



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 02-04-2026

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Bab el-Mandab Strait

Syllabus: GS-1: World Geography - Mapping

Context:

- The Bab el-Mandab Strait faces renewed threats of closure as Yemen-based Houthi rebels escalate ballistic missile attacks amid the widening Middle East conflict.

About Bab el-Mandab Strait

What It Is?

- A strategic maritime chokepoint and one of the world's most vital shipping lanes
- Serves as the southern gateway to the Red Sea, acting as the primary link between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea (via the Suez Canal)

Location



Geographical Position

- Situated between the Horn of Africa (Djibouti and Eritrea) to the southwest and the Arabian Peninsula (Yemen) to the northeast

Connectivity

- Connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea

Key Point

- Strait split into two channels by Perim Island; western channel is the primary lane for large commercial vessels

Origin of the Name

- In Arabic, Bab el-Mandab means “Gate of Tears”
- Legend: attributed to drowning during an ancient earthquake separating Asia and Africa OR due to extreme danger posed by narrow, treacherous navigation channels

Key Features

- **Width:** Narrowest point ~29 km (18 miles) → highly vulnerable to land-based missile attacks and naval blockades
- **Volume:** Accounts for ~10–12% of global seaborne oil and natural gas shipments
- **Capacity:** Over 30 million tonnes of LNG and millions of barrels of oil pass annually
- **Alternative Route:** Diversion via Cape of Good Hope (South Africa) → adds ~4,000–6,000 nautical miles and 14–20 days

Significance

- Critical conduit for Persian Gulf oil and gas to Europe and North America via Suez Canal and SUMED pipeline
- Massive container traffic (consumer goods, electronics, food) between Asia and Europe depends on this passage

Analytical Insight

- Classic example of a **strategic chokepoint** → vulnerable to geopolitical conflicts
- Closure impacts **global energy security, trade routes, and freight costs**
- Increasing relevance in **West Asian conflicts and maritime security discourse**

Humpback Whale

Syllabus: Prelims Bits

Context:

- Recently, **Humpback whale populations have surged from 10,000 to nearly 80,000** due to **conservation efforts** and the species’ **ability to adapt and switch food sources**

About Humpback Whale

- **Humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*)** is a species of **baleen whale**
- It is a **rorqual**, member of the **family Balaenopteridae**
- Known for **long migrations** → between **polar feeding grounds (summer)** and **tropical/subtropical breeding grounds (winter)**



Appearance

- Has a **distinctive hump on its back**
- **Long pectoral fins** → basis for name *Megaptera* meaning “**big-winged**”
- **Females are larger than males**

Distribution

- Found in **all major oceans** → from **sub-polar latitudes to the equator**

Behaviour & Feeding

- Uses **unique feeding method – bubble netting** → bubbles exhaled in spiral below dense prey patches
- **Filter feeders** → food strained through **baleen plates**

Diet

- Feeds on **krill, anchovies, cod, sardines, mackerel, capelin** and other **schooling fish**

Lifespan & Reproduction

- **Sexual maturity**: between **4–10 years**
- **Reproduction**: females produce **one calf every 2–3 years (on average)**

Conservation Status

- **IUCN Status: Least Concern**

Analytical Insight

- Population recovery highlights **success of global conservation regimes (e.g., whaling ban)**
- Demonstrates **ecological adaptability** → switching food sources aids resilience
- Serves as a **case study of marine conservation success**, relevant for **biodiversity and environmental governance** topics

- **Recent Development:** The Navegaon-Nagzira Tiger Reserve (NNTR) in Maharashtra's Gondia will get **control of the buffer notified area** in its vicinity from **April 1**.

Navegaon-Nagzira Tiger Reserve

Syllabus: GS-3: Environment – Protected Areas.

Context:

Location & Significance

- Located in the **state of Maharashtra**
- Situated in the **heart of the central Indian Tiger Landscape**, contributing **almost 1/6 of the total tiger population of the country**
- Declared a **tiger reserve in 2013**; it is the **fifth tiger reserve in Maharashtra**

Composition

- Comprises notified areas of:
 - Nawegaon National Park
 - Nawegaon Wildlife Sanctuary
 - Nagzira Wildlife Sanctuary
 - New Nagzira Wildlife Sanctuary
 - Koka Wildlife Sanctuary

Connectivity

- Has ecological **linkages with Kanha, Pench, and Tadoba Tiger Reserves**

Topography

- Terrain is **undulating**
- Highest point: **'Zenda Pahad' (~702 m above Mean Sea Level)**

Vegetation

- Dominated by **Southern Tropical Dry Deciduous** type

Flora

- **364 species of plants**
- Major trees include:
 - *Terminalia tomentosa*

- *Lagerstroemia parviflora*
- *Anogeisus latifolia*
- *Pterocarpus marsupium*
- *Diospyrus melanoxylon*
- *Ougeiniaoojeinensis*

Fauna

- Major wild animals:
 - Tiger, Panther, Small Indian Civet, Palm Civet
 - Wolf, Jackal, Wild Dog
 - Sloth Bear, Ratel
 - Common Giant Flying Squirrel
 - Gaur, Sambar, Chital
 - Four-horned Antelope, Mouse Deer, Pangolin

Analytical Note

- Part of **Central Indian landscape** → **crucial for tiger corridor connectivity**
- **Buffer area control** enhances **habitat protection, human-wildlife conflict management, and conservation governance**
- Important for **biodiversity conservation + landscape-level management approach**

PM e-Drive Scheme

Syllabus: GS-3: Environment – Policies related to Climate Change.

