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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 09-03-2026

NATIONAL NEWS

Gujarat Launches herSTART 5.0 Programme

The Government of Gujarat launched herSTART 5.0, a major initiative aimed at strengthening women-led startups and entrepreneurship in the state.

The event also marked the inauguration of a new research park at Gujarat University to promote innovation, research, and entrepreneurship.

The herSTART 5.0 programme is implemented by the Gujarat University Startup and Entrepreneurship Council.

The initiative focuses on supporting women entrepreneurs through incubation, mentorship, and access to business networks.

Under the programme, women-led startups will receive incubation support, mentorship programmes, and networking opportunities.

Through the herSTART initiative, women entrepreneurs will receive guidance in developing business models, accessing investment opportunities, and expanding market reach.

During the launch event, the Chief Minister also inaugurated a new research park at Gujarat University to strengthen the startup ecosystem and technology-driven businesses.

The organisers described the initiative as a "development triveni" integrating entrepreneurship, research, and innovation.

The Gujarat University Convention Centre will be renamed "Vidyagauri Nilkanth Sabhapuram".

Vidyagauri Nilkanth is recognised as the first Gujarati woman graduate, and the renaming aims to honour her contribution to education and women's empowerment.

The move is intended to inspire future generations of women entrepreneurs and leaders.

During the event, the Chief Minister also highlighted the rapid expansion of India's startup ecosystem.

Andhra Pradesh Announces ₹25,000 Incentive for Second and Third Child

The Government of Andhra Pradesh has announced a financial incentive of ₹25,000 for couples who

have a second or third child as part of a population boost policy.

The announcement was made while speaking in the Legislative Assembly of Andhra Pradesh, where the CM stated that the scheme aims to encourage families to have more children and maintain demographic balance.

Under the scheme, couples will receive ₹25,000 at the time of delivery for having a second or third child.

The initiative aims to increase the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) in the state and provide financial support to families.

The ₹25,000 childbirth incentive policy is viewed as a major demographic intervention aimed at ensuring sustainable population growth.

According to the state government, the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) in Andhra Pradesh is around 1.5, which is below the replacement level of 2.1 required to maintain population stability.

Government data shows that around 58% of families have only one child, about 2.17 lakh families have two children, and nearly 62 lakh families have three or more children.

Earlier, before 2004, state policies promoted smaller families and population control, including a law disqualifying individuals with more than two children from contesting local body elections.

The move also reflects broader demographic concerns across South India, where several states are witnessing declining birth rates, ageing populations, and potential long-term workforce shortages.

Total Fertility Rate (TFR) refers to the average number of children a woman is expected to have during her lifetime.

A TFR of 2.1 is considered the replacement level, meaning the population remains stable from one generation to the next

Kerala Launches ‘MeHEALTH’ Mobile Application

The Kerala Health Department launched the MeHEALTH mobile application to help citizens easily access information about public healthcare facilities and services in nearby locations.

The initiative was announced by Veena George, Health Minister of Kerala.

The application provides detailed information about hospitals, specialty departments, laboratory tests and service charges.

Through the MeHEALTH app, users can also locate blood banks, pharmacies and radiology services in their nearby areas.

The platform offers comprehensive information about government healthcare facilities, enabling citizens to identify the most suitable medical institutions in their locality.

A key feature of the application is the “Nearby Services” option, which allows users to locate healthcare services within a 10-kilometre radius.

The app provides detailed information about ambulances, blood banks, radiology services,

laboratories and hospital pharmacies, making healthcare services easier to discover.

Citizens can book doctor appointments and Out-Patient (OP) tickets online through the MeHEALTH application.

This facility is available in hospitals where the Kerala e-Health Project has already been implemented.

To use the service, users need to install the application, log in using their mobile number and One Time Password (OTP), and enter Aadhaar details to generate a unique health identification number.

Once registered, users can schedule hospital visits digitally, which helps reduce waiting time at hospitals.

The application also provides information about specialised healthcare facilities including Janakeeya Aarogya Kendrams (formerly sub-centres), government homoeopathy hospitals and Karunya pharmacies.

Users can easily locate these services through options such as “Find Institution”, “Find Specialties” and “Find Services”.

The application integrates navigation support using Google Maps, showing the exact distance and route to hospitals and healthcare facilities.

This navigation feature helps people reach medical institutions quickly, especially during emergencies.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

India–Finland Sign Mobility and Migration Pact During Finnish President’s India Visit

India and Finland signed a Mobility and Migration Partnership Agreement during the visit of Alexander Stubb, President of Finland, to India.

The agreement aims to facilitate the mobility of professionals, students, researchers, entrepreneurs, and academics between India and Finland, strengthening human resource exchange and skill collaboration.

