



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 23-03-2026

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Lipulekh Pass

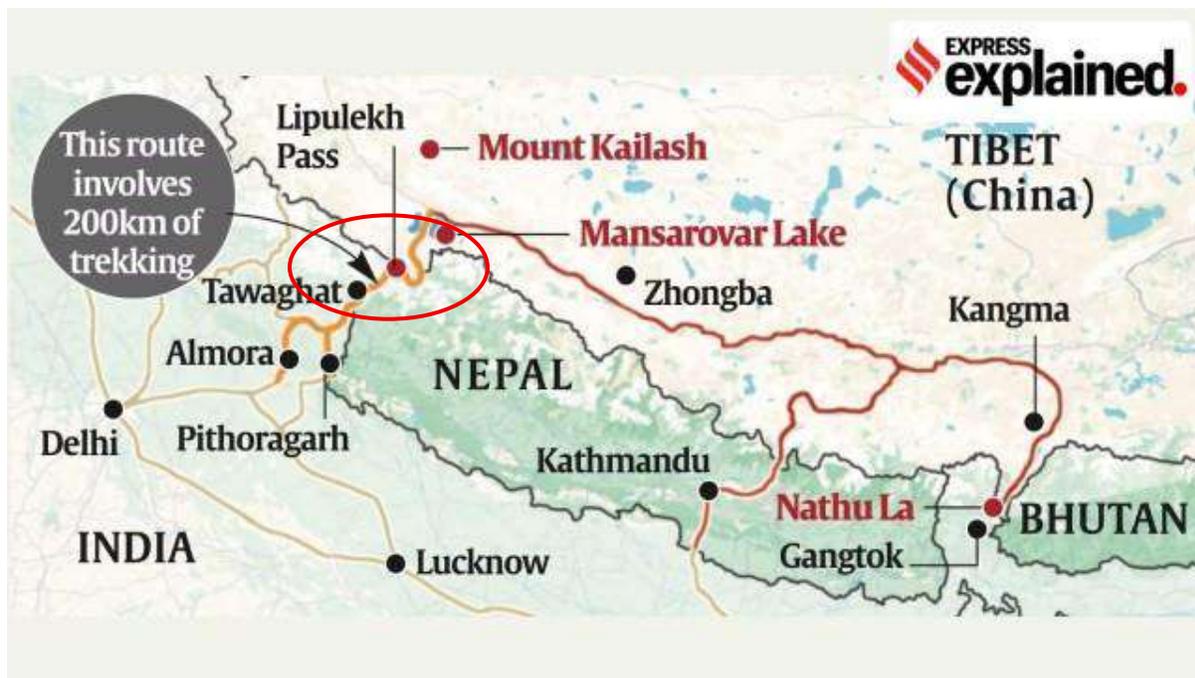
Syllabus: Prelims Bits – Mapping.

Context:

- Cross-border trade between India and China via **Lipulekh Pass (Uttarakhand)** is set to **resume in June**, after disruptions due to geopolitical tensions and COVID-19.

Background/Context

- Located in **Pithoragarh district (Kumaon region), Uttarakhand** near the **India-Nepal-China trijunction**.
- Connects India with the **Tibet Autonomous Region (China)**.
- Opened for trade in **1992** under bilateral agreements.
- Other trade passes: **Shipki La (1994, Himachal Pradesh)** and **Nathu La (2006, Sikkim)**.



Key Features / Data

- **Altitude:** ~5,334 m (17,500 ft) – high-altitude Himalayan pass.
- Serves as:
 - **Trade route** (traditional barter system revived).
 - **Pilgrimage route** for **Kailash Mansarovar Yatra**.
- Inhabited/used by **Bhotiya tribes** (e.g., Johari, Byansi).

Significance / Implications

- **Strategic Importance:**
 - Located near sensitive trijunction → vital for border management.
- **Economic:**
 - Revives livelihood of **border communities** via trade.
- **Cultural & Religious:**
 - Facilitates **Kailash Mansarovar Yatra**.
- **Connectivity:**
 - Enhances India's presence in border areas → counters isolation.

Challenges / Issues

- **Border disputes:**
 - Nepal claims the area (Kalapani–Lipulekh dispute).
- **Security concerns:**
 - Proximity to **Line of Actual Control (LAC)**.
- **Harsh terrain:**
 - Extreme weather, altitude-related risks.
- **Limited infrastructure:**
 - Seasonal accessibility.

Way Forward

- **Diplomatic engagement** with Nepal & China for dispute resolution.
- **Infrastructure development** (roads, logistics under Border Area Development Programme).
- **Sustainable trade mechanisms** for local communities.
- Strengthen **border management & surveillance**.

Prelims Facts

- **Trijunction:** India–Nepal–China near Kalapani region.
- **Kailash Mansarovar:** Located in Tibet; sacred to Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Bon.
- **Bhotiya tribes:** Transhumant traders of Uttarakhand Himalayas.
- Related Scheme: **Border Area Development Programme (BADP)**.

