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School of Research Based Learning & Competition

Current Affairs - 18 March 2026



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KALINJAR FORT



- It is located in the **Banda district** of **Uttar Pradesh**.
- It is situated on an **isolated hilltop**, surrounded by the **Vindhya Mountains** and the **Ken River**.
- It is **one of the oldest** and most impressive forts in the country.
- **Many decisive battles** were fought for the possession of this strategically located fort in **ancient, medieval, and modern times**.

History:

- Historical documents and inscriptions indicate that a strategic fort was **established during the Gupta period (4th-6th century)**.
- Later, Kalinjar came **under the Chandela dynasty (9th-13th century)** and became **one of their capitals**.
- During the rule of the **Chandela kings**, the fort **developed into a military fort** on one side **and a religious centre** on the other.
- **Mahmud Ghaznavi, Qutubuddin Aibak, and Humayun** attacked it and wanted to win it but **could not succeed**.
- Finally, in **1569 AD**, Akbar won this fort and **gifted it to Birbal**. After **Birbal**, this fort came **under the Bundel king Chhatrasal**.
- After them, the fort was occupied by Hardev Shah of Panna.
- **In 1812**, this fort became **under the British**.
- The fort also houses **mosques, temples, palaces, and stepwells**.
- One of the main attractions of Kalinjar is the **Neelkanth Temple**.
 - It was **built by Chandela ruler Paramaditya Dev**.
 - The **Shiva lingam is of blue stone** in addition to the giant 18-arm statue in the temple.

EXERCISE SEA DRAGON 2026



The Indian Navy along with multiple partner nations is participating in Exercise Sea Dragon 2026, a United States Navy-led multinational anti-submarine warfare drill.

- It is a United States Navy-led multinational anti-submarine warfare (ASW) drill conducted annually to strengthen maritime security and cooperation among allied nations in the Indo-Pacific region.
- It has been held annually since 2019 at Andersen Air Force Base in Guam in the Western Pacific.
- Participating countries deploy long-range maritime patrol aircraft, such as the P-8 Poseidon.
- It provides a structured environment to test interoperability between near-identical platforms operated by different nations, standardizing data links, communication protocols, and tactical procedures that would be essential in any real-world combined ASW operation.
- **Sea Dragon 2026:**
 - The exercise includes forces from the United States Navy, the Indian Navy, the Royal Australian Air Force, the Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force, and the Royal New Zealand Air Force.
 - Participants will be challenged on speed, accuracy, and coordinated mission execution, strengthening ASW proficiency and enhancing interoperability among partner forces.
 - It advances aircrew proficiency in ASW by progressing from track-simulated targets to detecting and tracking a live submarine.
 - During the exercise, each event is graded, and the nation scoring the highest total points will receive the coveted Dragon Belt award.



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MELANOMA



• Melanoma is a **kind of skin cancer** that starts in the melanocytes.

- Melanocytes are cells that make the pigment that gives skin its color. The pigment is called melanin.
- It typically starts on **skin that's often exposed to the sun**. This includes the skin on the arms, back, face and legs.
- Rarely, it can happen inside the body, such as in the nose or throat.
- **Cause**
 - The **exact cause** of all **melanomas isn't clear**.
 - Most melanomas are caused by **exposure to ultraviolet light**. Ultraviolet light, also called UV light, comes from sunlight or tanning lamps and beds.

Symptoms of Melanoma

- The first melanoma signs and symptoms often are:
 - **A change in an existing mole.**
 - The development of a new pigmented or unusual-looking growth on the skin.
 - It doesn't always begin as a mole. It also can happen on otherwise healthy skin.
- **Treatments for melanoma**
 - **Melanoma Surgery:** In the early stages, surgery has a high probability of being able to cure melanoma.
 - **Lymphadenectomy:** In cases where melanoma has spread, **removal of the lymph nodes** near the primary diagnosis site may be required.
 - **Metastasectomy:** It is used to remove small melanoma bits from organs.