Context:

- Ministry of Heavy Industries has **extended subsidies** → electric two-wheelers till **31 July 2026**, electric rickshaw & electric carts till **31 March 2028** under PM e-DRIVE scheme

About PM e-DRIVE Scheme

- **PM E-DRIVE (Electric Drive Revolution in Innovative Vehicle Enhancement)** → flagship initiative launched in **October 2024**
- **Effective from:** 1 October 2024
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Heavy Industries

Objectives

- Accelerate adoption of Electric Vehicles (EVs)
- Establish charging infrastructure across country
- Develop robust EV manufacturing ecosystem
- **Promote transition to EVs** → via upfront incentives + infrastructure support

Key Components of the Scheme

Subsidies (Demand Incentives)

- Incentives for:
 - e-2 wheelers (e-2W)
 - e-3 wheelers (e-3W)
 - e-ambulances
 - e-trucks
 - Other emerging EV categories

Grants for Creation of Capital Assets

- Funding for:
 - Procurement of e-buses
 - Charging infrastructure network
 - **Upgradation of testing facilities** under Ministry of Heavy Industries

Administrative Component

- Covers:
 - IEC (Information, Education & Communication) activities
 - Project Management Agency (PMA) fees

Role of States

- States encouraged to provide **additional incentives**:
 - Road tax waivers
 - Reduced toll & parking fees
 - Permit exemptions
- Aim → **enhance EV adoption at sub-national level**

Institutional Mechanism

➤ **Project Implementation and Sanctioning Committee (PISC):**

- Chaired by **Secretary, Heavy Industries**
- Functions:
 - Monitor scheme implementation
 - Ensure effective rollout
 - Address challenges
 - Revise incentives if needed
 - Increase e-bus numbers
 - Approve testing guidelines

Eligibility Conditions

- Vehicles must:
- Be registered as **“Motor Vehicles”** under CMVR
 - Use **advanced battery technology**

Analytical Insight

- Reflects **India’s push toward decarbonisation & energy transition**
- Complements initiatives like **Make in India & Atmanirbhar Bharat**
- Addresses **urban pollution + oil import dependency**
- Key challenge → **charging infrastructure gaps & battery supply chain dependence**

RBI Forex Cap

Syllabus: GS-3: Indian Economy – Foreign Reserves.

Context:

- RBI asked banks to limit foreign currency exposure to **\$100 million per day** to control falling rupee amid **rising oil prices + inflation concerns due to West Asia conflict**; compliance deadline: **April 10**
- Despite the move, rupee weakened **below ₹95/\$ (closed ~₹94.8)** while **oil prices > \$100/barrel**

RBI’s Forex Cap: Objective & Rationale

- Introduced to **stabilise sharply falling rupee + protect dwindling forex reserves** under pressure since **West Asia conflict (late February)**

- Rupee hit **historic low ₹94.81/\$ (≈4% fall)**, breaching ₹92, ₹93, ₹94 levels in **March**
- Indicates **heightened concern over currency volatility + external sector fragility**

What the Cap Does (Regulatory Change)

- Earlier: Banks allowed **Net Open Position (NOP) up to 25% of total capital**
- Now: RBI **tightened limits + directed unwinding of large currency positions by April 10**
- Intended impact:
 - **Temporary surge in dollar supply → support rupee**
 - Shift from **direct intervention (selling dollars)** to **regulatory tightening**
 - Aim: **Preserve forex reserves (“war chest”)**

Forex Reserves Trend

- Forex reserves **fell > \$30 billion to \$698.34 billion** since conflict
- Decline due to **RBI’s dollar sales to defend rupee**

FPI Exodus: Key Driver of Rupee Weakness

- **FPIs net sellers on every trading day in March**
- Causes:
 - Weak global equity markets
 - Continuous rupee depreciation
 - Fear of **declining Gulf remittances**
 - High crude oil prices affecting **growth + corporate earnings**

Why Banks Are Concerned

Implementation Challenges

- Immediate rollout → demand for **~3-month transition period**
- Risk of **abrupt adjustment of positions**

Risk of Losses

- Banks may need to unwind **\$11–15 billion exposure**
- Leads to **mark-to-market losses + reduced treasury profits (March quarter)**

Impact on Earnings

- Reduced **currency arbitrage opportunities (onshore vs offshore markets)**
- Decline in **trading income**

Broader Market Concerns

- Stricter domestic norms may **shift trading to offshore markets**
- Could:
 - Encourage **speculative bets against rupee**
 - Increase **currency volatility + depreciation pressure**

Policy Outlook: Possible RBI Measures

- If rupee weakness continues, RBI may:
 - Attract capital inflows
 - Tighten monetary policy (rate hikes)
 - Manage forex demand (import controls, etc.)

Lessons from Past Crises

- During **Global Financial Crisis & Taper Tantrum (Raghuram Rajan era)**:
 - **FCNR(B) scheme** → mobilised **>\$30 billion inflows**
 - **Dollar swap windows for oil companies**
 - **Repo rate hikes** → control inflation + boost investor confidence

FCNR(B) Account (Concept)

- **Foreign Currency Non-Resident (Bank) Account**
- Fixed deposit account for **NRIs/PIOs to hold foreign currency in India**

Other Policy/Regulatory Measures (Past)

- **Easing FPI & ECB norms**
- **Import restrictions (especially gold)**
- Outcome: **Improved reserves + rupee stabilisation**

Analytical Conclusion

- RBI's forex cap reflects a **shift from reserve depletion to regulatory management**
- However, **external vulnerabilities (oil prices + FPI outflows)** persist
- Effectiveness depends on **global conditions + capital flow dynamics**, not just domestic controls