



## **DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 26-03-2026**

### **Mapping Perspective**

1. Aghanasini River

### **Prelims Perspective**

2. National AI Skilling Initiative
3. Aakash 300 3D Printer

### **Mains Perspective**

4. Corporate Law Bill 2026
5. India's Strategic Petroleum Reserves

## Aghanasini River

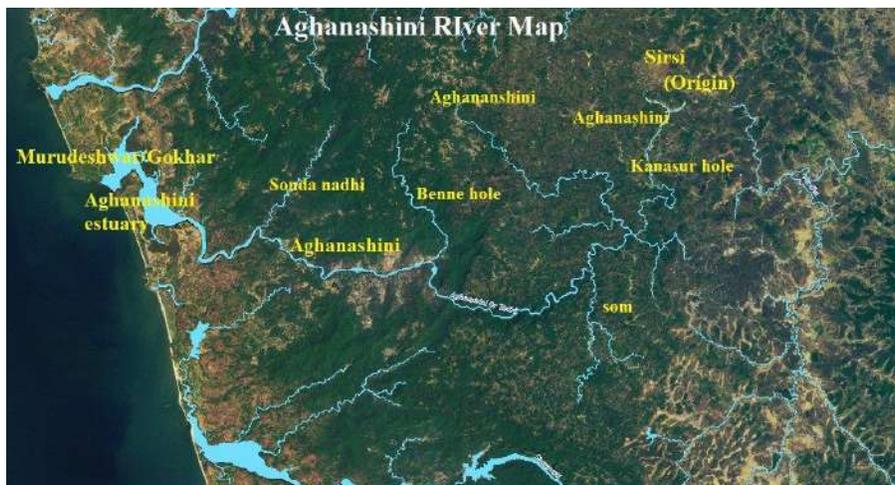
Syllabus: Prelims Bits – Rivers and Tributaries – Mapping.

### Context:

- UNESCO advised the Government of India that the **Aghanashini-Vedavathi river linking project** must comply with **World Heritage Conservation norms**.
- Raises concerns over ecological impact on a **free-flowing river system** and its estuary.

### Background

- River interlinking projects aim to **transfer water from surplus to deficit basins**.
- However, such projects often raise issues related to:
  - Environmental sustainability
  - Biodiversity loss
  - Impact on local livelihoods



### Key Features of Aghanashini River

- **Location:** Western Ghats, Karnataka
- **Origin:** Gadihalli (Sirsi) at ~676 m altitude
- **Length:** ~117 km
- **Drainage Area:** ~1449 sq. km
- **Outfall:** Joins the Arabian Sea at Tadri

### Unique Characteristics

- One of the **few free-flowing (undammed) rivers** in the world

- Name means “**Remover of Sins**”

### **Tributaries**

- Donihalla
- Chandika Hole
- Masti Mane Halla
- Benne Hole

### **Waterfalls (due to rugged terrain)**

- Burude Falls
- Dabbe Falls
- Unchalli Falls
- Benne Hole Falls

### **Rainfall Pattern**

- **Orographic rainfall**
- Range: **2500 mm (plains) to >6300 mm (Ghats)**

### **Aghanashini Estuary**

- Located at river’s confluence with the Arabian Sea
- Features:
  - Rich **mangrove ecosystems**
  - High **biodiversity (fish, birds, crustaceans)**
- Recognized as a **Ramsar Site**

### **Significance**

- **Ecological Importance**
  - Supports **unique estuarine and mangrove ecosystems**
  - Acts as a **carbon sink** and biodiversity hotspot
- **Hydrological Importance**
  - Being free-flowing, it maintains **natural sediment flow and nutrient cycles**
- **Livelihood Support**
  - Sustains **fisheries, agriculture, and local communities**
- **Climate Regulation**

- Mangroves provide **coastal protection** and resilience against climate change

### Challenges/Issues

#### ➤ **River Linking Project Concerns**

- Alteration of **natural flow regime**
- Threat to **estuarine ecology and Ramsar status**