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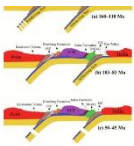
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LADAKH MAGMATIC ARC



LADAKH MAGMATIC ARC

- It is a **belt of igneous rocks** in the **Trans-Himalaya** formed in the period **Jurassic to Eocene**.
- The LMA is a **long-extinct volcanic system** evolved through **three major phases** of geological activity over tens of millions of years.
- **Process of Formation:**
 - Millions of years before the region that is now called Ladakh lay above an ocean called the **Neo-Tethys Ocean**.
 - Below that ancient sea, giant slabs of Earth's crust slowly plunged into the mantle in a **process known as subduction** leading to the formation of the **Ladakh Magmatic Arc (LMA)**.

Phases of Formation

- **Island Arc Formation:** In its earliest stage, **Ladakh resembled a chain of volcanic islands** rising from the Neo-Tethys Ocean.
 - Represented by the **Dras–Nidar Island Arc Complex (DNIAC)**
 - Magma primarily originated from the mantle
 - Minimal contribution from subducted sediments
- **Crustal Enrichment and Batholith Formation:** As tectonic plates converged, the system evolved:
 - Formation of large granite bodies **known as the Ladakh Batholith (LB)**
 - Increased input from continental crust and recycled sediments
 - Chemical signatures indicate deep crustal processes and magma mixing
 - This phase coincides with the **approaching collision between India and Eurasia**.

TRANSGENDER RIGHTS BILL: KEY REFORMS TO THE 2019 LAW

- The **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019** defines a transgender person as someone whose gender does not match the gender assigned at birth.
- It includes a wide range of identities such as:
 - Trans men and trans women (irrespective of medical procedures)
 - Persons with intersex variations
 - Genderqueer and non-binary individuals
 - Sociocultural identities like kinner, hijra, aravani, and jogta
- The Act's definition aligns with the United Nations' view, which treats transgender as an **umbrella term** for individuals whose gender identity differs from their assigned sex at birth.
- The framework highlights that **biological sex and social gender are distinct**, and recognizing this distinction is central to understanding transgender identities.
- **Distinction Between Sex and Gender**
 - **Sex:** Refers to biological characteristics; Determined by anatomy, chromosomes, and hormones; Categorised as male or female.
 - **Gender:** A social and cultural construct; Defines roles, behaviours, and expectations; Varies across societies and time.
- **Concept of Gender Identity**
 - Gender identity is a person's internal sense of self and gender.
 - It may or may not align with the sex assigned at birth.
 - Forms the basis of transgender identity.

NALSA Judgment (2014) and Its Impact on Transgender Rights

- The Supreme Court in *NALSA v. Union of India* (2014) delivered a landmark ruling that transformed transgender rights in India.
- It recognised transgender persons as a **“third gender”** and affirmed that they are entitled to all fundamental rights under the Constitution.

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- A key aspect of the judgment was the **right to self-identification of gender**, allowing individuals to identify as male, female, or third gender without mandatory medical intervention. The Court also directed the government to create laws and welfare measures for the transgender community.
- This led to the enactment of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, which institutionalised legal recognition through:
 - Inclusion of “third gender” in official documents
 - Issuance of transgender identity cards
 - Creation of welfare mechanisms, including Transgender Welfare Boards

Criticism of the Transgender Rights Amendment Bill, 2026

- **Violation of Self-Determination**
 - Activists argue the Bill removes the fundamental right to self-identify gender.
 - Seen as a serious human rights violation, undermining dignity and autonomy.
 - **Burden of Proof on Individuals**
 - The amendment requires individuals to prove their identity through medical certification.
 - Activists argue identity should not require validation by authorities.
 - Raises concerns about institutional barriers and discrimination.
 - **Challenges Due to Social Stigma**
 - Requirement of medical documentation may be difficult due to prevailing transphobia in healthcare systems.
 - Trans persons may face bias, exclusion, and lack of access in hospitals and institutions.
 - **Exclusionary Definition of Transgender Identity**
 - Recognition limited to certain socio-cultural groups.
 - Excludes individuals who identify as transgender outside traditional community structures.
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MATERNITY LEAVE FOR ADOPTIVE MOTHERS - SUPREME COURT REDEFINING PARENTHOOD RIGHTS

- The Supreme Court of India has read down provisions of the Code on Social Security, 2020 to extend **12 weeks** of maternity leave to all **adoptive mothers** irrespective of the child's age.
- Simultaneously, it has urged the Union Government to recognise **paternity leave** as a social security benefit.
- The judgment also intersects with an ongoing constitutional challenge to Section 5(4) of the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, which restricts maternity benefits for adoptive mothers based on the age of the child.

