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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 14-03-2026

NATIONAL NEWS

Chhattisgarh Cabinet Approves Draft Freedom of Religion Bill 2026

The Chhattisgarh State Cabinet approved the draft Freedom of Religion Bill 2026 aimed at preventing illegal religious conversions in the state.

The decision was taken during a Cabinet meeting held in Raipur, chaired by Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai.

The Freedom of Religion Bill 2026 seeks to curb religious conversions carried out through force, inducement, fraud or undue influence.

After Cabinet approval, the bill will be introduced in the Chhattisgarh Legislative Assembly for further discussion and approval.

The main objective of the bill is to prevent unlawful religious conversions while protecting the constitutional right of individuals to freely practice their faith.

The draft bill proposes to prohibit conversions carried out through force or coercion, inducements or financial incentives, fraud or misrepresentation, and undue influence or manipulation.

The legislation is intended to address cases where individuals may be pressured or misled into changing their religion.

If passed by the legislative assembly, the Freedom of Religion Bill 2026 will become part of the legal framework governing religious conversions in Chhattisgarh.

The Constitution of India guarantees freedom of religion under Articles 25 to 28, allowing individuals to freely profess, practice and propagate their religion.

At the same time, the Constitution allows governments to regulate religious activities in the interest of public order, morality and health.

Gujarat Launches 'Lake and Air Watch' Initiative

The Gujarat Government launched the 'Lake and Air Watch' initiative to monitor and improve air quality and lake health in urban areas across the state.

The project will be implemented by the Gujarat Urban Development Mission under the Urban Development and Urban Housing Department.

Under the initiative, air quality monitoring systems will be installed in 17 municipal corporations and 152 municipal areas.

These systems will provide real-time Air Quality Index data, enabling authorities to monitor urban air pollution levels continuously.

The initiative aims to address environmental challenges caused by rapid urbanization, including declining lake water quality, reduced groundwater recharge and worsening air pollution.

The project will integrate monitoring systems across multiple government departments, allowing authorities to identify environmental issues early and implement timely corrective measures.

Air quality monitoring stations will continuously measure pollution levels and generate real-time Air Quality Index data across cities and towns.

If Air Quality Index levels exceed safe limits, the system will automatically generate alerts for authorities to take immediate action.

Another important feature of the initiative is the use of satellite technology to monitor the health of urban lakes.

Satellite imagery will help analyse lake areas, detect pollution, identify waste accumulation and monitor algae growth.

The technology will help address environmental issues such as water pollution, siltation and declining water quality in urban lakes.

The initiative will be implemented with an estimated budget provision of ₹10 crore.

The Gujarat Urban Development Mission will oversee the project and coordinate between different departments to ensure effective environmental monitoring and sustainable urban development.

NITI Aayog Collaborates with Tata Electronics

NITI Aayog has strengthened its commitment to positioning India as a global leader in electronics manufacturing through strategic industry partnerships.

The collaboration focuses on scaling electronic production, strengthening resilient supply chains, and enhancing India’s role in global value chains.

The initiative aligns with the Atmanirbhar Bharat campaign in the semiconductor and advanced electronics sectors.

Policy alignment with industry needs is emphasised by partnering with domestic players like Tata Electronics, known for semiconductor testing and mobile component production.

Sustained collaboration between government institutions and industry leaders is essential to unlock investments, innovations, and job opportunities.

The Union Budget 2026-27 increased funding for the Electronics Components Manufacturing Scheme (ECMS) to Rs 40,000 crore, supporting domestic manufacturing infrastructure.

Over the past 11 years, India has become a significant electronics-manufacturing hub, achieving an

almost six-fold increase in production.

Growth in the sector has expanded the industrial base, created 5 million jobs, and strengthened its role in employment generation and economic advancement.

The collaboration between Niti Aayog and Tata Electronics supports India's global electronics hub ambitions and the government's Atmanirbhar Bharat vision.

BANKING

RBI Issues 2026 Prudential Norms to Regulate Dividend Declaration by Commercial Banks

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) issued the RBI (Commercial Banks – Prudential Norms on Declaration of Dividend and Remittance of Profits) Directions, 2026 to regulate how commercial banks declare dividends.

The RBI repealed the 2025 dividend framework and introduced revised prudential norms, which will come into effect from the Financial Year 2026–27 (FY27).

Under the new dividend payout rules, the maximum dividend payout for banks incorporated in India is capped at 75% of the Profit After Tax (PAT) for the financial year.

