all adult women in the State. Women from the Scheduled Caste community will receive ₹1,500 per month, with the government allocating ₹9,300 crore for the programme in the coming financial year.

The scheme is designed to cover most women above 18 years of age, excluding only certain groups such as current or former government employees, MPs, MLAs, and income tax payers. The government said the initiative aims to ensure broader inclusion compared with similar schemes in neighbouring states. Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann has positioned the programme as a universal welfare measure intended to strengthen economic independence for women.

Overall, the scheme highlights how direct cash transfer programmes are increasingly being used by state governments to promote women's empowerment, improve household financial stability, and expand social welfare coverage.



## Prelims 2026 Most Probable High-Yield Topics

### Stablecoins: Opportunities and Challenges

Stablecoins are cryptocurrencies pegged to fiat currencies like the USD, backed by issuer-held reserves to maintain value stability. They enable value storage and payments but differ from central bank money as private issuances, with redemption at full value not always clearly guaranteed by issuers.

#### Opportunities

- Supporters argue that stablecoins offer several potential benefits in the financial system :
- **Faster and cheaper cross-border payments:** Stablecoins may reduce transaction time and costs compared to traditional international banking channels.
- **Promotion of financial inclusion:** They could provide access to digital financial services for people who do not have bank accounts.
- **Integration with the digital economy:** Stablecoins are seen as a possible bridge connecting the cryptocurrency ecosystem with the real economy.

However, many of these benefits are already being addressed through advanced digital payment systems such as Unified Payments Interface in India.

#### Challenges

Stablecoins also raise several concerns for financial stability and economic policy. Their widespread use could affect how national financial systems function and weaken the role of traditional monetary institutions. Key challenges include:

- **Currency substitution:** People may prefer stablecoins over domestic currency, reducing demand for national money.
- **Weakened monetary policy:** Central banks may lose some control over money supply, interest rates, and capital flows.
- **Impact on banks:** If stablecoins replace bank deposits, banks' role in credit creation and financial intermediation may decline.
- **Systemic financial risks:** Large-scale adoption could expose economies, especially emerging markets, to external shocks.
- **Loss of seigniorage:** Governments may lose revenue earned from issuing currency, as profits shift to private stablecoin issuers.



#### Prelims model questions

1. Consider the following statements regarding stablecoins:

1. Stablecoins are cryptocurrencies pegged to a fiat currency and backed by reserves.
2. Issuers of all major stablecoins make an unconditional promise to pay holders the full value.
3. Stablecoins fully satisfy the defining features of modern fiat money.

Which of the statements is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a) 1 only

2. Which of the following are claimed benefits of stablecoins by proponents?

1. Faster and cheaper cross-border payments
2. Greater financial inclusion for the unbanked
3. Acting as a bridge between the crypto market and the real economy

Select the correct answer:

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

Answer: (d) 1, 2 and 3

## PRELIMS CORNER :

1) Consider the following statements (2020)

1. The weightage of food in Consumer Price Index (CPI) is higher than that in Wholesale Price Index (WPI).
2. The WTI does not capture changes in, the prices of services, which CPI does.
3. Reserve Bank of India has now adopted WPI as its key measure of inflation and to decide on changing the key policy rates.

Which of the statements given- above is/are correct?

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

2) Which among the following steps is most likely to be taken at the time of an economic recession? (2021)

- a) Cut in tax rates accompanied by increase in interest rate
- b) Increase in expenditure on public projects
- c) Increase in tax rates accompanied by reduction of interest rate
- d) Reduction of expenditure on public projects

## HERITAGE

### INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY



March 8 marks International Women's Day to honor courage that changed history. In 1917, women textile workers in Petrograd staged the famous "Bread and Peace" strike, demanding an end to World War I and relief from food shortages. Their bold action helped topple the Tsar and won women the right to vote. The date, originally February 23 in Russia's old calendar, was officially set as March 8 in 1922—and the UN recognized it globally in 1977. Today, it is a celebration of women's achievements across the world and a reminder of the ongoing struggle for equality, justice, and opportunity. It inspires people everywhere to honor women's voices, power, and contributions in every sphere of life.



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# Prelims Corner: Explanations

## 1) Answer is option A

- The Consumer Price Index (CPI) measures the changes in prices of goods and services purchased by households. Food has a higher weightage of around 46% in CPI because it constitutes a major part of household consumption expenditure. The Wholesale Price Index (WPI) tracks the prices of goods traded in bulk by wholesalers to other businesses. In WPI, the weightage of food items is lower, around 26%, as it focuses more on industrial goods and commodities rather than household consumption patterns.

Hence, Statement 1 is correct.

## CPI vs. WPI in capturing services:

- The WPI only measures the prices of goods and does not include services.
- In contrast, CPI includes both goods and services that households consume, such as education, health, and transport services.
- This makes CPI a better reflection of the actual cost of living experienced by consumers.

Therefore, Statement 2 is correct.

- Inflation measure adopted by RBI:
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has adopted CPI as its key measure of inflation for monetary policy decisions, including determining policy rates like the repo rate.
- RBI does not use WPI as the primary inflation measure for monetary policy, though WPI is still published for informational purposes.

Hence, Statement 3 is incorrect.

## 2) Answer is option b

In Economic Recession, the Government can: Decrease interest rate to make more room for borrowing, Increase Government Spending, Cut Tax rates to increase spending capacity of people.

### What Is a Recession?



#### Unemployment rate rises

16,000 jobs lost in January 2008



#### Consumer purchases fall off



#### Businesses go bankrupt

In 2008, business' orders declined .06 percent compared to the prior year



#### People lose their homes

Housing prices fell 10 percent in 2008



#### Young people can't get a good job after school

“

**“The two most powerful warriors are patience and time.”**

— Leo Tolstoy

Prelims 2026 countdown

**76 days to go**



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