Key Highlights of the Judgment:

- **Removal of age restriction for adoptive mothers:**
 - The Court read down Section 60(4) of the Code on Social Security, 2020.
 - It held that all adoptive mothers are entitled to 12 weeks of maternity leave, regardless of whether the child is above or below 3 months.
 - It declared the earlier restriction violative of Articles **14** (Right to Equality) and **21** (Right to Life and Personal Liberty).
- **Motherhood beyond biological childbirth:**
 - The Court clarified maternity benefit is linked to motherhood, not childbirth.
 - Adoptive mothers have similar caregiving responsibilities as biological mothers.
 - Adoption recognised as part of reproductive and decisional autonomy under **Article 21**.
- **Maternity leave as a human right:** The judgment termed maternity protection as a “basic human right”, ensuring economic security, workplace inclusion of women, and freedom to exercise reproductive choices without employment penalty.
- **Emphasis on role of fathers:**
 - The Court highlighted early childhood care requires both parents.

- Absence of paternity leave reinforces gender stereotypes, limits father's participation in caregiving, and urges the government to frame a paternity leave policy as part of social security.

Key Issues and Challenges:

- **Discrimination in existing framework:** Unequal treatment between biological and adoptive mothers, adoptive mothers based on child's age.
- **Structural barriers in adoption:** Lengthy procedures make adoption of infants (<3 months) rare, legal requirements (e.g., declaration of child as "legally free") cause delays.
- **Lack of paternity leave:** India lacks a comprehensive statutory paternity leave policy, leading to gender imbalance in caregiving, and reinforcement of traditional roles.
- **Limited impact on women's workforce participation:** Evidence suggests that decline in women's participation in several sectors post-2017 amendment, as a result of employer bias due to increased costs and lack of childcare support.
- **Implementation gaps:** Weak enforcement in the **unorganised sector**. Limited access to crèche facilities, work-from-home flexibility.

24 SPEED POST



- It provides **guaranteed next-day delivery (D+1)** service for urgent and time-sensitive consignments.
 - 'D' means the **day of booking** of the article.
- It is **developed under Speed Post category** and introduced to meet urgent & bulk customer needs.
- It is available in identified metro city pairs **Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai, Kolkata and Hyderabad**.
- **Nodal Ministry:** It is launched by the **Department of Posts**, Ministry of Communications.

FLOATING LIDAR BUOY SYSTEM



Recently, the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT) has successfully tested an indigenously developed Floating LiDAR Buoy System off the coast of Muttom in Tamil Nadu.

- It is a **high-tech ocean-based instrument** used to **measure wind conditions over the sea**.
- It combines a **floating platform (buoy) with LiDAR technology**, short for Light Detection and Ranging.
- It **uses laser pulses** to measure atmospheric conditions with high precision.
- **Purpose:** It is designed to **measure wind profiles and atmospheric conditions** over the ocean. It can track wind speed and direction and changes in wind at different heights.

Working of Floating LiDAR Buoy System:

- The system **uses LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) technology**.
- The **buoy** in this floats on the **ocean surface and emits laser pulses** into the atmosphere.
- These pulses bounce back after hitting particles in the air and the returned signals are **analysed to measure wind movement and patterns**.
- This allows scientists to **gather highly accurate, real-time data from areas** where traditional instruments may struggle.
- Unlike traditional instruments, this buoy can capture **detailed wind data up to 300 metres above sea level**.

Significance: Better weather prediction, improved storm and cyclone tracking and understanding climate change impact will help scientists to know how sea works.