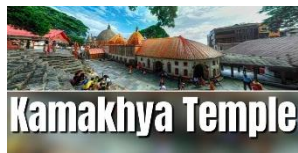


### KAMAKHYA TEMPLE



- It is situated on Nilachal Hill and adjoins the southern bank of the Brahmaputra River in Guwahati, Assam.
- The temple is dedicated to Goddess Sati, an incarnation of goddess Durga and the consort of Lord Shiva.
- It is one of the most revered centres of Tantric practices.
- It is regarded as one of the oldest of the 51 Shakti Peethas in India.
- The former temple was destroyed by Kala Pahar, which was later reconstructed in 1565 by Chilarai, who was the reigning king of the Koch dynasty.
- Ambubachi Mela is one of the major festivals of this temple. The festival is held every year to commemorate the yearly menstruation of Goddess Kamakhya.

#### Temple Architecture:

- It had been modelled out of a combination of two different styles, namely, the traditional Nagara, or North Indian, and Saracenic, or Mughal style of architecture.
- This unusual combination has been named the Nilachala Style of Architecture.
- It has a unique structural style that is shaped in the form of a beehive surrounded by different sculptures of different gods.
- This is the only temple of Assam having a fully developed ground plan.
- It consists of five chambers, garbhagriha or sanctuary, antarala or vestibule, Jagan Mohan or principal chamber, bhogmandir or ritual chamber and natmandir or opera hall for performing traditional dance and music associated with sukti temples.
- It is interesting to note that the superstructure of each of the above chambers exhibits different architectural features.

### EUROPEAN FREE TRADE ASSOCIATION



EUROPEAN FREE  
TRADE ASSOCIATION

Recently, the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) between India and the member states of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) has completed two years since its signing.

- It is an **intergovernmental organisation** established in 1960 by the **Stockholm Convention**.
- **Objective:** Promotes free **trade and economic integration** between its members within Europe and globally.
- **Member Countries:** Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland.
- The members of this organization are all open, competitive economies committed to the progressive liberalisation of trade in the multinational arena as well as in free trade agreements.
- In contrast to the European Union (EU), it is **not a customs union**.
- **Headquarters:** EFTA Secretariat is **located in Geneva**.
  - It assists the EFTA Council in the management of relations between the 4 EFTA States and deals with the negotiation and operation of EFTA's FTAs.

#### Governance

- **EFTA Council:** Its highest governing body is the EFTA. It generally **meets 8 times a year** at the ambassadorial level and twice a year at the ministerial level.
- **EFTA Surveillance Authority (ESA):** It monitors compliance with European Economic Area (EEA) rules in Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.
- **EFTA Court:** It is **based in Luxembourg** and has the competence and authority to settle internal and external disputes regarding the implementation, application or interpretation of the EEA agreement.



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### ASTEROID 2024 YR4



Recently, NASA has officially ruled out the possibility of asteroid 2024 YR4 asteroid 2024 YR4 colliding with the moon in 2032.

- It is classified as an **Apollo-type asteroid**, meaning its orbit crosses Earth's orbit but spends most of its time beyond it.
- **Origin:** The study reveals YR4 is a solid, stony type that likely originated from an asteroid family in the **central Main Belt between Mars and Jupiter**,
- It was **discovered in 2024**, by the **Asteroid Terrestrial-impact Last Alert System (ATLAS)** telescope in Chile.
  - The Y in the asteroid's name indicates that it was discovered in the last half of December.
  - The R4 indicates that it was the 117th asteroid found in that period.

### WHY INDIA MAY FACE AN LPG SUPPLY CRUNCH

Unlike crude oil, where India maintains strategic reserves covering about two months of consumption, the LPG system is designed mainly for continuous operational flow rather than stockpiling, which the International Energy Agency (IEA) has identified as a major infrastructure weakness.

#### **Inadequate Strategic Reserves**

- India has only two underground LPG storage caverns at Mangaluru and Visakhapatnam, with a combined capacity of 1.4 lakh tonnes, equivalent to less than two days of national consumption.
- The Mangaluru cavern, with 80,000 tonnes capacity, equals roughly one day's consumption.

### Underground Caverns as a Storage Solution

- Expanding underground gas storage caverns is considered a potential solution to India's LPG supply vulnerability.
- Such facilities allow countries to store large volumes of gas and ensure supply security during disruptions.

