Shankar School of Banking | ASPIRANT'S CHOICE
Information is a Blessing
A Shankar IAS Academy Initiative

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 30-03-2026

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

United Nations Declares 2026 as International Year of the Woman Farmer

Agriculture is central to India's economy, with 80% of rural women engaged in agriculture and allied sectors (33% as labourers, 48% as self-employed farmers).

The United Nations has declared 2026 as the International Year of the Woman Farmer (IYWF 2026) to recognise their critical role in agriculture.

Women farmers contribute across the entire agricultural value chain—from production to marketing—making them vital for food security, rural livelihoods, and economic growth.

Despite their contributions, women face challenges in access to land, finance, and technology.

India hosted the Global Conference on Women in Agri-Food Systems (GCWAS-2026) in New Delhi, focusing on gender-inclusive policies, women leadership, climate-smart agriculture, and technology-driven solutions.

IYWF 2026 highlights the essential roles of women in agrifood systems, from production to trade, while addressing the gender gaps and promoting women's livelihoods globally.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

NASA Drops Lunar Gateway Plan, to Build $20 Billion Moon Surface Base

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has scrapped its Lunar Gateway space station plan, which was intended to orbit the Moon, and will instead construct a $20 billion lunar surface base, marking a major strategic shift in the Artemis Program.

NASA chief Jared Isaacman announced the changes, emphasizing a step-by-step approach, similar to the Apollo Program, to reduce risks and build operational capability.

NASA unveiled plans for a nuclear-powered Mars mission, with a spacecraft named "Space Reactor 1 Freedom" planned for launch before 2028, featuring advanced nuclear electric propulsion and deploying helicopters on Mars.

The Artemis Program timeline targets landing astronauts on the Moon by 2028

National Commission for Women Partners with Truecaller

The National Commission for Women (NCW) has collaborated with Truecaller, a global communications platform, to launch a nationwide Women's Digital Safety Awareness Initiative in India.

The collaboration was formally announced at an event held at Sushma Swaraj Bhawan, aiming to strengthen women's online safety and digital awareness.

The initiative focuses on creating a structured framework to raise awareness about digital risks faced by women and improve access to institutional redressal mechanisms, including the NCW 24×7 helpline.

Under this partnership, NCW and Truecaller launched "TrueCyberSakhi: A Digital Safety Toolkit, Created for Her", designed to enhance digital safety awareness and informed online participation.

The toolkit includes interactive modules, quizzes, and self-assessment tools to educate users about online threats such as spam, phishing, impersonation, harassment, and financial fraud.

It also provides practical guidelines, do's and don'ts, and best practices for ensuring safe digital communication and behavior.

A key feature of the initiative is highlighting the NCW 24×7 helpline, guiding women on how and when to seek institutional support in cases of digital harm.

Truecaller has verified the NCW helpline number on its Government Directory Service (GDS) to improve trust, authenticity, and visibility of official support channels.

This verification helps users identify the genuine helpline, reducing risks of fraud, impersonation, and misinformation, ensuring faster access to assistance.

The initiative is supported by a coordinated digital and social media awareness campaign to promote women's online safety and responsible digital participation.

IIT Ropar's Annam.AI to Establish Weather Intelligence Network

ANNAM.AI, a Government of India-supported Centre of Excellence at IIT Ropar, has launched an initiative to deploy 100 AI-based weather stations across Punjab by 30 March 2026.

The initiative begins with Punjab as the first implementation hub, marking the start of a scalable national weather intelligence network.

These AI-powered weather stations will provide hyperlocal, real-time weather data to farmers free of cost, improving agricultural decision-making.

The system helps farmers make better decisions related to sowing, irrigation, and crop protection, thereby enhancing farm productivity and climate resilience.

ANNAM.AI is developed as a digital public good supported by the Ministry of Education to promote

data-driven agriculture in India.

The initiative is being implemented by IIT Ropar's Centre of Excellence in AI for Agriculture (ANNAM.AI) to build a scalable agricultural AI ecosystem.

The project aims to reduce climate-related risks and support precision farming practices across the country.

The initiative is part of a phased rollout model, with future expansion planned in states such as Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, Odisha, Bihar, Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and Maharashtra.

By providing real-time weather intelligence at no cost, the system strengthens farm-level planning and risk management.

Overall, ANNAM.AI initiative at IIT Ropar promotes AI-driven agriculture, climate-smart farming, and digital transformation of the agriculture sector in India.

BANKING

PFRDA and Digital India BHASHINI Division Ink MoU

The Digital India BHASHa Interface for India (BHASHINI) Division (DIBD) under Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) under Ministry of Finance (MoF) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) under the initiative "BHASHINI for Seva–Sanchalan".

The objective of the MoU is to enhance multilingual accessibility of pension services across India, improving inclusion and outreach.

The initiative enables pension service access in all 22 Eighth Schedule languages, including Hindi, Bengali, Telugu, Marathi, Tamil, Urdu, and Sanskrit, expanding reach to rural, informal sector, and first-time pension savers.

BHASHINI acts as a Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) using APIs and Artificial Intelligence (AI) models for real-time translation and contextual language processing.

The integration provides voice-enabled interfaces with speech-to-text and text-to-speech technologies, improving user-friendly digital pension services.

The system is implemented through the BHASHINI Sahayogi Programme, integrating language tools into PFRDA digital platforms.