#### ➤ **Biodiversity Loss**

- Impact on fish breeding grounds and mangroves

#### ➤ **Regulatory Concerns**

- Need to comply with **international conservation frameworks (UNESCO norms)**

#### ➤ **Development vs Environment Conflict**

- Balancing water needs with ecological sustainability

### Way Forward

#### ➤ **Strict Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)**

- Incorporate cumulative and long-term ecological impacts

#### ➤ **Compliance with Global Norms**

- Align with UNESCO and Ramsar guidelines

#### ➤ **Promote Sustainable Alternatives**

- Watershed management, rainwater harvesting instead of large-scale diversion

#### ➤ **Community Participation**

- Involve local stakeholders in decision-making

#### ➤ **Conservation Priority**

- Recognize Aghanashini as an **ecologically sensitive river system**

### Prelims-Oriented Facts

#### ➤ Aghanashini is a **west-flowing river** of Karnataka

#### ➤ It is **undammed and free-flowing**

#### ➤ Its estuary is a **Ramsar Site**

#### ➤ Origin: **Western Ghats (Sirsi region)**

#### ➤ Drains into: **Arabian Sea**

## **National AI Skilling Initiative**

**Syllabus: GS-3: Indian Economy – Skill and Employment.**

### **Context:**

- The Union Minister for Information & Broadcasting recently launched the **National AI Skilling Initiative**.
- Aims to enhance India's AI capabilities in the **creative and media sectors (AVGC ecosystem)**.

### **Background**

- Rapid growth of **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** and **Generative AI** is transforming industries globally.
- India's **AVGC sector (Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, Comics)** is emerging as a key driver of the digital economy.
- There is a growing **skill gap in AI-driven creative technologies**.
- Government initiatives like **Digital India** and **IndiaAI Mission** emphasize skilling and capacity building.

### **Key Points**

- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Information & Broadcasting
- **Partners:** Google and YouTube
- **Implementation Agency:** Indian Institute of Creative Technologies (IICT)

### **Coverage & Target:**

- Training of **15,000 participants**
- Target groups: Creators; Media professionals; Students & Developers

### **Focus Areas:**

- AI applications in: Animation; Visual Effects (VFX); Gaming; Comics; Media technology

### **Two-Phase Structure:**

#### **Phase I (Foundation Level):**

- Large-scale AI learning through:
  - Google Career Certificates
  - Google Cloud Generative AI learning paths
- Courses include:

- AI Essentials
- Prompting Essentials
- Introduction to Generative AI
- Generative AI Leader Path
- **Mandatory completion** for Phase II entry

### Phase II (Advanced Level):

- Hands-on, project-based specialization
- Industry-oriented training for creative sectors
- Conducted in major cities across India

### Significance

- **Bridges Skill Gap:** Builds AI competency in the fast-growing AVGC sector
- **Boosts Digital Economy:** Strengthens India's position in global creative industries
- **Employment Generation:** Enhances job readiness in emerging tech domains
- **Supports Innovation:** Encourages AI-driven content creation and media production
- **Public-Private Partnership Model:** Collaboration with global tech players improves quality and scalability

### Challenges

- **Digital Divide:** Unequal access to training in rural and remote areas
- **Quality Assurance:** Ensuring standardization and practical relevance of training
- **Rapid Technological Change:** Course content may become outdated quickly
- **Industry Absorption:** Limited job opportunities may restrict full utilization of skills
- **Dependence on Big Tech:** Over-reliance on private platforms like Google

### Way Forward

- **Expand Outreach:** Include Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities via hybrid/online models
- **Continuous Curriculum Update:** Align with evolving AI technologies
- **Industry Linkages:** Strengthen placement support and startup incubation
- **Integration with Education:** Embed AI courses in university and skilling curricula
- **Promote Indigenous Platforms:** Develop India-based AI tools and ecosystems

- **Monitoring & Evaluation:** Regular assessment of outcomes and employability impact