Both countries set a target to double bilateral trade to USD 2.6 billion by 2030, supported by progress in India–EU Free Trade Agreement

India and Finland will co-host the 2026 World Circular Economy Forum (WCEF) in India in collaboration with Sitra and the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

Both countries renewed the 2020 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Environmental Cooperation, expanding partnerships in bioenergy, waste-to-energy, green hydrogen, renewable energy storage, and solar, wind, and hydropower

A new MoU on Cooperation in Statistics was signed to enhance official data exchange, statistical methodologies, and policy research collaboration.

A Joint Task Force on 6G technology will connect the University of Oulu with the Bharat 6G Alliance to promote next-generation telecom research.

Both nations will create an Indo–Finland Startup Corridor linking global startup events such as Slush (Helsinki) and Startup Mahakumbh (New Delhi) to promote innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystems.

BANKING

BoB Launches ₹10,000 Crore Green Bond Issue for Sustainable Projects

Bank of Baroda (BoB) raised ₹10,000 crore through Series I Long-Term Green Infrastructure Bonds to support sustainable infrastructure financing in India.

The bond issue received strong investor response, attracting bids worth ₹16,415 crore, which is more than three times the base issue size of ₹5,000 crore.

The bonds were issued at a coupon rate of 7.10%, reflecting a Green Premium (Greenium) due to strong demand for sustainable financial instruments.

This makes Bank of Baroda the first Indian bank to issue domestic Green Infrastructure Bonds in the country.

The bond proceeds will be used to finance environmentally sustainable infrastructure projects, aligned with the bank's ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) financing strategy.

The bond was issued through the Electronic Debt Bidding platform of the National Stock Exchange (NSE) with a seven-year maturity period.

The issuance demonstrates strong investor confidence despite market volatility, highlighting demand for green finance instruments in India.

The initiative supports renewable energy projects, green infrastructure development, and India's transition toward sustainable economic growth.

SEBI Uses AI Tool 'Sudarshan'

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has deployed an in-house Artificial Intelligence (AI) system named 'Sudarshan' to strengthen digital surveillance of financial content across online platforms.

The AI system has helped in removing more than 1.20 lakh misleading social media posts posted by unregistered financial influencers, strengthening investor protection mechanisms.

The AI-based monitoring system can scan large volumes of audio, video, and text content across multiple digital platforms and languages to detect financial advisory violations.

The system helps identify unregistered investment advisory activities and misleading financial claims, enabling faster regulatory action against securities market violations.

SEBI has clarified that only SEBI-registered entities are legally allowed to provide investment advisory services in India.

SEBI Chairman Tuhin Kanta Pandey warned retail investors about derivatives trading risks, stating that 9 out of 10 investors lose money in options trading.

To enhance investor awareness, mandatory risk warning pop-ups have been introduced on trading platforms to protect retail investors from speculative losses.

The initiative reflects SEBI's focus on technology-driven market regulation, digital financial monitoring, and investor protection in the Indian securities market.

Shriram Finance Receives USD 76 Million Co-Financing from DEG and Citi

DEG (Deutsche Investitions- und Entwicklungsgesellschaft mbH) and Citibank N.A. jointly provided a co-financing lending facility of USD 76 million (around Rs 630 crore) to Shriram Finance Limited (SFL), one of India's largest Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs), to promote financial inclusion and sustainable mobility in India.

This initiative marks the second collaboration between DEG and Citi, following their previous co-financing transaction supporting CreditAccess Grameen in 2024.

The funding structure has been arranged through External Commercial Borrowings (ECBs) to mobilize international capital for financing activities in India.

Under the arrangement, DEG extended a loan of USD 46 million (EUR 40 million), while Citi provided an additional loan of Rs 260 crore to Shriram Finance Limited.

Citibank N.A. (Citi) also acted as the Lead Arranger and Coordinator for the entire financing transaction.

The loan proceeds will be used to finance Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), women borrowers, and promote Electric Vehicle (EV) adoption, particularly in underserved and rural areas.

The funding will help expand access to formal credit through Shriram Finance's extensive lending network across India, strengthening inclusive financial growth and green mobility initiatives.

Motilal Oswal Home Finance Limited Secures USD 100 Million Funding from ADB

Motilal Oswal Home Finance Limited (MOHFL) signed a USD 100 million debt financing agreement with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to expand affordable housing finance in India.

The funding will be raised through Non-Convertible Debentures (NCDs) as Indian Rupee (INR)-

equivalent debt, strengthening MOHFL's borrowing profile and funding base.

The primary purpose of the funds is to provide affordable housing loans to women borrowers, especially in underserved Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities and emerging towns in India.

