



192 bird species recorded in Silent Valley

THE HINDU :
10-03-2026 - Page 3



K.N. Panikkar, renowned historian, academic and public intellectual, passes away at 89

THE HINDU :
10-03-2026 - Page 6

RBI buys 50,000 cr. G-Secs for liquidity, tranche 2 on Friday

THE HINDU :
10-03-2026 - Page 12



UPSC Spotlight - focus page for prelims 2026

The Pala Civil Times special feature



Iran picks Mojtaba Khamenei as new leader

The Assembly of Experts, an 88-member clerical body in Iran, has appointed Mojtaba Khamenei as the country's new Supreme Leader following the death of his father, Ali Khamenei, who was reportedly killed in a joint U.S.–Israeli strike on February 28. Mojtaba Khamenei thus becomes the third Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic after Ruhollah Khomeini and Ali Khamenei. In Iran's political system, the Supreme Leader is the most powerful authority, serving as head of state and commander-in-chief of the armed forces.

The appointment comes at a time of heightened geopolitical tension. Donald Trump criticised the choice, signalling continued strain between Iran and the United States. At the same time, the new leader maintains close ties with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and groups within Iran's "Axis of Resistance," including Hezbollah. Meanwhile, leaders such as Vladimir Putin and the government of China welcomed the appointment, suggesting that Iran may further strengthen its partnerships with Russia and China.

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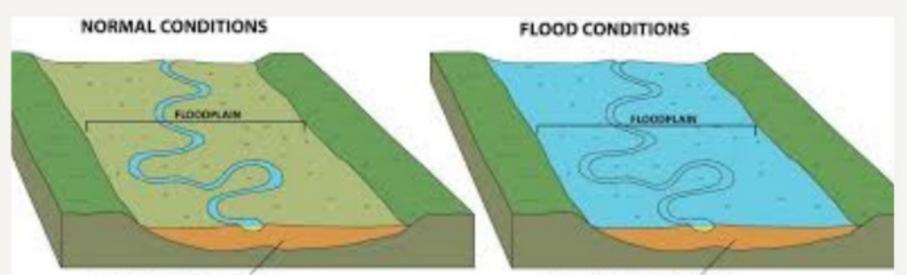
Eminent historian and public intellectual K. N. Panikkar passed away in Thiruvananthapuram at the age of 89, leaving behind a remarkable legacy in the study of modern Indian history. Born in 1936 near Guruvayur, he pursued his higher education at University of Rajasthan and went on to build a distinguished academic career. In 1972 he joined Jawaharlal Nehru University, where he served as Professor of History, Head of the Centre for Historical Studies and later Dean of the School of Social Sciences. He also held important roles such as Vice-Chancellor of Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit and founding Chairperson of the Kerala Council for Historical Research.

Professor Panikkar was widely respected for his influential writings on colonialism, religion, culture and peasant movements. His well-known book *Against Lord and State: Religion and Peasant Uprisings in Malabar (1836–1921)* offered a powerful interpretation of the Malabar rebellion and sparked significant scholarly debate. Beyond his academic contributions, he was remembered by students and colleagues as an inspiring teacher, a sharp thinker and a committed voice for progressive ideas. His passing marks the loss of one of India's most respected historians, whose work will continue to shape historical scholarship for generations.

Govt strengthens Yamuna banks between ITO and Sarai Kale Khan

The Delhi Government is taking steps to improve flood management and protect people living near the Yamuna floodplains by strengthening the banks of the Yamuna River. The Irrigation and Flood Control Department is reinforcing the Millennium Bund between ITO and Sarai Kale Khan using stone pitching, a technique where stones are placed on slopes to prevent soil erosion, along with gabion structures to strengthen the embankment. These measures aim to reduce the risk of riverbank erosion and flooding, especially during the monsoon season.

As part of broader urban governance and disaster preparedness, the department is also upgrading drainage infrastructure and strengthening approach roads along Drain No. 12 to ensure effective cleaning and quick emergency response during heavy rains. The department currently maintains 57 major stormwater drains, including the Najafgarh and Shahdara outfall drains, and has taken charge of additional drains from other agencies. Together, these measures highlight how proactive infrastructure management can help governments reduce flood risks and safeguard communities living near vulnerable riverbanks and floodplains.



192 bird species recorded in Silent Valley

A recent bird survey in Silent Valley National Park recorded 192 bird species, highlighting the park's rich avian biodiversity. The survey, conducted from March 6–8 by the Kerala Forest Department and the Malabar Natural History Society, covered both the core and buffer zones of the park. About 85 birdwatchers from Kerala and Tamil Nadu participated. Rare migratory birds such as the Asian house martin and the Western house martin were recorded during the exercise. This was the first survey to cover all 21 forest camps in the park, including high-altitude areas like Poochipara, Sispara, and Walakkad.