## **Aakash 300 3D Printer**

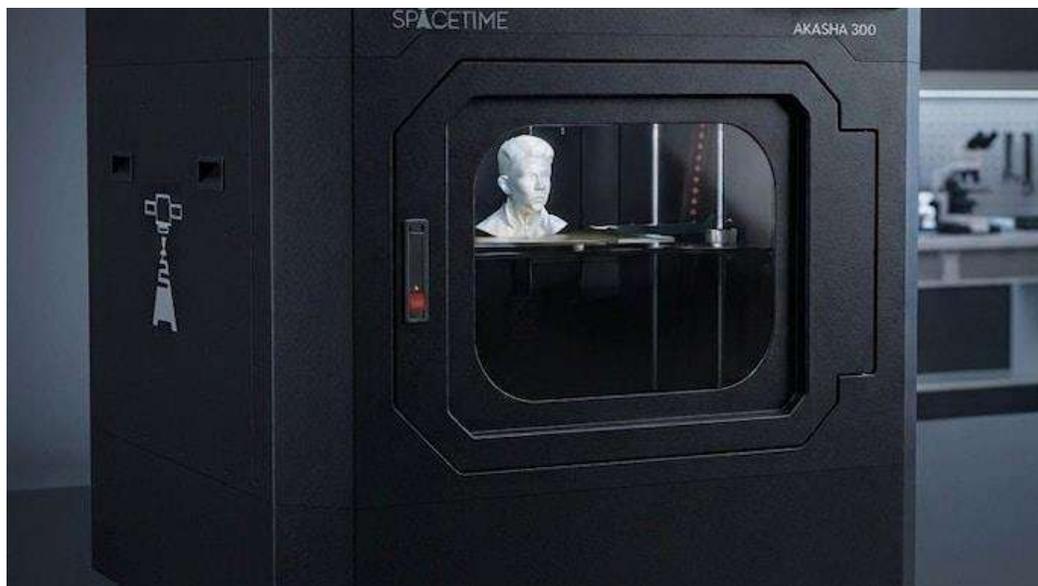
**Syllabus: GS-3; Science and Technology**

**Context:**

- A Kerala-based start-up delivered the **Akasha300 3D Printer** to **ISRO**.
- Marks a significant step towards **Atmanirbhar Bharat in advanced manufacturing and space technology**.

**Background/Context**

- Developed with support from:
  - Space Technology Innovation and Incubation Centre (STIIC), IIST
  - Kerala Startup Mission (KSUM)
- Reflects India's push towards **indigenous high-end manufacturing technologies**, especially for aerospace applications.



**Key Features / Technical Specifications**

- **Type:** High-temperature **multi-material extrusion 3D printer**
- **Dual-extrusion technology**
  - Current capability: up to **350°C**

- Future upgrade: up to **500°C**
- **Modular extruder design**
  - Enables integration of additional extrusion systems
  - Supports **hybrid additive manufacturing**
- **Thermal control system**
  - Heated bed: up to **110°C** (upgradeable to 150°C)
  - Enclosed chamber: up to **80°C**
- **Industrial-grade design**
  - Robust motion system
  - Integrated **air filtration system**
- Capable of printing **high-performance engineering materials**

### Significance / Implications

- **Boost to Indigenous Technology**
  - Reduces dependence on foreign 3D printing technologies
- **Space Sector Advancement**
  - Helps **ISRO** in rapid prototyping of aerospace components
- **R&D Acceleration**
  - Enables faster design iterations and innovation
- **Startup Ecosystem Growth**
  - Demonstrates success of **incubation ecosystems (IIST, KSUM)**
- **Strategic Manufacturing Capability**
  - Supports sectors like **defence, aerospace, and advanced materials**

### Challenges / Issues

- **High initial costs** of advanced 3D printing systems
- **Limited skilled workforce** in additive manufacturing
- Dependence on **specialized materials and supply chains**
- Need for **standardization and certification** in aerospace applications

### Way Forward

- **Skill development programs** in additive manufacturing

- Strengthening **industry-academia collaboration**
- Promoting **R&D funding** for indigenous hardware innovation
- Creating **standards and regulatory frameworks** for 3D printed components
- Expanding use beyond space sector into **healthcare, defence, and MSMEs**

### **Prelims Fact Pointers**

- Akasha300 → **High-temperature multi-material 3D printer**
- Developed with support of → **IIST & Kerala Startup Mission**
- Used by → **ISRO**
- Key capability → Printing **high-performance materials under controlled thermal conditions**

## **Corporate Law Bill 2026**

**Syllabus: GS-2: Governance – Laws and Policies & GS-3: Indian Economy – Ease of doing business**

### **Context:**

- The Corporate Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026 was introduced in Lok Sabha by the finance minister.
- Referred to a **31-member Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC)** for detailed scrutiny.
- Aims to amend:
  - Limited Liability Partnership Act, 2008
  - Companies Act, 2013

### **Background/Context**

- India has been undertaking **corporate law reforms** to:
  - Improve **Ease of Doing Business (EoDB)**
  - Reduce compliance burden
  - Align with global regulatory standards
- Earlier reforms (2019–2023) focused on:
  - Decriminalisation of offences

- Digital governance
- This Bill continues the reform trajectory with deeper structural changes.

