

March - 20

TNPSC BITS

- ❖ A new parasitic wasp species, *Chelonus (Carinichelonus) mahadeb*, was discovered in Assam tea estates and belongs to the Braconidae family known for parasitoid behaviour.
- ❖ The rare plant *Henckelia monophylla* has been rediscovered in Arunachal Pradesh after about 189 years and is an endemic species of the Gesneriaceae family, first collected in 1836.
- ❖ A new earthworm species, *Drawida vazhania*, was discovered in Peechi-Vazhani Wildlife Sanctuary in Thrissur district and belongs to the genus *Drawida* and family Moniligastridae, playing an important role in soil fertility and nutrient cycling.
- ❖ Indian Metro Network has become the world's third largest with over 1,143 km of operational metro lines.
 - This rapid growth, up from just 248 km in 2014, places India behind only China and the USA and it has expanded rapidly from just 5 cities in 2014 to 29 cities, showing major growth in urban transport infrastructure
- ❖ National Para Athletics Championship 2026 will be held from March 19–21, 2026, at Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar, Odisha.
- ❖ Bharat Tribes Fest 2026 started in New Delhi to promote tribal culture and entrepreneurship.
- ❖ Brazil has enforced a new law to regulate social media access for children below 16 years.
- ❖ World Sleep Day is observed every year on the Friday (March 13/2026) before the March equinox to raise awareness about sleep disorders like insomnia and sleep apnea.
 - The theme for the year 2026 is "Sleep Well, Live Better".
- ❖ World Consumer Rights Day 2026 will be observed on March 15 to promote consumer awareness and protect rights in online and offline markets.
 - The theme for the year 2026 is "Safe Products, Confident Consumers".

NATIONAL NEWS

Maternity Leave for Adoptive Mothers

- ❖ The Supreme Court of India struck down the age cap on maternity leave for adoptive mothers as unconstitutional.

- ❖ The court ruled that Section 60(4) of the Social Security Code, 2020, violated equality and the right to life under Articles 14 and 21.
- ❖ It has granted 12 weeks of maternity leave to adoptive mothers irrespective of the child's age at adoption.
- ❖ The earlier rule limited benefits only to children below three months, making it impractical and discriminatory.
- ❖ The court also urged the government to consider paternity leave as part of social security benefits.

The Supreme Court of India said that denying maternity leave to women adopting children above 3 months was unconstitutional, recognising the right to a dignified life for adoptive parents and the child.



MC Mehta Vs Union of India

- ❖ The Supreme Court of India has closed the 40-year-old MC Mehta v. Union of India case related to air pollution in Delhi-NCR.
- ❖ The case was originally filed in 1985 by environmentalist MC Mehta and became a landmark Public Interest Litigation in environmental law.
- ❖ Over the years, the case led to major measures like CNG adoption in Delhi transport and stricter pollution control norms.
- ❖ The court has now initiated a suo motu case titled “Re: Issues of air pollution in NCR” to address ongoing concerns more effectively.
- ❖ It also directed those pending applications be converted into separate writ petitions for better case management.

- ❖ The move aims to ensure faster and more focused handling of air pollution issues in the National Capital Region.

M.C. MEHTA v. UNION OF INDIA (1986 – ONGOING)

Constitutional Interpretation & Basic Structure

BASIC CASE INFO

Year: 1986 – Ongoing (multiple landmark orders)

Case: M.C. Mehta v. Union of India (includes multiple environmental issues)

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Bench Strength: Multiple benches over time

Key Articles Involved:

- Article 21 (Right to Life - clean air symbol)
- Article 32 (Constitutional Remedies - a hand with a petition)
- Article 48A (DPS Environmental Protection - a hand planting a tree)
- Article 51A(g) (Fundamental Duty for Environment - a group of people cleaning a beach)