Core Sector:

Syllabus: GS-3: Indian Economy - Industry – Core Sector.

Context:

- India's **core sector growth** slowed to **2.3% in February 2026**, marking a **three-month low**.
- Raises concerns over **industrial recovery and economic momentum**.

Background:

- Core sector comprises **8 key industries**: Coal, Crude Oil, Natural Gas, Refinery Products, Fertilizers, Steel, Cement, Electricity.
- These sectors have a **40.27% weight in Index of Industrial Production (IIP)**.
- Considered a **leading indicator of industrial performance**.

Key Features/Provisions/Data

- February growth: **2.3% (down from ~7–8% in previous months)**.
- Major contributors:
 - **Positive growth**: Cement, Steel, Electricity
 - **Negative/slow growth**: Crude Oil, Natural Gas, Refinery Products
- Cumulative growth (FY26 so far): Moderating trend.
- Reflects **demand-side and supply-side constraints**.

About IIP

- IIP is a **composite index** measuring short-term changes in **industrial production**.
- Compiled and released monthly by **National Statistical Office (NSO)** under Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

Key Features/Data

- **Base Year**: 2011–12
- **Three sectors**:
 - **Manufacturing** (≈77.6%) – largest share
 - **Mining** (≈14.4%)
 - **Electricity** (≈8%)
- Published with a **time lag of ~6 weeks**.
- Uses **Laspeyres Index method** (fixed base weights).

Significance/Implications

- Indicates **slowing industrial activity** → may impact GDP growth.
- Affects **downstream industries** like manufacturing.
- Signals potential **weakening of infrastructure push**.
- Impacts **investment sentiment and employment generation**.

Challenges/Issues

- **Decline in fossil fuel output** (crude oil, gas).
- **Global economic slowdown** affecting exports.
- **Input cost volatility** and supply chain issues.
- Infrastructure bottlenecks and **policy implementation gaps**.

Way Forward

- Boost **domestic production of energy resources**.
- Strengthen **infrastructure investment** (e.g., under National Infrastructure Pipeline).
- Promote **renewable energy transition**.
- Improve **ease of doing business** and logistics efficiency.
- Ensure **stable policy and regulatory environment**.

Relevant Frameworks/Schemes

- Index of Industrial Production (IIP) – CSO, Ministry of Statistics.
- National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP).
- PM Gati Shakti Master Plan.

Prelims Facts

- Core sector weight in IIP: **40.27%**.
- Electricity often acts as a **high-frequency demand indicator**.
- Steel & Cement → proxies for **construction activity**.

Weight Loss Drugs

Syllabus: GS-3: General Science – Drugs and Medicines.

Context:

- Patent expiry of blockbuster obesity drug **Semaglutide** (marketed as Ozempic/Wegovy) by **Novo Nordisk** is expected to enable cheaper generic versions in India.

Background/Context

- GLP-1 receptor agonists (like semaglutide) are used for:
 - Type-2 diabetes management
 - Weight loss (anti-obesity drugs)
- India faces a dual burden:
 - Rising obesity (~135 million obese individuals)
 - High diabetes prevalence (≈77 million cases; IDF)

Key Features/Provisions/Data

- Patent expiry:
 - Core patent for semaglutide expected to expire around **2026–27 in India**
- Market impact:
 - Indian pharma firms likely to launch **generic versions**
 - Prices may drop significantly (currently costly imports)
- Drug mechanism:
 - Mimics GLP-1 hormone → reduces appetite, slows gastric emptying
- Regulatory aspect:
 - Approval required from **Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation**

Significance/Implications

- **Public Health**
 - Improved affordability → wider access to obesity treatment
 - Potential reduction in NCD burden (diabetes, CVDs)
- **Economic**
 - Boost to Indian generics industry
 - Export opportunities for affordable GLP-1 drugs

➤ **Healthcare system**

- Shift towards preventive pharmacotherapy

Challenges/Issues

➤ **Affordability vs Accessibility**

- Even generics may remain expensive initially

➤ **Supply constraints**

- Global shortages of GLP-1 drugs

➤ **Regulatory & Safety concerns**

- Side effects (nausea, pancreatitis risks)

➤ **Lifestyle substitution risk**

- Over-reliance on drugs vs diet/exercise

Way Forward

➤ Promote **generic competition + price regulation**

➤ Integrate anti-obesity drugs into **National Programme for Prevention and Control of NCDs (NPCDCS)**

➤ Strengthen **pharmacovigilance systems**

➤ Encourage **lifestyle interventions + drug therapy synergy**

➤ Support domestic R&D for **biosimilars and peptides**

Supreme Court on Crop Diversification

Syllabus: GS-3: Indian Agriculture – Cropping pattern.