Earlier, dividend declaration was mainly linked to the Capital to Risk-Weighted Assets Ratio (CRAR) and the level of Net Non-Performing Assets (NPAs).

Under the revised RBI guidelines, dividend declaration will now be primarily linked to the Common Equity Tier 1 (CET-1) ratio, which measures the core capital strength of banks.

According to the new prudential norms, banks with a CET-1 ratio of 8% or below are not allowed to declare any dividend.

The revised framework aims to strengthen capital adequacy, ensure financial stability, and promote prudent profit distribution among commercial banks.

SEBI Forms High-Level Panel to Develop Technology Roadmap for Securities Market

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has set up a high-level expert working group to prepare short-term and long-term technology roadmaps for India's securities market ecosystem.

The Working Group is chaired by Dr D B Phatak, Professor Emeritus at IIT Bombay, and the announcement was made by SEBI Chairman Tuhin Kanta Pandey.

The group will examine future technology architecture needed to support the next phase of growth in India's capital markets.

SEBI has developed internal technology tools like "SEBI Sudarshan", a real-time surveillance system

for monitoring unauthorised digital market activity.

Another tool, “SEBI R(AI)DAR”, uses artificial intelligence (AI) to review and monitor advertisements related to securities markets.

SEBI is strengthening supervisory and governance frameworks for Market Infrastructure Institutions (MIIs) such as stock exchanges, clearing corporations, and depositories.

The regulator has mandated external independent performance evaluations of MIIs and their statutory committees.

SEBI has issued governance guidelines to strengthen board oversight and clarify reporting lines for key management personnel (KMPs).

The initiative comes amid increasing trading activity, digital participation, and the complexity of market operations, highlighting the importance of technology infrastructure and supervisory capabilities.

Axis Max Life Insurance Teams Up with Saarathi Finance

Axis Max Life Insurance Limited has entered into a strategic Corporate Agent partnership with Saarathi Finance and Credit Private Limited to strengthen financial protection for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in India.

Under the partnership, Group Credit Life Secure (GCLS) insurance will be integrated with loans provided to MSMEs, ensuring borrowers receive financial protection along with credit support.

The insurance coverage provides a safety net for entrepreneurs by protecting loan obligations in case of unexpected events, thereby reducing financial stress on businesses and families.

The collaboration aligns with India’s broader objective of achieving universal insurance coverage by 2047 and promotes financial inclusion and risk protection for MSMEs.

Saarathi Finance is a next-generation greenfield NBFC focused on bridging the credit gap for India’s Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

The partnership strengthens credit-linked insurance solutions for MSME borrowers, combining insurance and lending services.

Bank of Baroda Introduces ‘bob Women Sapphire Savings Account’

Bank of Baroda (BoB) launched a special savings account for women named ‘bob Women Sapphire Savings Account’ to provide banking, healthcare, and lifestyle benefits for women customers in India.

The bob Women Sapphire Savings Account is exclusively available for women customers and requires a Monthly Average Balance (MAB) of ₹1 lakh.

The account offers health and wellness benefits, including ₹10 lakh cancer care coverage for women aged between 18 and 60 years.

It also provides complimentary online doctor consultations for up to six family members.

Account holders receive up to 15% concession on medicines and up to 20% concession on pathology tests as part of the healthcare benefits.

Customers are issued the bob Bhoomi RuPay Select Debit Card, which provides various lifestyle privileges.

The debit card benefits include domestic airport lounge access, complimentary gym membership, health check-ups, spa or salon services, and Over-The-Top (OTT) subscriptions.

Account holders also receive a 50% first-year fee waiver in the form of reward points on the BOBCARD Tiara Credit Card, a premium women-centric credit card.

Additional benefits include concessions on locker charges and a 50% waiver on home loan processing charges for account holders.

The initiative aims to enhance financial inclusion, health security, and lifestyle benefits for women banking customers in India.

SIB Launches Digital Loan Against Mutual Funds (LAMF) Facility for Secured Credit

South Indian Bank (SIB) has launched a digitally integrated Loan Against Mutual Funds (LAMF) facility to provide secured credit to investors using their mutual fund holdings as collateral.

The bank has partnered with smallcase, a fintech firm providing the secured credit technology stack and API-based digital infrastructure for the LAMF service.

The loan facility starts at an interest rate of 9.99% per annum, allowing customers to access liquidity without redeeming long-term investments.

The platform offers a fully digital end-to-end process, including pledging mutual fund units, loan approval, fund disbursal, and release of pledged units.

SIB became one of the first banks in India to provide a fully integrated LAMF solution to fintech partners, enabling digital wealth platforms and financial apps to embed secured credit services within their platforms.