The survey also documented 20 bird species endemic to the Western Ghats, including the Nilgiri laughingthrush, Black-and-orange flycatcher, White-bellied treepie, and Nilgiri pipit. Evidence of breeding was observed in around 11 species, such as the Sri Lanka frogmouth, Malabar trogon, and Crimson-backed sunbird. Among the survey sites, Anavaayi recorded the highest number of species (95). Researchers also noted a healthy presence of birds of prey, including owls and nightjars, indicating a balanced ecosystem. Overall, the study confirms that Silent Valley remains one of the most important biodiversity hotspots for birds in the Western Ghats.



Black-and-orange flycatcher

UV camera snaps treetops glowing amid thunderstorm



Coronae glow on the tips of spruce needles as weak electric discharges subtly singe the tips of leaves and needles. WILLIAM BRUNE/AGU

Scientists have long believed that thunderstorms can cause electrical discharges on trees, producing a faint ultraviolet glow called corona discharges (coronae). A study published in *Geophysical Research Letters* by researchers from Pennsylvania State University has provided the first direct observations of this phenomenon in natural forests. Using the Corona Observing Telescope System (COTS), a mobile instrument with a camera sensitive to a narrow ultraviolet wavelength blocked by Earth's ozone layer, the team detected these glows even during daylight. During a thunderstorm in North Carolina, corona discharges were observed on trees such as sweetgum and loblolly pine, with the glow moving from leaf to leaf and branch to branch.

The study found that these glows are linked to small electrical currents flowing through tree branches. Each discharge emits billions of photons and produces a tiny current of about one microampere, but when spread across a forest canopy the total current can become significant. Observations from storms in Florida and Pennsylvania indicate that this is a common thunderstorm phenomenon. The discharges also generate hydroxyl radicals that help clean the atmosphere, though they may slightly damage leaves by burning their tips.

The jobs that AI could most certainly replace, as per an Anthropic study

A recent study by Anthropic examines how artificial intelligence may reshape labour markets by introducing a metric called “observed exposure,” which measures not only what AI can theoretically do but what it is already performing in workplaces. The study analyses the potential impact of AI adoption on unemployment trends, hiring patterns, workforce demographics, and entry-level job opportunities. Using occupational task databases, theoretical assessments of AI capabilities, and real-world professional AI usage, the researchers compare AI exposure with employment projections and labour market data. The framework provides an early evidence-based perspective for policymakers and economic planners to understand how AI-driven automation could gradually influence labour market structures and workforce demand.

Jobs Most Exposed ★

- **High exposure:** Computer programming, customer service, financial analysis, engineering, business and finance roles.
- **Low exposure:** Construction, agriculture, protective services, personal care jobs.

Gap Between AI Potential and Current Use
 Although artificial intelligence is capable of performing a large share of tasks, its actual use in workplaces remains limited. Example : AI can theoretically perform around 94% of computer-related tasks, but in practice only about one-third of these tasks are currently automated. This implies while the technology has significant potential, its integration into work is still gradual.

- Impact on Hiring**
- Entry-level hiring has dropped sharply: Workers aged 22–25 in high-exposure roles saw a 14% drop in hiring since late 2022.
 - Companies retain existing staff but limit new recruitment, affecting junior pipelines and graduate programs.

Demographic Vulnerability ★
 AI exposure varies across different demographic groups.

- **Gender:** 54.4% of high-exposure jobs are held by women, compared to 38.8% in low-exposure roles.
- **Education:** Highly educated workers are more exposed; graduates are about four times more likely to be in high-exposure occupations.
- **Race:** White (65.1%) and Asian workers are more represented in high-exposure roles, while Black and Hispanic workers are less represented.
- **Age:** Slightly older workers (average 42.9 years) face higher exposure.

Most exposed occupations



Occupation	Observed exposure	Leading automated task
Computer programmers	74.5%	Write, update, and maintain software programs
Customer service representatives	70.1%	Confer with customers to provide info, take orders, handle complaints
Data entry keyers	67.1%	Read source documents and enter data into systems
Medical record specialists	66.7%	Compile, abstract, and code patient data
Market research analysts and marketing specialists	64.8%	Prepare reports of findings, illustrating data graphically and translating complex findings into written text
Sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing, except technical and scientific products	62.8%	Contact customers to demonstrate products and solicit orders
Financial and investment analysts	57.2%	Inform investment decisions by analyzing financial information to forecast business, industry, or economic conditions
Software quality assurance analysts and testers	51.9%	Modify software to correct errors or improve performance
Information security analysts	48.6%	Perform risk assessments and test data processing security
Computer user support specialists	46.8%	Answer user inquiries regarding computer software or hardware operation to resolve problems