Context:

- In *Kisan Mahapanchayat v. Union of India*, duty-free import of yellow dal was challenged.
- Concern: It depressed domestic prices and discouraged farmers from cultivating pulses.

Background/Context

- India faces **structural imbalance** in cropping patterns (dominance of wheat-paddy).

- High dependence on imports for pulses and edible oils.
- Crop diversification promoted through:
 - PM-RKVY (Crop Diversification Programme)
 - National Mission on Edible Oils (NMEO)
 - Mission for Aatmanirbharata in Pulses
 - MIDH (horticulture)

Key Features/Concepts

- **Crop Diversification:** Shift to high-value/alternative crops based on profitability and sustainability.
- **Current Issues:**
 - Duty-free imports → price suppression.
 - MSP not effectively realized for pulses.
- **Data Points:**
 - India is the **largest producer & consumer of pulses**, yet imports ~15–20%.

Significance/Implications

- **Economic:** Reduces import dependence, stabilizes farmer income.
- **Environmental:**
 - Pulses fix nitrogen → improve soil fertility.
 - Reduces groundwater exploitation vs paddy.
- **Nutritional Security:** Enhances protein intake.
- **Cropping Resilience:** Reduces monoculture risks.

Challenges/Issues

- **Policy Incoherence:** MSP vs import policy mismatch.
- **Weak Procurement:** MSP remains notional.
- **Infrastructure Gaps:** Storage, processing, market access.
- **Behavioural Constraints:** Risk aversion, lack of awareness.
- **Climate Risks** affecting alternative crops.

Supreme Court Suggestions

- **Governance Reforms:**
 - Strengthen inter-ministerial coordination.

- Long-term stable policy for pulses & oilseeds.
- **MSP Reforms:**
 - Ensure remunerative MSP (aligned with Swaminathan Commission – C2+50%).
 - Guarantee procurement platform.
- **Import Policy Alignment:**
 - Calibrate import duties with MSP to protect farmers.
- **Stakeholder Consultation:**
 - Include farmers, experts in policymaking.

Way Forward

- Integrate **price support + trade policy + procurement**.
- Promote **cluster-based diversification** with value chains.
- Expand **e-NAM, FPOs, storage & processing units**.
- Encourage **climate-resilient crops** and extension services.

Prelims Facts

- **PM-RKVY:** Flexible state-led agriculture scheme.
- **NMEO-Oilseeds:** Targets self-reliance in edible oils.
- **Swaminathan Commission:** Recommended MSP = C2 + 50%.
- **Pulses:** Leguminous crops with nitrogen-fixing ability.

India as Drone Hub

Syllabus: GS-3: Science and Technology – Drones.

Context:

- Defence Minister emphasised the growing importance of drones and counter-drone systems in modern warfare.
- Highlighted the need for a robust domestic drone ecosystem to ensure **strategic autonomy**.

Background/Context

- Rise of **asymmetric and technology-driven warfare** (e.g., Russia–Ukraine conflict).
- Increasing use of **Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs)** for surveillance, targeting, and combat.
- India aims to reduce defence imports under **Atmanirbhar Bharat**.

Key Features/Provisions/Data

- **Role of Drones in Warfare:**
 - *Surveillance*: Real-time intelligence without risking personnel.
 - *Suppression of Defences*: Use of swarm drones to overwhelm air defence systems.
 - *Low-cost Warfare*: High impact at low cost (e.g., Ukraine operations).
 - *Electronic Warfare*: Jamming/spoofing enemy communication and radar.
- **Government Initiatives:**
 - **PLI Scheme for Drones**: Incentivises domestic manufacturing.
 - **Import Ban**: Prohibition on CBU, CKD, SKD drone imports.
 - **GST Rationalisation**: Reduced to 5% (2025).
 - **Promotion Platforms**: Bharat Drone Shakti, Drone Mahotsav.
 - **SwaYaan Programme**: Skill development in UAV sector.

Significance/Implications

- Enhances **defence preparedness** and real-time battlefield awareness.
- Promotes **indigenous defence industry** and reduces import dependency.
- Enables **dual-use applications** (agriculture, disaster management).
- Strengthens India's position in **emerging defence technologies**.

Challenges/Issues

- Dependence on **critical components** (chips, sensors).
- Vulnerability to **cyber-attacks and hacking**.
- Regulatory and airspace management issues.
- Ethical concerns (autonomous lethal weapons).

Way Forward

- Invest in **R&D and semiconductor ecosystem**.

- Develop **counter-drone systems** (anti-UAV, radar, AI detection).
- Strengthen **public-private partnerships** and start-up ecosystem.
- Frame robust **data security and export policies**.

Prelims Facts

- UAVs classified into **nano, micro, small, medium, large** (DGCA norms).
- **Drone Rules, 2021**: Liberalised regulatory framework.