



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 06-03-2026

Mapping Perspective

1. Lebanon

Prelims Perspective

2. Megalithic Rock-Cut Chambers
3. Operation Sankalp

Mains Perspective

4. India's Export Resilience
5. WTO's 14th Ministerial Conference (MC14)

Lebanon

Syllabus: Prelims Bits - Mapping

Context:

Lebanon is currently a focal point of geopolitical instability in the Middle East due to the escalating conflict between Israel and Hezbollah.

General Profile

- **Official Name:** Republic of Lebanon.
- **Geographic Region:** Located in the **Levant** region of West Asia.
- **Strategic Significance:** Historically known as the "Gateway to the East," it serves as a bridge between the Mediterranean basin and the Arabian hinterland.
- **Capital:** Beirut (A major port city often called the "Paris of the Middle East").



Physical Geography & Borders

Lebanon's geography is defined by its rugged terrain and maritime access.

- **Land Borders:**
 - **North and East:** Syria (Longest border).
 - **South:** Israel (Defined by the **Blue Line**, a 120km line set by the UN in 2000).
- **Maritime Border:** Westward access to the **Mediterranean Sea**.

Key Physiographic Regions

Lebanon is unique for its four parallel longitudinal belts:

Region	Description
Coastal Plain	Narrow and discontinuous; hosts the main urban centers (Beirut, Tripoli, Sidon).
Mount Lebanon Range	Highest peaks in the country; home to the Cedars of God , the national symbol found on the flag.
Bekaa Valley	A high-altitude plateau between the two mountain ranges. It is the country's "breadbasket" and part of the Great Rift Valley system.
Anti-Lebanon Range	Forms the eastern border with Syria; includes Mount Hermon , which is strategically vital for water resources and surveillance.

Important Water Bodies & Landmarks

- **Litani River:** The longest river entirely within Lebanon; crucial for hydroelectric power and irrigation in the Bekaa Valley.
- **Orontes (Asi) River:** Flows north into Syria and Turkey.
- **The Blue Line:** The temporary border between Lebanon and Israel/Golan Heights, monitored by **UNIFIL** (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon).
- **Port of Beirut:** One of the largest and busiest ports on the Eastern Mediterranean, critical for national imports.

Megalithic Rock-Cut Chambers

Syllabus: GS-1: Indian History – Pre-Historic art and culture.

Context:

- A ~2,000-year-old laterite rock-cut chamber from the **Megalithic period** was recently discovered at **Panayal, Kasaragod district (Kerala)** during construction work.
- Such finds provide **direct archaeological evidence of Megalithic burial practices** in South India.

What is Megalithic Rock-Cut Chambers?

- **Subterranean burial structures** carved directly into **laterite rock**.

- They were used by **Megalithic communities for funerary purposes**, where the **bones of the deceased were interred along with grave goods**.
- Represent a distinctive **Iron Age burial architecture in South India**.



Local Names

In Kerala and nearby regions, these chambers are known by different traditional names:

- **Muniyara** – “Hermit’s cell”
- **Pandava Cave** – Associated in folklore with the Pandavas
- **Peeranki Cave** – “Cannon cave”
- **Nidhikuzhi** – “Treasure pit”
- **Kalppathayam** – “Stone box / granary”

Origin and Time Period

- **Period:** Iron Age / Megalithic culture & **Approximate Age:** 2000–2500 years old (c. 500 BCE – early centuries CE).
- **Geographical distribution:** Kerala (especially northern districts); Coastal Karnataka; Regions with abundant laterite formations.

Purpose (Burial Practice)

- Primarily used for **secondary burial**.
- Ritual process:
 - Initial burial/cremation performed.
 - **Bones were later collected and placed in the chamber.**
 - Accompanied by **grave goods**, such as: Pottery; Iron tools; Beads

- These items were believed to **assist the deceased in the afterlife.**

Key Architectural Features

- **Circular Inner Chamber:** Carved directly into laterite rock.
- **Entrance Shaft:**
 - A narrow vertical passage leading down to the chamber.
 - Entrance sealed with a **heavy stone slab.**
- **Top Aperture:**
 - Small circular hole (≈5 cm in the recent discovery).
 - Possibly used for:
 - Ritual offerings
 - Symbolic passage for the spirit.
- **Associated Megalithic Monuments:** Often located near:
 - Umbrella Stones (Kudakkallu)
 - Cap Stones (Toppikallu)

Significance

- **Reveals socio-religious beliefs** and ritual practices of **Megalithic societies** in South India.
- Demonstrates **advanced use of iron tools** to carve chambers into hard laterite.
- Helps archaeologists **trace the transition from the Neolithic to the Iron Age** in the **Western Ghats region.**
- Provides insights into **early settlement patterns and funerary traditions.**

Operation Sankalp

Syllabus: GS-3: Internal Security – Maritime Security.