Around 10% of the proceeds will be allocated for financing green-certified residential housing units, promoting environmentally sustainable building practices.

The transaction represents a cross-border debt raise for MOHFL and adds a multilateral lender (ADB) to its long-term funding sources.

The long-tenor capital from ADB will support asset-liability management (ALM) and help diversify the company's borrowing structure.

The strategic partnership between MOHFL and ADB aims to expand affordable housing access in underserved regions and support sustainable housing development in India

RANKS, INDICES & REPORTS

SBI Ranked Strongest Indian Bank Globally in Brand Finance Banking 500 Report 2026

State Bank of India (SBI) has been ranked the strongest Indian bank globally, securing 16th position worldwide and 7th position in Asia Pacific with an AAA+ brand strength rating in the Brand Finance Banking 500 Report 2026.

HDFC Bank remains the most valuable Indian banking brand with a brand value of USD 12.4 billion, though it slipped to 31st position globally.

SBI's brand value increased by 2% to USD 8.1 billion, ranking 56th among the world's most valuable banking brands.

ICICI Bank recorded the fastest brand value growth among Indian banks, increasing by 19% to USD 5.5 billion.

Nine Indian banks featured in the Top 500 global banking brands, including Axis Bank, Bank of Baroda, Union Bank of India, Punjab National Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Indian Bank, and Bank of India.

Other global rankings included Axis Bank (96), Canara Bank (136), Union Bank of India (151), Punjab National Bank (153), Kotak Mahindra Bank (160), Indian Bank (194), Bank of India (209), IndusInd Bank (247), IDBI Bank (286), Federal Bank (293) and Yes Bank (346).

19 Indian banking brands together account for USD 47.8 billion in total brand value, showing India's growing global banking presence.

India ranks 8th globally in banking brand value, contributing 2.7% of the world's total banking brand value.

The total global banking brand value of the Top 500 banks increased by 10% in 2026, reaching nearly USD 1.8 trillion.

Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) remains the world's most valuable banking brand (USD 90.9 billion).

Banco do Brasil (BCA) is the world's strongest banking brand, while Nubank ranks as the fourth strongest global banking brand.

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

President Orders Transfer and Appointment of Governors and Lt Governors in Major Reshuffle

President Droupadi Murmu announced a major reshuffle of Governors and Lieutenant Governors for seven States and two Union Territories ahead of upcoming Assembly elections.

R. N. Ravi has been appointed as the new Governor of West Bengal, replacing C. V. Ananda Bose, who resigned before the polls.

Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar, Governor of Kerala, will hold additional charge of Tamil Nadu after Ravi's transfer.

Shiv Pratap Shukla has been transferred as Governor of Telangana, while Kavinder Gupta becomes Governor of Himachal Pradesh.

Syed Ata Hasnain has been appointed as Governor of Bihar, replacing Arif Mohammed Khan.

Jishnu Dev Varma, former Governor of Telangana, will become Governor of Maharashtra.

Taranjit Singh Sandhu, former Indian Ambassador to the U.S. and BJP leader, has been appointed as the new Lieutenant Governor of Delhi.

Nand Kishore Yadav, former Bihar Assembly Speaker and BJP leader, has been appointed as Governor of Nagaland.

Vinai Kumar Saxena, former Lieutenant Governor of Delhi, has been appointed as Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh, replacing Kavinder Gupta.

The reshuffle aims to strengthen administrative continuity and manage upcoming state elections

Dr Rajeev Singh Raghuvanshi Reappointed as Drugs Controller General of India

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved the reappointment of Rajeev Singh Raghuvanshi as Drugs Controller General (India) (DCGI) at the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO).

The reappointment is on a contract basis for 1 year w.e.f. 1 March 2026, or until a regular incumbent is appointed, or until further orders, whichever is earlier.

Dr. Rajeev Singh Raghuvanshi was initially appointed as DCGI on 23 February 2023, and this decision marks his second tenure extension.

His first extension was granted in February 2025, extending his tenure until February 2026 by the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions.

The Department of Health and Family Welfare proposed the reappointment, and the Recruitment Rules (RRs) for the post have been kept in abeyance during the extension period.

The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) is currently leading the strict implementation of revised Schedule M, which sets Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) standards for the pharmaceutical industry.

The revised Schedule M implementation has been opposed by several industry bodies, as it may lead to the closure of thousands of micro, small and medium pharmaceutical units.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare earlier initiated a deputation-based recruitment process (ISTC) for the DCGI post in August 2024, but no suitable candidates were found.

The tenure extension granted in 2025 was challenged in the Madras High Court, alleging violation of recruitment rules, but the Central Government defended the decision, citing the importance of the post and lack of a suitable successor.

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