LEGAL DOCTRINES & CORE PRINCIPLE

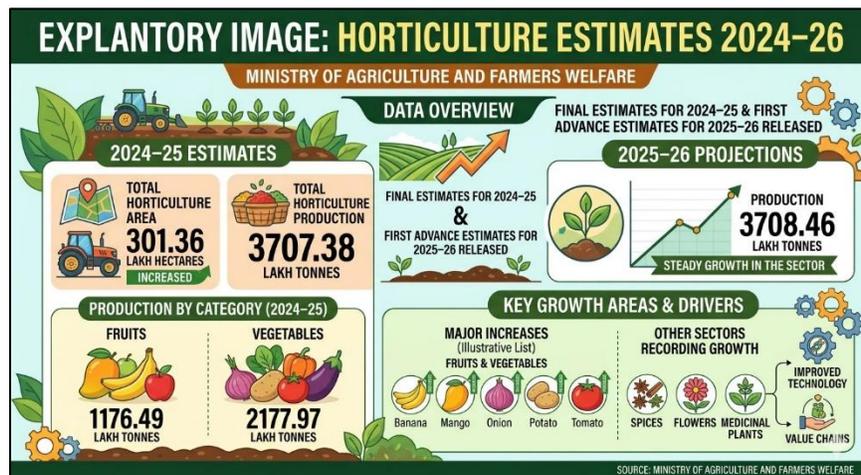
DOCTRINES EVOLVED:

- POLLUTER PAYS PRINCIPLE:** Industries pay for environmental cleanup (factory with money coming out)
- ABSOLUTE LIABILITY:** Strict responsibility for hazardous activities
- RIGHT TO CLEAN ENVIRONMENT:** Recognized as part of Art. 21

CORE PRINCIPLE

Famous Line: "Environmental protection is a fundamental duty of every citizen."

Horticulture Estimates 2024–26



- ❖ Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare released Final Estimates for 2024–25 and First Advance Estimates for 2025–26.
- ❖ Total horticulture area increased to 301.36 lakh hectares and production reached 3707.38 lakh tonnes in 2024–25.
- ❖ Production for 2025–26 is projected at 3708.46 lakh tonnes, showing steady growth in the sector.
- ❖ Fruits production rose to 1176.49 lakh tonnes and vegetables to 2177.97 lakh tonnes in 2024–25.

- ❖ Major increases were seen in fruits and vegetables like banana, mango, onion, potato and tomato.
- ❖ Spices, flowers, and medicinal plants also recorded growth due to improved technology and value chains.

Coconut Promotion Scheme 2026



- ❖ The government announced the Coconut Promotion Scheme in Budget 2026–27 to boost coconut production and farmer income.
- ❖ India is the world’s largest coconut producer, contributing about 30.37% of global coconut production.
- ❖ Coconut is cultivated on about 2165 thousand hectares and produces around 21,373 million nuts annually.
- ❖ Nearly 30 million people, including about 10 million farmers, depend on coconut cultivation for their livelihood.
- ❖ The scheme focuses on improving productivity, replacing old trees, and promoting high-value agriculture crops like coconut, cashew and cocoa.

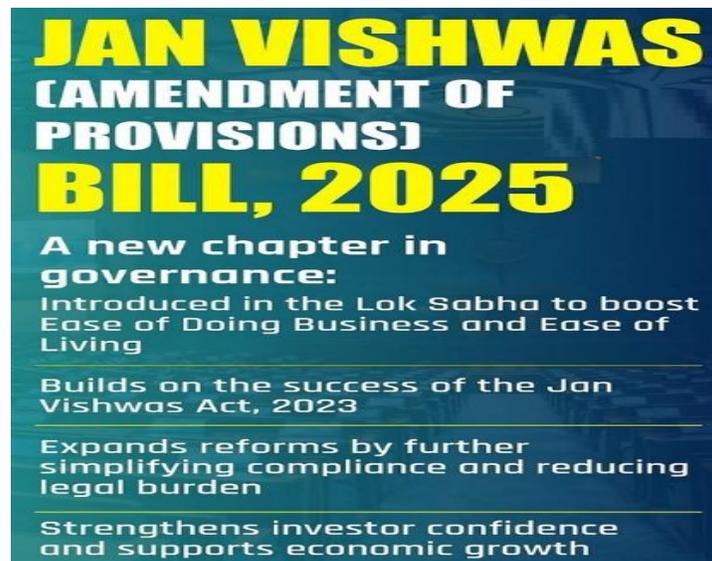
Dirghavadhi Krishak Punji Sahakar Yojana

- ❖ The Dirghavadhi Krishak Punji Sahakar Yojana has been launched by the National Cooperative Development Corporation under the Ministry of Cooperation to strengthen long-term credit for cooperatives.
- ❖ The scheme aims to provide long-term financial support for agriculture and allied sectors, promoting capital formation and rural infrastructure development.
- ❖ It targets cooperative societies with sound financial performance to ensure steady institutional credit flow and improve productivity.
- ❖ National Cooperative Development Corporation conducts appraisal, monitoring and loan sanction with proper security and due diligence norms.