Context:

- **Operation Sankalp** is a maritime security initiative of the Indian Navy launched in **June 2019** to ensure the safety of **Indian-flagged merchant vessels** and maintain stability in the **Indian Ocean Region (IOR).**
- It was initiated after attacks on oil tankers and rising tensions near the **Strait of Hormuz** and the **Gulf of Oman.**

Background

- Launched on **19 June 2019** following attacks on commercial ships in the **Gulf of Oman**.
- The region is strategically critical because a large share of global oil passes through the **Strait of Hormuz**.
- Escalating tensions in **West Asia** raised concerns about the safety of maritime trade routes.



Objectives

- **Ensure safe passage** of Indian merchant vessels through critical sea lanes such as:
 - Strait of Hormuz
 - Gulf of Aden
 - Gulf of Oman
- **Combat piracy and maritime threats** in the **Indian Ocean Region (IOR)**.
- **Protect India's maritime trade and energy security**, especially oil imports.
- Strengthen India's role as a **net security provider in the region**.

Key Features

- **Continuous Naval Deployment**

- Indian Navy deploys **frigates, destroyers, and patrol vessels** in critical maritime zones.
- **Escort Missions**
 - Navy escorts **Indian-flagged merchant vessels** passing through high-risk areas.
- **Comprehensive Maritime Surveillance**
 - Use of **long-range maritime patrol aircraft** and special forces such as
 - Marine Commandos.
- **Inter-Ministerial Coordination**
 - Conducted in coordination with ministries such as **Defence, External Affairs, and Shipping**.
- **Legal Framework**
 - Supported by the **Maritime Anti-Piracy Act, 2022**, which allows prosecution of piracy.
- **First Responder Capability**
 - Ships are also prepared for **Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR)** missions during crises.

Significance for India

- **Energy Security**
 - Nearly **60–65% of India's oil imports** come from the **Persian Gulf**.
- **Protection of Maritime Trade**
 - Safeguards major shipping routes carrying **millions of tonnes of cargo**.
- **Strategic Projection**
 - Demonstrates India's capability as a **blue-water navy**.
- **Regional Stability**
 - Reinforces India's role as a **Preferred Security Partner** in the **Indian Ocean Region**.

Conclusion

- **Operation Sankalp** reflects India's commitment to **securing sea lanes, protecting maritime commerce, and responding to regional crises**.
- It highlights the growing operational reach and strategic importance of the **Indian Navy in the Indian Ocean Region**.

India's Export Resilience

Syllabus: GS-3: Indian Economy – Trade – Export.

Context:

- India has achieved **zero-duty market access to nearly 70% of global GDP** through various **Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)** and trade partnerships.
- This has significantly improved **export competitiveness and market penetration.**

Export Performance (2025–26)

- **Cumulative exports:USD 720.76 billion** during April–January 2025–26.
- **Growth:+6.15% Year-on-Year (YoY).**

Sector-wise Export Performance

Electronic Goods

- **3rd largest export category** for India.
- India has emerged as the **2nd largest mobile phone manufacturer in the world.**
- Growth driven by **Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes** and electronics manufacturing ecosystem.

Petroleum Products

- India is the **7th largest exporter of refined petroleum products globally.**
- Major export destinations include **Asia, Africa and Europe.**

Pharmaceuticals

- India is known as the **“Pharmacy of the World.”**
- **3rd largest pharmaceutical producer globally by volume.**
- **11th largest by value.**

Automobiles & Textiles

Automobile Sector

- Provides **direct and indirect employment to over 30 million people.**
- Increasing exports of **two-wheelers, passenger vehicles and auto components.**

Textile Sector

- India holds the **6th largest share in global textile exports.**
- Major products: **cotton textiles, garments, technical textiles.**

Defence Exports

- Defence exports reached **₹23,622 crore in FY2025**.
- India exports defence equipment to **over 100 countries**.
- Reflects progress towards **Atmanirbhar Bharat in defence manufacturing**.

Institutional Support Mechanisms

Export Promotion Mission (EPM)

- Total **outlay: ₹25,060 crore (FY26–FY31)**.
- Focus areas:
 - MSME exporters
 - First-time exporters

Key initiatives

- **Niryat Protsahan:** Financial support for export promotion.
- **Niryat Disha:** Capacity building and guidance for new exporters.

Logistics & Warehousing Support

FLOW Initiative

- Supports **overseas warehousing facilities**.

LIFT Initiative

- Helps offset **freight disadvantages in low-export districts**.

TRACE Initiative

- **Trade Related Assistance for Certification & Evaluation (TRACE)**.
- Reimburses exporters for:
 - International **testing**
 - **Inspection**
 - **Certification costs**.