RBI buys 50,000 cr. G-Secs for liquidity, tranche 2 on Friday

Amid rising global uncertainty due to the prolonged conflict in West Asia, the Reserve Bank of India announced new Open Market Operations (OMO) to purchase Government securities worth ₹1,00,000 crore in two tranches. The move aims to inject liquidity into the banking system and ease financial pressures caused by advance tax outflows. At the same time, surging crude oil prices—crossing \$110 per barrel—have pushed the Indian rupee to a record low against the U.S. dollar, highlighting the broader economic risks for India from rising energy costs and geopolitical tensions.

Government Securities

Government Securities (G-Secs) are tradeable debt instruments issued by the government to borrow money.

G-Secs are issued by the Government of India and State Governments.

They are risk-free or gilt-edged securities because the chances of default are extremely low.

Classification:

G-Secs are of two main types.

1. Short-term securities - Treasury Bills (T-Bills) with maturities of 91, 182 and 364 days. These are zero-coupon instruments issued at a discount and redeemed at face value. Cash Management Bills (CMBs) for maturities less than 91 days.
2. Long-term securities - Dated Government Securities (government bonds) with maturities generally ranging from 5 to 40 years, which pay fixed or floating interest half-yearly.

State governments issue similar long-term bonds called State Development Loans (SDLs).

Uses and Advantages:

- G-Secs help finance fiscal deficits and manage public expenditure.
- They provide safe investment options for banks,
- They act as benchmark interest rates in financial markets.
- They support liquidity management.

War hits poultry exports to West Asia



The ongoing conflict in West Asia has disrupted shipping routes and affected India's egg exports. Around 80 containers of eggs sent from Kochi Port to destinations such as Dubai, Bahrain and Oman were diverted to Jawaharlal Nehru Port after shipping lines suspended operations due to the war. Exporters from the Namakkal poultry hub in Tamil Nadu have requested help from the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) to ensure the containers are shipped to their original destinations. The disruption in exports has also affected domestic markets. Because shipments cannot move smoothly during the conflict, supply has accumulated within India, causing egg prices to fall by nearly 20% in the past two weeks. This shows how geopolitical conflicts can disrupt trade routes, delay exports, and directly impact farmers and producers by lowering prices and creating logistical problems in international trade.

Key Takeaways

- Agriculture and allied sectors have grown steadily at 3-5% CAGR, with livestock and fisheries expanding faster at 5-6% annually, strengthening rural income diversification.
- India leading as world's largest milk producer, contributing nearly 25% of global output, with production rising from 146.31 MT (2014-15) to 247.87 MT (2024-25), reflecting 69% growth.
- India ranks second globally in egg production, with output increasing from 78.48 billion to 149.11 billion eggs, while per capita availability rose from 62 to 106 eggs annually.
- India is the second-largest fish producer globally, with production rising from 9.58 MT to 19.77 MT, contributing nearly 8% of global output and supporting over 30 million livelihoods.
- Meat production increased from 6.69 MT to 10.50 MT, positioning India as the fourth-largest producer worldwide.
- The Union Budget 2026-27 allocated ₹2,761.80 crore to fisheries and ₹6,153.46 crore to the MoAH&D (a 16% increase), reinforcing sustained sectoral investment.

Prelims 2026 Most Probable High-Yield Topics

Vice President

On 21 July 2025, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar resigned from his post to “prioritise health and abide by medical advice.”

Election

- Indirect election by electoral college of both Houses of Parliament (elected + nominated MPs).
- Excludes State Legislative Assemblies, unlike President’s election.
- Uses proportional representation with single transferable vote; voting is secret ballot.
- Requires nomination by 20 proposers + 20 seconders; deposit ₹15,000 in RBI.
- First Vice-President : Dr. S. Radhakrishnan (1952-1957), (1957-1962)

Qualification

- Must be an Indian Citizen, ≥35 years, eligible for Rajya Sabha.
- Must not hold office of profit.

A sitting President or Vice-President, any state governor, or a Union/State minister is not considered to hold an office of profit, so they are eligible to be Vice-President.

- Cannot be a member of Parliament or State Legislature at the time of election.

Powers and Functions

- Ex-officio Chairman of Rajya Sabha: powers like Lok Sabha Speaker.
- Acts as President during vacancy/temporary inability: max 6 months or until President resumes office.
- During acting Presidency, Rajya Sabha duties handled by Deputy Chairman.