The service is available to both South Indian Bank customers and users of digital wealth platforms integrated through the bank’s Lending Service Provider (LSP)

The solution leverages API-led integration to ensure a compliant, scalable, and seamless experience for investors accessing secured credit digitally.

PayU and GoKwik Collaborate to Introduce India’s First Integrated Conversion-to-Completion Stack

PayU, a leading digital payments and financial services provider in India, partnered with GoKwik, a checkout optimization platform for Direct-to-Consumer (D2C) brands.

The partnership aims to launch India’s first Integrated Conversion-to-Completion (C2C) stack to

enhance checkout efficiency and payment completion for online shoppers.

The Integrated Commerce Platform combines GoKwik's conversion intelligence and checkout tools with PayU's digital payment infrastructure, enabling D2C brands to manage customer conversion and payments through a single platform.

The collaboration addresses checkout drop-offs, payment failures, and conversion inefficiencies, which are referred to as the "silent revenue killer" in the D2C sector.

The partnership simplifies the commerce technology stack, improves checkout conversions, reduces transaction failures, enhances payment success rates, and strengthens India's digital e-commerce ecosystem.

PayU operates under Prosus and offers services regulated by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), providing advanced digital financial solutions for merchants, banks, and consumers.

GoKwik supports over 15,000 D2C brands, helping improve conversion rates and reduce Return-to-Origin (RTO) orders.

The collaboration reflects a commitment to empowering India's D2C ecosystem, driving innovation, employment, and digital adoption in the country.

This partnership enables D2C brands to move from fragmented solutions to a single integrated commerce layer, improving operational efficiency and revenue assurance.

AWARDS & PRIZES

META Lifetime Achievement Award 2026

Veteran actor and filmmaker Amol Palekar will be honoured with the META Lifetime Achievement Award 2026 at the Mahindra Excellence in Theatre Awards (META).

The award recognises his outstanding contribution to Indian theatre, cinema and storytelling over several decades.

The honour will be presented during the 21st edition of the Mahindra Excellence in Theatre Awards, scheduled to be held in New Delhi from 19 March to 25 March 2026.

The Mahindra Excellence in Theatre Awards (META) is one of India's most prestigious theatre festivals celebrating excellence in stage performances.

The awards are instituted by the Mahindra Group and produced by Teamwork Arts to promote theatrical creativity across India.

The META Lifetime Achievement Award 2026 will be presented during the concluding ceremony of the week-long festival.

Amol Palekar made significant contributions to Indian theatre by experimenting with new performance formats and staging plays in unconventional venues.

He introduced theatre performances in parks, terraces, canteens and garages, helping bring theatre closer to audiences and expand its accessibility.

Apart from theatre, Amol Palekar is widely known for his contributions to Hindi cinema during the 1970s, where he portrayed realistic middle-class characters.

His notable films include Chhoti Si Baat, Chitchor, Bhumika, Baaton Baaton Mein and Gol Maal.

These performances established him as the iconic “boy-next-door” hero in Indian cinema.

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

First Woman Chief of a Functional Nuclear Power Plant

RM Nachammai became the first woman to head the operations of a functional nuclear power plant in India under the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL).

She has been appointed Chief Superintendent of Kaiga Generating Station Units 3 and 4 in Karnataka, effective 15 March 2026.

As Chief Superintendent, she will oversee operations, maintenance, and engineering support divisions, including reactor operations, safety systems, and plant performance.

Her appointment is a milestone for gender representation in India’s nuclear energy sector, which employs around 900 women out of nearly 10,000 employees.

India aims to expand nuclear power capacity to around 100 gigawatts by 2047, making skilled leadership in plant operations critical.

Nachammai has 35+ years of experience in nuclear power plant operations and holds a degree in Electrical and Electronics Engineering from the University of Madras, where she secured a university rank in 1990.

She joined NPCIL in 1991, topped the second batch of engineer trainees, and received the Vikram Sarabhai Award.

She has served in key roles at Madras Atomic Power Station and Kaiga Units 1 and 2, earning the NPCIL Special Contribution Award in 2010, 2014, and 2017.

The Kaiga Nuclear Power Station operates four Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs) of 220 MWe each, with a total installed capacity of 880 MW, and upcoming Units 5 and 6 will increase capacity to 2,280 MW.

Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors use heavy water as both coolant and moderator.

Nachammai’s appointment underscores the importance of gender inclusion, experienced operational leadership, and safety, efficiency, and reliability in India’s nuclear energy programme.