### Objectives of the Bill

- **Ease of Doing Business**
  - Simplify procedures and reduce regulatory burden
- **Decriminalisation**
  - Replace criminal penalties for minor offences with monetary fines
- **Modernisation**
  - Align corporate laws with international best practices
- **Governance Reforms**
  - Strengthen institutions like:
    - National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA)
    - Regional Directors (RDs)

### Key Provisions

#### 1. Decriminalisation of Corporate Offences

- Minor offences → converted into **civil violations**
- Penalties → monetary fines instead of imprisonment
- **Outcome:** Reduced litigation, improved investor confidence

#### 2. Changes in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

- CSR applicability threshold increased:
  - ₹5 crore → ₹10 crore profits
- Mandatory CSR spending:
  - Remains **2% of average net profits (last 3 years)**
- Relaxations:
  - Exemptions for small companies
  - Deadline for unspent CSR funds:
    - 30 days → 90 days

#### 3. Corporate Governance & Compliance Reforms

- Reduced compliance burden for small companies:

- Relaxed auditor appointment norms
- Lower additional filing fees
- Enhanced role of:
  - National Financial Reporting Authority
  - Regional Directors

#### **4. Hybrid Meetings & Digital Governance**

- AGMs/EGMs allowed via **videoconferencing**
- Mandatory:
  - At least **one physical AGM every 3 years**
- Reflects **post-pandemic governance transformation**

#### **5. Capital Structure Flexibility**

- Rationalisation of **share buyback provisions**
- Greater flexibility in capital structuring
- Safeguards retained to prevent misuse

#### **6. Trust Conversion Framework**

- Allows conversion of:
  - SEBI/IFSC-registered trusts → LLPs
- Promotes flexibility in **investment structures**

### **Concerns & Criticisms**

#### **1. Delegation of Legislative Powers**

- Excessive powers to executive bodies like NFRA
- Reference:
  - Hamdard Dawakhana vs Union of India
- Issue: Risk of **“skeletal legislation”**

#### **2. Dilution of Parliamentary Oversight**

- Reduced legislative scrutiny in rule-making
- Risk of arbitrariness and reduced accountability

#### **3. Weakening of CSR Framework**

- Increased threshold may:

- Exclude many companies
- Reduce overall CSR spending

#### **4. Governance vs Deregulation Debate**

- Decriminalisation may:
  - Lower fear of non-compliance
  - Weaken deterrence against misconduct

#### **Significance for the Economy**

- **Improved Investment Climate**
  - Reduced compliance burden → better business sentiment
- **Global Alignment**
  - Brings India closer to international corporate governance norms
- **Digital Corporate Ecosystem**
  - Promotes efficiency via virtual meetings
- **Boost to Financial Innovation**
  - Trust-to-LLP conversion expands structuring flexibility

#### **Challenges**

- Balancing:
  - **Ease of Doing Business vs Corporate Accountability**
- Risk of misuse of decriminalisation provisions
- Ensuring **effective oversight** despite delegation
- Maintaining **CSR effectiveness**

#### **Way Forward**

- **Balanced Decriminalisation**
  - Strict penalties for serious offences must continue
- **Strengthen Parliamentary Scrutiny**
  - JPC should closely examine delegation provisions
- **Stakeholder Consultation**
  - Industry + civil society + experts
- **Accountability Mechanisms**

- Strengthen oversight of NFRA and RDs
- **CSR Safeguards**
  - Monitor impact of raised thresholds on social spending

### Conclusion

- The Bill represents a **major step in modernising India's corporate legal framework**.
- Its success hinges on maintaining a **fine balance between liberalisation and accountability**, ensuring that economic growth does not compromise governance standards.

## India's Strategic Petroleum Reserves

**Syllabus: GS-3: Indian Economy – Energy sector.**

### Context:

- India's Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPRs), with a total storage capacity of **5.33 million tonnes**, are currently holding **3.37 million tonnes of crude oil — just 64% of total capacity**.
- Revealed by the **Minister of State for Petroleum in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha**.