### Geological Zones Suitable for Storage in India

- The **Peninsular Shield**, covering much of southern India, is the most suitable geological zone for underground storage.
- It consists of stable granite and gneiss formations, which already host the LPG caverns at Visakhapatnam and Mangaluru.
- These caverns use proven engineering techniques and demonstrate that the rock formations are suitable for storage.
- **Deccan Traps**
  - The Deccan Traps, a large basalt plateau across western and central India, present more engineering challenges for cavern construction.
  - Projects designed by Engineers India Limited (EIL) have faced difficulties due to geological conditions.
- **Salt Caverns in Rajasthan**
  - The Bikaner–Barmer salt formations in Rajasthan offer another promising option. Salt caverns are cheaper, quicker to build, naturally impermeable, and allow rapid gas injection and withdrawal.
  - EIL has partnered with Germany's DEEP to develop technology for such storage.
- **Depleted Gas Reservoirs**
  - Another potential option under study is the use of depleted gas reservoirs in the Krishna–Godavari, Cambay, and Mumbai offshore basins for underground gas storage.



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### FISCAL HEALTH INDEX



- It was introduced by NITI Aayog. It provides a systematic framework to evaluate the fiscal performance of **18 major Indian states, 10 North-Eastern and Himalayan states.**
- It provides a comprehensive and comparable assessment of the **fiscal performance of Indian states.**
- The Index has **been designed as a data-driven framework** to evaluate fiscal soundness, guide reforms, and promote evidence-based fiscal policymaking across states.
- It is built on **five key pillars of fiscal health**: Quality of Expenditure, Revenue Mobilisation, Fiscal Prudence, Debt Index, and Debt Sustainability.
- **The index classifies states into four tiers.**
  - **Achievers**: These are states with strong fiscal discipline, high own-tax revenues, low deficits, and manageable debt;
  - **Front Runners**: These states maintain broadly sound finances but fall short of the top tier on one or more indicators;
  - **Performers**: They occupy the middle ground, with mixed results across the five pillars.
  - **Aspirational**: These states are those facing the most significant fiscal stress, characterised by persistent deficits, high debt, and limited revenue capacity.

### Key Highlights of Fiscal Health Index (FHI) 2026

- **Odisha, Goa and Jharkhand** have been categorised as **achievers.**
- **Karnataka and Telangana** moved from front runner to performer, and Kerala and Tamil Nadu slipped further to the aspirational group.
- Among **northeastern and Himalayan states, Arunachal Pradesh has topped** in the index, followed by Uttarakhand, Tripura, Meghalaya, Assam and Mizoram.

### HOLDING UP HALF THE SKY ON INDIA'S FARMS

- The celebration of **International Women's Day** on March 8 highlights the achievements and struggles of women across sectors.
- In the same spirit, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) declared the **International Year of the Woman Farmer**, drawing attention to the vital yet often unrecognized role of women in agriculture.
- In **India**, women form a **backbone**, pillar, and essential workforce of the agricultural economy, contributing significantly to crop cultivation, livestock rearing, and agricultural labour.
- Despite this central role, women farmers remain **undercounted**, **underpaid**, and economically marginalized.

### **The Challenge of Counting Women Workers**

- Accurate measurement of women's participation in agriculture remains difficult due to the **informal nature** of rural economies.
- Much of women's labour is **home-based**, seasonal, intermittent, and closely linked with care work, making it difficult for surveys to capture their actual contribution.
- Many women perform multiple tasks such as childcare, animal care, and farm work within a single day, which often leads to their labour being unreported.

### **Persistent Challenges Faced by Women Workers**

- **Inequality in Wages and Earnings**
  - Despite their extensive participation, women agricultural workers receive low wages, limited earnings, and face a significant gender wage gap.
  - In many rural regions, women earn **less than ₹300 per day** for agricultural work.
  - In some areas, women's wages are less than half of men's wages, demonstrating strong wage inequality.