Government Schemes & Manufacturing Push

Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Schemes

Key sectors:

- Automobiles
- Bulk Drugs
- Medical Devices

Objective:

- Reduce import dependence
- Boost domestic manufacturing

Technology & EV Push

India Semiconductor Mission 2.0: Strengthening **semiconductor manufacturing ecosystem.**

Electronics Component Manufacturing Scheme (ECMS): ₹40,000 crore scheme to develop domestic component supply chains.

PM E-DRIVE Scheme

- **₹10,900 crore** initiative.
- Promotes **Electric Vehicles (EVs)** and green mobility.

Conclusion

- India's export strategy combines **trade agreements, sectoral incentives, logistics reforms and technology push.**
- These measures aim to **enhance global competitiveness, diversify export baskets, and achieve the target of becoming a major global manufacturing and export hub.**

Practice Qs:

Q. India's export growth is increasingly supported by sectoral diversification and targeted government initiatives. Examine the key sectors driving India's export performance and evaluate the role of institutional mechanisms and policy schemes in strengthening India's export competitiveness. (250 words)

WTO's 14th Ministerial Conference (MC14)

Syllabus: GS-3: Indian Economy – Trade Conferences.

Context:

- The **Ministerial Conference** is the **highest decision-making body** of the World Trade Organization (WTO).
- It consists of **trade ministers from all 166 member countries.**
- The conference:
 - Negotiates **multilateral trade agreements.**
 - Reviews global **trade policies and disputes.**

- Sets the **future direction of the international trading system.**

Origin and Legal Basis

- Established under the **Marrakesh Agreement (1994)** which created the WTO.
- The WTO replaced the earlier **General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)** system.
- The WTO agreement mandates that the Ministerial Conference **must meet at least once every two years.**



WTO's 14th Ministerial Conference (MC14)

- **Venue:** Yaoundé, Cameroon
- **Dates:** 26–29 March 2026
- **Chair:** Luc Magloire Mbarga Atangana, Cameroon's Minister of Trade

Major Agenda Items

- **Permanent solution for food security**
 - Especially regarding **public stockholding programmes** used by countries like India.
- **Fisheries Subsidies – Phase II negotiations**
 - Address **overcapacity and overfishing** while protecting **small-scale and traditional fishers.**
- **Restoration of WTO Appellate Body**
 - Reviving the dispute settlement system that has been **non-functional since 2019.**
- **E-commerce Moratorium**
 - Decision on whether to **extend or end the moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmissions.**

India's Key Proposals for MC14

India has submitted proposals focusing on:

- **Permanent Solution for Public Stockholding (PSH)**

- To allow developing countries to **procure and stock food grains for food security programmes** without violating WTO subsidy limits.
- **Protection of Traditional Fisherfolk**
 - Safeguards for **artisanal and small-scale fishing communities** in subsidy negotiations.
- **Equitable Trade Rules**
 - Ensuring rules do not disproportionately affect **developing and least developed countries (LDCs)**.

Important WTO Ministerial Conferences

MC1 – Singapore (1996)

- First WTO Ministerial Conference.
- Introduced “**Singapore Issues**”:
 - Trade & Investment
 - Competition Policy
 - Transparency in Government Procurement
 - Trade Facilitation
- These issues became **highly controversial for developing countries**.

MC4 – Doha (2001)

- Launch of the **Doha Development Agenda (DDA)**.
- Focus: making global trade rules **more development-oriented**.
- Adopted the **TRIPS and Public Health Declaration**, allowing countries to bypass patents during **health emergencies**.

MC9 – Bali (2013)

- Produced the **Bali Package**.
- Key outcomes:
 - **Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA)** to simplify customs procedures.
 - **Peace Clause** protecting developing countries’ food security programmes from legal challenges.

MC10 – Nairobi (2015)

- Adopted the **Nairobi Package**.
- Major decision:

- **Elimination of agricultural export subsidies**, helping farmers in developing countries compete fairly.

MC12 – Geneva (2022)

- Produced the **Geneva Package**.
- Key outcomes:
 - Agreement on **curbing harmful fisheries subsidies**.
 - **TRIPS waiver for COVID-19 vaccines**.
 - Extension of the **e-commerce duty moratorium**.

MC13 – Abu Dhabi (2024)

- Focus on **expansion and regulatory reforms**.
- New members admitted:
 - Comoros
 - Timor-Leste
- Progress on **Investment Facilitation for Development** and **service sector regulations**.

Significance of MC14

- May **resolve long-standing agriculture subsidy disputes**.
- Critical for **reviving WTO's dispute settlement system**.
- Determines future rules on **digital trade and fisheries subsidies**.
- Important for **India's food security and fishing community livelihoods**.