### Overview of SPRs

- Strategic Petroleum Reserves are **dedicated stockpiles of crude oil** maintained as a buffer against:
  - Sudden supply disruptions
  - Price shocks
- They are **distinct from routine operational reserves** held by oil companies.

### Historical Background

- Concept proposed after the **Oil Crisis of 1973**:
  - Arab nations imposed an oil embargo on Western countries
- Since then, SPRs have been used during **major global emergencies**
- Countries like:
  - US

- China
  - Japan
- maintain **massive SPRs**, highlighting their strategic importance

### India's SPR Infrastructure: Current Status

- Managed by **Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserve Limited (ISPRL)**:
  - A **special purpose vehicle**
  - Wholly-owned subsidiary of the **Oil Industry Development Board (OIDB)**

### Existing Underground Cavern Facilities

- Visakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh) – 1.33 million tonnes
- Mangaluru (Karnataka) – 1.50 million tonnes
- Padur (Karnataka) – 2.50 million tonnes

### Total Capacity: 5.33 million tonnes

- At full capacity:
  - Covers approximately **9.5 days of India's crude oil requirements**

### Current Status of Reserves

- Present storage:
  - **3.37 million tonnes (64% capacity)**
- One-third of storage capacity is **lying vacant**
- Reserve levels are:
  - **Dynamic, not static**
  - Fluctuate based on:
    - Market conditions
    - Incoming stocks
    - Consumption levels
- The **64% figure is only a snapshot**

### Planned Expansion: Future SPR Sites

- **July 2021 approval** for additional reserves (6.5 million tonnes):
  - **Chandikhol, Odisha** – 4 million tonnes
  - **Padur (Karnataka expansion)** – 2.5 million tonnes

### Further Proposed Sites

- **Bikaner (Rajasthan)**
- **Rajkot (Gujarat)**
  - Potential addition: **6 million tonnes**
- Decisions on these are **yet to be taken**

### **Key Gaps and Concerns**

- Current SPR coverage:
  - Only **~9.5 days of crude needs**
  - Far below **90-day benchmark recommended for IEA members**
- Reserves at only **64% capacity**
- Expansion projects:
  - **Incomplete or undecided**
- Leads to vulnerability during:
  - **Prolonged supply disruptions**
  - Example: **current West Asia conflict**

### **India's Oil Stockpiles: Status and Vulnerability**

#### **Import Dependency**

- India is the **world's third-largest consumer of crude oil**
- Over **88% of crude oil requirement is met through imports**
- Leads to **high vulnerability to global supply disruptions**

#### **IEA Benchmark: Comparison**

- **International Energy Agency (IEA)** recommends:
  - Oil stocks equivalent to **90 days of net imports**
  - Includes:
    - Strategic reserves
    - Commercial inventories

#### **India's Position**

- India is an **Associate Member (not full member)** → not legally obligated
- Current total storage capacity:
  - **74 days (including commercial stocks)**

- Still short of 90-day benchmark

### Need for Expansion of SPRs

- Triggered by:
  - West Asia conflict
  - Closure of Strait of Hormuz (critical maritime chokepoint)

### Reasons for Urgency

- Massive and growing consumption
- Over 88% import dependency
- Risk of extended supply disruptions
- Current SPR:
  - Only ~9.5 days buffer → dangerously thin

### Commercial Case for Expanding SPRs

#### Strategic + Economic Benefits

- Market leverage:
  - Release oil when prices surge
  - Refill when prices are low
- Enhances India's role as a player in international oil markets

#### Leasing Model

- Storage can be leased to:
  - West Asian refiners
- Benefits:
  - Reduced freight costs
  - Strategic positioning in Southeast Asian markets

#### ADNOC Example

- July 2021:
  - Approval for commercialisation of Phase-I SPRs
- Agreement between:
  - ADNOC (Abu Dhabi National Oil Company, UAE)
  - ISPRL

### Key Feature

- ADNOC allowed to use:
  - **7,50,000 tonnes capacity at Mangaluru SPR**

### Significance

- Model for:
  - Revenue generation
  - Maintaining emergency availability of reserves

### Conclusion

- India's SPR system reflects **strategic intent but operational gaps**
- Key issue:
  - **Low capacity utilisation + inadequate coverage duration**
- Way forward lies in:
  - Expedited expansion
  - Optimal utilisation
  - Strategic-commercial integration