Term and Vacancy

- Term: 5 years; eligible for re-election, can hold office till successor assumes charge.
- Vacancies occur due to: expiry, resignation, removal, death, disqualification, or void election.
- Removal: Resolution by Rajya Sabha (special majority) + Lok Sabha approval; no formal impeachment or specific grounds required.

According to Article 67(a) of the Constitution, the Vice President may resign from Office by writing to the President.

Prelims model questions

1. Consider the following statements regarding the election of the Vice-President of India:

1. The electoral college consists of elected members of both Houses of Parliament only.
2. Nominated members of Parliament can vote in the election of the Vice-President.
3. Members of State Legislative Assemblies participate in the election.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: B

2. Which one of the following correctly describes the method of election of the Vice-President of India?

- A. Direct election by the people through simple majority
- B. Indirect election through proportional representation by means of single transferable vote
- C. Election by simple majority of both Houses of Parliament in a joint sitting
- D. Election by electoral college consisting of Parliament and State Legislatures

Answer: B

PRELIMS CORNER :

1) In India, which one of the following Constitutional Amendments was widely believed to be enacted to overcome the judicial interpretations of the Fundamental Rights? (2023)

- (a) 1st Amendment
- (b) 42nd Amendment
- (c) 44th Amendment
- (d) 86th Amendment

2) The Preamble to the Constitution of India is (2020)

- (a) a part of the Constitution but has no legal effect
- (b) not a part of the Constitution and has no legal effect either
- (c) a part of the Constitution and has the same legal effect as any other part
- (d) a part of the Constitution but has no legal effect independently of other parts

“

“By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.” – Benjamin Franklin

Prelims 2026 countdown

75 days to go

Rest to Rise: The Hidden Link Between Sleep and Focus



Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur have conducted a study examining how hostel living conditions influence students' sleep quality and academic performance. The research, led by Anubha Goel, was initiated after observations that many students appeared tired and less alert even before classes began. This raised concerns that factors within hostel environments might be affecting students' sleep and, consequently, their learning abilities.

To investigate this issue, the research team surveyed around 500 hostel students using the internationally recognized Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index, which evaluates sleep patterns and disturbances. Students were asked about their sleep habits as well as the environmental conditions in their hostel rooms, including ventilation, temperature, humidity levels, and whether windows were kept open during the night. The findings revealed that nearly 70% of the respondents reported poor sleep quality, often associated with hot, humid, or poorly ventilated rooms.

The study found a clear link between these unfavorable indoor conditions and reduced concentration, slower comprehension, and lower overall academic efficiency. Poor sleep was shown to negatively affect students' cognitive performance, highlighting how the physical design and environmental management of hostels can influence educational outcomes.

To gain deeper insights, the researchers are now conducting follow-up experiments using environmental sensors and wearable smartwatches to monitor real-time room conditions.

Prelims Corner: Explanations

1) Answer is option A

A constitutional amendment is a formal change made to the Constitution to modify, add, or remove its provisions according to the procedure laid down in the Constitution itself. In India, constitutional amendments are provided under Article 368 of the Constitution of India.

- The 1st Amendment (1951) was enacted primarily to address judicial decisions that had struck down certain laws for violating Fundamental Rights, especially the right to property and freedom of speech.
- It introduced restrictions on freedom of speech and expression in the interest of “public order” and allowed the state to make laws for the compensation for property acquisition, effectively curbing some Supreme Court interpretations of Fundamental Rights.

The other amendments:

- 42nd Amendment (1976): Known as the “Mini-Constitution,” made extensive changes during Emergency, affecting Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles.
- 44th Amendment (1978): Reversed many provisions of the 42nd Amendment, strengthening civil liberties.
- 86th Amendment (2002): Made education a Fundamental Right for children aged 6–14.

So, the 1st Amendment was specifically aimed at overcoming early judicial interpretations of Fundamental Rights.

2) Answer is option d

Status of the Preamble - In the landmark case Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala (1973), the Supreme Court held that the Preamble is a part of the Constitution. Earlier, in Berubari Union Case (1960), the Court had said that the Preamble was not a part of the Constitution, but this view was later reversed.

Legal Position

Although the Preamble is part of the Constitution, it is not enforceable in a court of law by itself. It cannot be the source of any substantive power or limitation.

Interpretative Role

The Preamble acts as a guiding principle for interpreting the provisions of the Constitution. When there is ambiguity in constitutional provisions, courts may refer to the Preamble to understand the spirit and objectives of the Constitution.

The Preamble is part of the Constitution, but it does not have independent legal effect unless read with other constitutional provisions.



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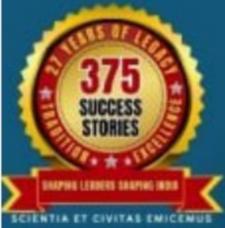
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