- ❖ Recovery mechanisms include legal provisions under SARFAESI (Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest) Act, 2002 and Debt Recovery Tribunal (DRT) proceedings.



Jan Vishwas Amendment Bill 2025



- ❖ The government withdrew the Jan Vishwas (Amendment) Bill, 2025, from Lok Sabha after Select Committee review to incorporate detailed recommendations and improvements.
- ❖ The bill aims to decriminalize minor offences across various laws by replacing imprisonment provisions with monetary penalties and fines.
- ❖ It seeks to reduce the burden on courts, minimize litigation, and promote ease of doing business in India.
- ❖ Withdrawal is a procedural step allowing the government to revise, refine and reintroduce the bill with stronger provisions.

- ❖ The move reflects a shift towards trust-based governance, regulatory simplification, and improving the compliance environment.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Asia Africa Agri Alliance



Asia Africa
Agri Alliance

A transformative platform fostering sustainable agricultural growth through

TRADE PROMOTION, INVESTMENT & TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER
between Asia and Africa.

Key Focus Areas

- Bilateral Trade
- Investment Facilitation
- Technology Transfer
- Public-Private Partnerships
- Sustainable Value Chain

- ❖ Asia Africa Agri Alliance has been established to boost trade, agricultural cooperation, investment, and technology exchange between Asia and Africa.
- ❖ It is set up as a not-for-profit institution under Section 8 of the Companies Act to create structured frameworks for partnerships and policy alignment.
- ❖ The alliance focuses on improving agri-food value chains and promoting knowledge and technology sharing between the regions.
- ❖ Asia and Africa together contribute over 40 percent of global agricultural production, making this collaboration important.
- ❖ The bilateral agricultural trade between the two regions exceeds 90 billion US dollars annually.

ENVIRONMENT NEWS

Koala Population Recovery in Australia



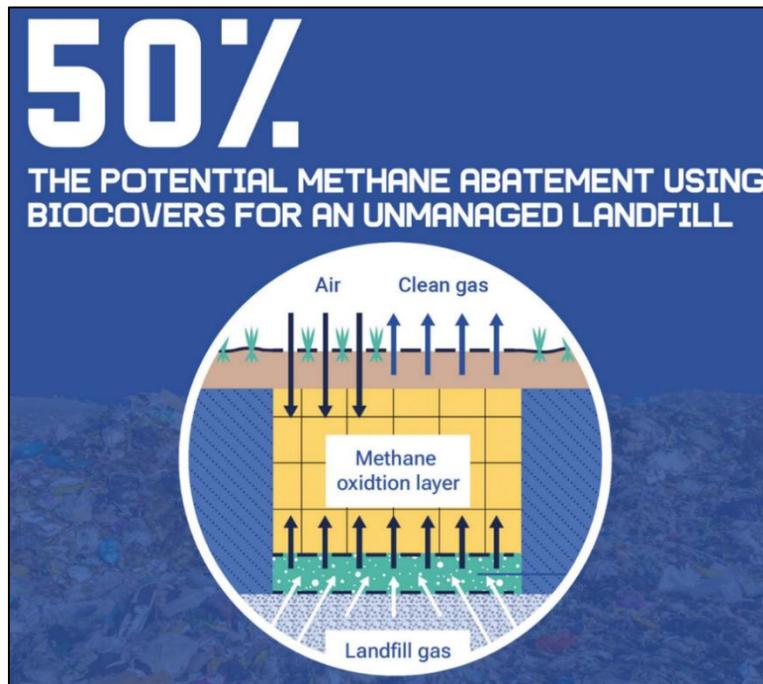
- ❖ The population of koalas in Victoria has significantly recovered, leading to improved genetic diversity.
- ❖ Earlier, excessive hunting and habitat loss caused a sharp decline, creating a genetic bottleneck in the species.
- ❖ Rapid population growth in recent decades has increased gene reshuffling and reduced inbreeding problems.
- ❖ This has helped improve overall health, reduce deformities, and enhance adaptability to environmental changes.
- ❖ Koalas are marsupials that mainly feed on eucalyptus leaves and depend on forest ecosystems for survival.

