



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 31-03-2026

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Zojila Pass

Syllabus: GS-1: Indian Geography – Mountain Passes – mapping.

Context:

Recently, a massive snow avalanche has hit the **Zojila Pass in Ladakh**.

About Zojila Pass

- Zojila Pass, also known as ‘**The Mountain Pass of Blizzards**’, is a high mountain pass located in the **Kargil district of Ladakh**.
- It is located on the **Srinagar–Kargil–Leh highway (NH-1)** at a height of **11,650 feet**.
- It lies in the **Greater Himalayan Range**.
- The pass remains **closed for almost half of the year due to heavy snowfall**.



History

- It was the site of the **Indo-Pakistan War of 1947–48**.
- It was captured by militias aided by the **Pakistan Army in 1948**, with the ultimate aim of capturing Ladakh.
- However, the pass itself was captured by the **Indian Army on 1st November 1948**, in an assault codenamed **Operation Bison**.

Avalanche – Concept

- It is a **large amount of snow that quickly moves down a slope**.
- It can be **deadly because it will bury or sweep away anything in its path**.
- Many different conditions make an avalanche possible.
- An avalanche is more likely to happen on a **slope without trees or large rocks**, as these help to keep snow in place.
- A **weak layer of snow also makes an avalanche likely**.

Relevance

- Important for **Geography (physical processes in Himalayas) + Disaster Management (avalanche hazards)**.
- Strategic significance due to location on **NH-1 (connectivity to Ladakh)** and role in **India-Pakistan conflict history**.

Earth Hour

Syllabus: Prelims Bits

Context:

- Recently, the **World Wildlife Fund (WWF) India**, in collaboration with the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change**, organised awareness and outreach activities in **Gwalior** to mark **20 years of Earth Hour**.

About Earth Hour

Nature & Objective

- It is a **global grassroots movement** uniting people to take action on environmental issues and protect the planet.
- It is organized by the **World Wildlife Fund (WWF)**.

Background

- Started in **Sydney, Australia (2007)** as a **symbolic lights-out event**.
- Has grown into a **global movement** involving millions of people in **190+ countries and territories**.

Timing

- Observed **towards the end of March every year**.

Participation & Key Features

- Encourages people to **switch off all lights for one hour (8:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. local time)** to promote awareness of **climate change challenges and energy conservation**.
- **Governments and companies** participate by turning off **non-essential lights** in buildings, monuments, and landmarks.
- The symbolic '**lights off**' moment:
 - Unites people worldwide in support for the planet.
 - Serves as a reminder of the **impact of energy consumption** and ongoing **environmental issues**.

Red Crowned Roofed Turtle

Syllabus: GS-3: Wildlife – Species in News.

Context:

- The Red-crowned Roofed Turtle, once a jewel of the Ganga, is now inhabiting a shrinking sanctuary.

About Red-crowned Roofed Turtle

- It is a species of freshwater turtle endemic to South Asia.
- It is one of the three large freshwater species in the genus *Batagur* found in India.

Distribution

- Native to India, Bangladesh, and Nepal.
- Historically widespread in the Ganga River, both in India and Bangladesh.
- Also occurs in the Brahmaputra basin.



Features of Red-crowned Roofed Turtle

- Males are shorter in comparison to females and reach only half their length.
- Reddish-orange coloured head with a black crown and a greenish-brown carapace (upper shell) with yellowish patterns.
- Plastron (lower shell) is yellow with black markings.
- Diet: Omnivorous; feeds on a variety of plants and animals.
- Functions as a bio-indicator of river health.
- Contributes to nutrient cycling within the river, essential for aquatic ecosystem health.

Conservation Status

- **IUCN:** Critically Endangered
- **CITES:** Appendix II
- **Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972:** Schedule I

RBI payment's Vision 2028

Syllabus: GS-3: Indian Economy – Payment System in India.

Context:

- The vision outlines a roadmap to strengthen and expand India's digital payments ecosystem.