BHASHINI (National Language Translation Mission) is an AI-driven language technology initiative under MeitY, supporting 36 Indian languages, 23 voices, and 35 international languages.

The MoU establishes a framework for integrating translation APIs, multilingual AI models, and voice-based technologies into the pension ecosystem.

It strengthens inclusive digital governance by ensuring language accessibility for subscribers and stakeholders across India.

The collaboration also focuses on enriching linguistic datasets, improving the accuracy, scalability, and adaptability of AI-based language systems.

The initiative reinforces BHASHINI as a population-scale language digital infrastructure, enabling inclusive, interoperable, and secure multilingual AI systems in governance and financial services.

ECONOMY

Nippon India ETF Gold BeES Secures 6th Position Globally in Gold ETF Fund Inflows

Nippon India ETF Gold BeES, the flagship fund of Nippon India Mutual Fund, ranked 6th globally among the top 15 gold ETFs by fund flows, as per the World Gold Council.

The ETF recorded strong inflows of USD 1,085.2 million (≈6.6 tonnes of gold demand) as of 28 February 2026, making it the only Indian ETF in the global top 10.

The fund holds a total of 36.2 tonnes of gold, highlighting its strong position as a leading gold investment vehicle in India.

The ranking is based on data compiled by the World Gold Council, Bloomberg, and company filings, reflecting global ETF fund flow trends.

The top 15 gold ETFs collectively attracted inflows of about USD 42.86 billion, corresponding to nearly 301.3 tonnes of gold demand globally.

Global gold ETF demand remained strong, driven by increased allocation to safe-haven assets amid market uncertainty.

Major ETFs such as SPDR Gold Shares and SPDR Gold MiniShares Trust (USA-based funds) continued to dominate global inflows due to high liquidity and strong institutional participation.

US and China-based funds remained dominant players in the global gold ETF market, contributing significantly to overall inflows.

India emerged as a growing contributor to the global ETF market, with increasing adoption of regulated exchange-traded gold investment instruments.

Investors are increasingly using gold ETFs for diversification, liquidity, and inflation protection without holding physical gold.

Nippon India ETF Gold BeES remained India’s sole representative in the global top 15 gold ETFs by inflows, strengthening India’s presence in global investment markets.

AWARDS & PRIZES

Balakrishna Honoured With Lifetime Achievement Award At International Film Festival of Delhi 2026

Veteran Telugu actor Nandamuri Balakrishna was honoured with the Lifetime Achievement Award at the International Film Festival of Delhi 2026, recognising his 50-year contribution to Indian cinema.

The award ceremony was held at Bharat Mandapam, a key venue for international events.

Balakrishna was recognised for completing 50 years in cinema, highlighting his versatility, strong screen presence, and contribution to Telugu cinema.

The award was presented by Rekha Gupta in the presence of film personalities and dignitaries.

During the festival, his film Bhagavanth Kesari, directed by Anil Ravipudi, was screened.

The film had earlier won the Best Telugu Film award at the 71st National Film Awards.

Balakrishna was also awarded the Padma Bhushan in 2025, India’s third-highest civilian honour.

He credited his success to his father N. T. Rama Rao, known for his role in social reform and public life.

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

Chairperson of National Commission for Backward Classes

Sadhvi Niranjan Jyoti has assumed charge as Chairperson of the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC).

Mrs. Kiran Umesh Mahalle has assumed charge as Member of NCBC.

Sadhvi Niranjan Jyoti is a former Member of Parliament and has served as Union Minister of State in the Ministries of Rural Development and Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution.

She has been actively involved in social and community development, particularly for the upliftment of weaker and marginalized sections, strengthening her governance and public service experience.

Her experience is expected to enhance the effective functioning and mandate of NCBC in promoting welfare and protection of backward classes.

Mrs. Kiran Umesh Mahalle is an experienced public representative with strong involvement in social and organizational work.

She has served as Mayor of the Municipal Corporation, Amravati, and held several key public positions in governance and administration.

She has actively contributed to women empowerment, social welfare initiatives, and grassroots governance, reflecting her commitment to inclusive development.

Her association with cooperative and social institutions highlights her dedication towards community development and social upliftment.

The appointments aim to strengthen the NCBC's mandate for welfare, protection, and socio-economic development of Backward Classes across India.

ACQUISITIONS & MERGERS

RBI Approves Avenir Investment's Acquisition of Controlling Stake in Sammaan Capital

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved Avenir Investment RSC Limited's acquisition of a controlling stake in Sammaan Capital Limited (formerly Indiabulls Housing Finance Limited).

The approval also includes Sammaan Finserve Limited (formerly Indiabulls Commercial Credit Limited), covering the indirect change in control of the subsidiary arising from the transaction.

The RBI has waived the mandatory public notice requirement, facilitating a faster execution of the deal.

Avenir Investment RSC Ltd, owned by International Holding Company PJSC (Abu Dhabi), will invest approximately ₹8,850 crore through a preferential allotment of shares.

Post-investment, Avenir will hold around 41.23% stake in Sammaan Capital, strengthening its ownership and control position.

If the open offer is fully subscribed, Avenir's stake could increase to approximately 63.36%, giving it a majority controlling interest.

While RBI approval has been secured, approval from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) is still pending, and the company is working to complete the regulatory process.

The transaction represents a significant foreign investment in India's financial services sector, enhancing capital infusion and growth potential of Sammaan Capital.