REPORTS AND INDICES

Landfill Methane Emission reduction

- ❖ The report “Reducing Methane Emissions from Landfills: The potential of biocover systems” was released by the Climate and Clean Air Coalition.

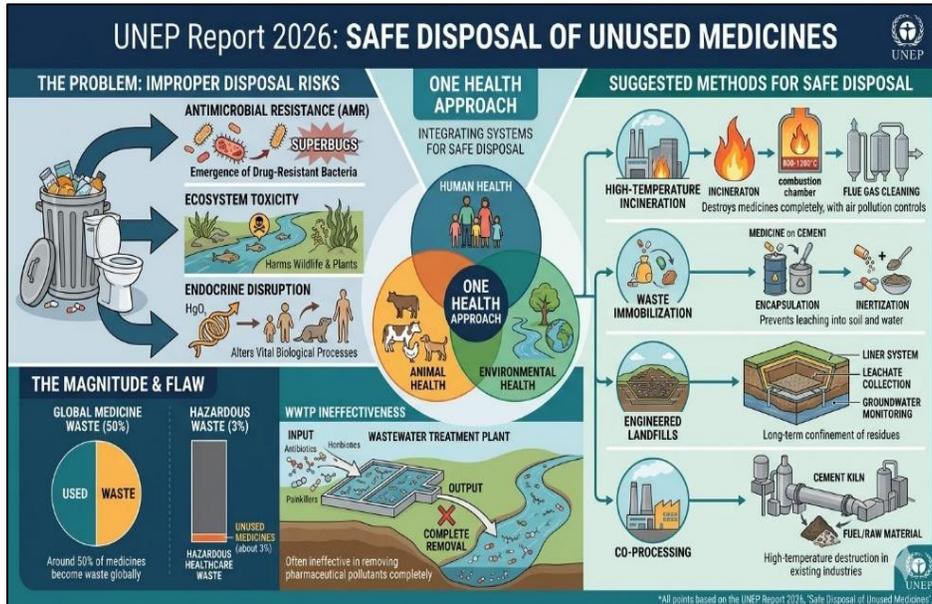
- ❖ The report highlights that biocover systems can effectively reduce methane emissions from landfills while improving air quality and public health.
- ❖ Biocovers are microbial systems that use naturally occurring bacteria to convert methane into less harmful carbon dioxide and water.
- ❖ They can mitigate up to 50 percent of methane emissions over a long period, making them useful for waste management.
- ❖ Landfills contribute about 11 percent of global human-made methane emissions, and methane has a very high global warming potential.



UNEP Report 2026 on Unused Medicines

- ❖ The United Nations Environment Programme has released the “Safe Disposal of Unused Medicines” report, highlighting risks of improper disposal to the environment and public health.
- ❖ The report adopts a One Health approach integrating human, animal, and environmental health systems for safe medicine disposal.
- ❖ Improper disposal contributes to Antimicrobial Resistance, ecosystem toxicity, and endocrine disruption.
- ❖ Around 50% of medicines become waste globally, and unused medicines form about 3% of hazardous healthcare waste.
- ❖ Wastewater treatment plants are often ineffective in removing pharmaceutical pollutants completely.

- ❖ Suggested methods include high-temperature incineration, waste immobilization, engineered landfills, and co-processing.



STATE NEWS

Freedom of Religion Bill 2026

The Maharashtra Legislative Assembly passed the Freedom of Religion Bill, 2026. The bill was approved by voice vote on 16 March.



- ❖ The Maharashtra Freedom of Religion Bill 2026 was passed by the Maharashtra Assembly to curb forced religious conversions.
- ❖ The Bill aims to regulate religious conversions and ensure that conversions happen voluntarily without coercion, fraud or inducement.
- ❖ It provides strict punishments, including imprisonment up to 7 years and fines for illegal conversion activities.
- ❖ Higher penalties are prescribed for cases involving minors, women, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to ensure their protection.
- ❖ The law also covers conversions through marriage and mass conversions, ensuring transparency and legal accountability.