Key Focus Areas of Payments Vision 2028

1. Cross-Border Reforms

- Exploring a single-window authorization process under PSS Act and FEMA to ease international payments.

2. TReDS Interoperability

- Trade Receivables Discounting System (TReDS) interoperability: Integration across platforms to boost MSMEs financing efficiency.

3. New Proposed Initiatives

- Proposed initiatives like "Switch On/Off" Facility, Payments Switching Service (PaSS), Uniform Domestic Legal Entity Identifier (DLEI), etc.

India's Digital Payments Ecosystem

1. Global Leadership

- India processes nearly 50% of global real-time digital payments.

2. Key Initiatives

(a) Core Infrastructure

- Introduced Real-Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) in 2004, National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT), Electronic Clearing Services (ECS), and Cheque Truncation System (CTS).

(b) Institutional Framework

- Creation of Department of Payment and Settlement Systems (DPSS) within RBI in 2005, and the establishment of National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) in 2008.

(c) Regulatory Backing

- Enactment of Payment and Settlement Systems (PSS) Act, 2007, giving RBI statutory authority to regulate payment systems.

(d) Transformative Platforms

- Unified Payments Interface (UPI), Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS), and acceleration of Aadhaar Enabled Payment Systems (AePS).

(e) Market Expansion

- Licensing and expansion of Prepaid Payment Instruments (PPIs), Trade Receivables Discounting System (TReDS) for MSME payments, and Master Direction on Payment Aggregators.

Analytical Note

- Focus on interoperability, regulatory simplification, and innovation indicates a shift from expansion → optimization of digital payments ecosystem, with emphasis on global integration and MSME financing.

Production and Availability of Oilseeds and Pulses in the Country

Syllabus: GS-3: Indian Agriculture – Oil Seeds.

Context:

- Oilseeds, grown for their high oil content, provide edible oils essential for cooking and non-edible oils used in industrial applications.

Significance of Oilseeds

- **Economic Backbone:** Second-largest agricultural segment after food grains; occupies 14.3% of gross cropped area.
- **Nutritional Security:** Provides 12–13% of dietary energy and essential fats, contributing significantly to balanced diets; per capita consumption of edible oils increased from 9.85 kg (1996–2006) to 20.3 kg (2022–23).
- **Addressing Hidden Hunger:** Rich in fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, K), helps address micronutrient deficiencies and malnutrition.
- **Farmers' Livelihoods:** Important cash crops grown largely in rainfed areas, supporting income diversification and sustaining millions of small & marginal farmers.
- **Production Status:** India is fourth largest producer of oilseeds; ranks first in castor, sesame, safflower, niger; second in groundnut; third in rapeseed-mustard.

Issues in Oilseeds Sector

- **Low Productivity:** India contributes only 6–7% of global vegetable oil production due to low productivity.
- **Yield Gaps:** Due to low adoption of high-yielding varieties (HYVs) and inadequate seed replacement rates (SRR).
- **Import Dependence:** Imports 56% of edible oil needs (15.66 MMT in 2023–24), exposing India to global price volatility and supply disruptions.

Recommendations to Increase Oilseeds Production

- **Strengthen PM-AASHA:** Expand MSP procurement to cover 100% of national oilseeds production (from 25% at present).
- **Boost NMEO-OP:** Fast-track National Mission on Edible Oils – Oil Palm; provide adequate Viability Gap Payments (VGP) for Fresh Fruit Bunches (FFBs) and subsidize planting material costs up to 80%.
- **Promote Biotechnology:** Invest in CRISPR-Cas9, Marker-Assisted Selection (MAS) to develop climate-resilient, high-yielding, pest-resistant varieties.
- **Seed Infrastructure:** Establish at least one Seed Hub in every district by 2030; expand SATHI portal to cover all 36 States/UTs by 2027.

Conclusion

- Oilseeds sector is critical for nutritional security, import substitution, and farmer income; addressing productivity gaps and strengthening institutional support is essential for achieving self-reliance in edible oils.