## Current Affairs - 12 March 2026

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- National statistics reveal a similar pattern: the average daily wage for women in agricultural tasks such as sowing and weeding is approximately ₹384, with variations across states.
- Even where wages are higher, inflation-adjusted earnings have shown little improvement over the past decade.
- **Structural Inequality and Lack of Asset Ownership**
  - A major structural barrier is the limited ownership of productive assets, especially agricultural land.
  - Although women constitute nearly half of the agricultural workforce, only about **10% of rural women own land**.
  - Without land ownership, women face restrictions in accessing institutional credit, government schemes, agricultural subsidies, and decision-making power within farming households.
  - This lack of ownership reinforces patterns of economic dependency and gender inequality.

### Conclusion

- Women sustain India's agricultural economy through their extensive involvement in crop farming, livestock management, and **rural labour markets**.
  - Their work supports food production, household livelihoods, and the broader rural economy. Yet their contributions remain largely invisible, undervalued, and poorly compensated.
  - Addressing these inequalities requires improved **data collection**, recognition of women as farmers and workers, expansion of **fair wages**, and greater access to **land ownership** and **economic rights**.
  - Strengthening these measures is essential for achieving **inclusive rural development**, ensuring **gender equity**, and acknowledging the vital role women play in sustaining India's agricultural system.
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### NEW MOTH SPECIES



- They are two **new lichen moth species** discovered from the **eastern Himalayas**.
- **Caulocera hollowayi** was identified from specimens collected near **Golitar in Sikkim**.
  - Researchers distinguished this species through its **unique wing patterns, colour bands, and specific microscopic body features** that differentiate it from previously known moths of the same genus.
- **Asura buxa**, was discovered from specimens collected at **Panijhora in West Bengal**.
  - Scientists noted that the moth possesses **distinctive colour patterns on its wings** along with unique internal anatomical characteristics that confirmed it as a new species.
- **Lichen moths** play an important **ecological role** because their **caterpillars feed on lichens, organisms that are highly sensitive to environmental pollution**.
- Because **lichens are affected by polluted air**, the **presence or absence of these moths can help scientists monitor air quality and environmental health**, particularly in fragile mountain ecosystems like the Indian Himalayas.

### KEY FACTS ABOUT JHELUM RIVER



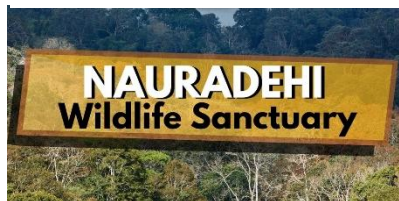
- It is an important river that flows through **northwestern India and eastern Pakistan**.
- It is a **tributary of the Indus River**.
- The river is also known as **Vitasta in Sanskrit, Hydaspes in Greek, and Bidasp in Persian**.
- It is the **lifeline of Kashmir**, the region where it flows for most of its course.
- It is the **largest and most western of the five rivers of Punjab** and passes through the **Jhelum District in the North of Punjab province, Pakistan**.

## Current Affairs - 12 March 2026

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- **Course:**
    - It originates at the Verinag Spring at Anantnag, at the foot of the Pir Panjal range in the Kashmir Valley.
    - The river meanders northwestward from the northern slope of the Pir Panjal Range through the Vale of Kashmir to Wular Lake at Srinagar, which controls its flow.
    - The river makes a deep, narrow gorge on its way to Pakistan.
    - It joins the Chenab River near Trimmu, Pakistan.
  - The hydrology of the Jhelum River is largely controlled by snowmelt from the Karakoram and Himalaya ranges in the spring and the southwest monsoon on the Indian subcontinent that brings heavy rains from June to September.
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### NAURADEHI WILDLIFE SANCTUARY



- It is located in Madhya Pradesh.
  - It is the largest wildlife sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh.
  - Situated on a plateau in the upper Vindhyan range, it serves as an important ecological corridor connecting Panna, Satpura, and Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserves.
  - It is classified under the Deccan peninsula biogeographic region.
  - **Vegetation:** It is rich with lush green vegetation, small grasslands, and dense tropical dry and mixed deciduous forests.
  - **Flora:** Teak, Saja, Dhaora, Bhirra, Ber, Bel, Mahua, Tendu, Gunja, Amla, etc. Teak dominates the forested region.
  - **Fauna:**
    - It supports diverse wildlife, including Indian wolves, Bengal tigers, leopards, sloth bears, sambar deer, nilgai, chinkara, and various bird species.
    - It has been selected for the Cheetah reintroduction Project in India.
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