

5. Short News

Thirumangai Alvar Bronze Sculpture

Context- In March 2026, the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, returned a 16th-century bronze idol of Thirumangai Alvar to India after provenance research confirmed its origin in a Tamil Nadu temple.

About Thirumangai Alvar Bronze Sculpture

1. The sculpture is a 16th-century Chola-style bronze idol representing the Vaishnavite saint Thirumangai Alvar, originally worshipped in Soundararaja Perumal Temple, Tamil Nadu.
 1. It was returned to India to restore its religious and cultural significance as a temple icon.
2. Origin- Archival photographs from 1957 preserved at the Institut Français de Pondichéry and École française d'Extrême-Orient (IFP-EFEO) confirmed the sculpture's original location.
 1. The statue had been acquired by the Ashmolean Museum in 1967 through the private collection of J.R. Belmont.
3. Features
 1. Material- Cast in bronze using the traditional lost-wax (cire perdue) technique common in South Indian temple art.
 2. Posture- Typically depicts the saint standing in devotional posture, often with folded hands or symbolic attributes.
 3. Iconography- Shows ornaments, traditional attire, and expressive facial features typical of medieval Tamil Vaishnavite sculptures.
 4. Religious Role- Used as a processional deity (utsava murti) during temple festivals and rituals.

About Thirumangai Alvar

1. Thirumangai Alvar was one of the twelve Alvars, Tamil poet-saints devoted to Vishnu in the Sri Vaishnavism tradition.
2. Early Life- Believed to have lived between the 8th–9th centuries CE in Tamil Nadu.
 1. Initially a local chieftain or warrior, he later transformed into a devout saint after embracing Vaishnavite devotion.
3. Contributions- Authored several hymns included in the Nalayira Divya Prabandham, the sacred Tamil devotional canon of Vaishnavism.
 1. His poetry celebrates Vishnu temples (Divya Desams) across South India.
4. Significance- Played a key role in popularising Bhakti (devotional) traditions in Tamil society.

Claude Ai System

Context- The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) has entered a public dispute with AI company Anthropic, developer of the Claude AI system.

1. The DoD warned it could label Anthropic a “supply chain risk,” which may discourage companies working with the U.S. government from using Anthropic’s products.

About Claude

1. Claude is an advanced Artificial Intelligence (AI) chatbot developed by the company Anthropic.
2. It is based on Large Language Models (LLMs) and is designed to assist users in tasks such as text generation, coding, analysis, and problem-solving.

Key Features

1. AI Coding Assistance- Through its tool Claude Code, it helps developers create, edit, and optimise software code.
2. Large Language Model Based- Uses powerful LLMs to understand and generate human-like text and programming instructions.
3. Tool Development- Can assist in building and modifying software tools when connected to relevant software libraries.
4. Applications in Organisations- Used by companies and institutions for automation, research, and software development tasks.

Advantages

1. Highly capable in automating coding tasks and software development.
2. Allows users to generate, refine, and iterate complex code efficiently.

Applications

1. Software Development- Automates coding tasks, debugging, and documentation.
2. Research and Data Analysis- Assists researchers in analysing reports, summarising literature, and generating insights.
3. Enterprise and Business Use- Used for customer support, workflow automation, and knowledge management.
4. Defence and High-Technology Sectors- AI tools like Claude can potentially help in rapid software iteration for complex technological systems, though such use involves strict security considerations.

Total Lunar Eclipse

Context- On 3 March 2026, a Total Lunar Eclipse was visible across India and several regions worldwide, as confirmed by the India Meteorological Department.

About lunar eclipse

1. A lunar eclipse occurs when the Lunar Eclipse happens during a full moon, when the Sun, Earth, and Moon align in a straight line (syzygy).
 1. In this alignment, Earth comes between the Sun and the Moon, casting its shadow on the Moon and blocking direct sunlight.
2. Earth's shadow has two parts-
 1. Umbra- Dark inner region where sunlight is completely blocked.
 2. Penumbra- Outer region where sunlight is partially blocked.
3. When the Moon passes through these shadow regions, different types of lunar eclipses occur.

Types of Lunar Eclipses

1. Penumbral Lunar Eclipse- Occurs when the Moon passes only through Earth's penumbra, causing a faint dimming that is often difficult to observe with the naked eye.
2. Partial Lunar Eclipse- Occurs when only a part of the Moon enters the umbra, leading to a visible dark shadow covering a portion of the lunar surface.
3. Total Lunar Eclipse- Occurs when the entire Moon passes into Earth's umbra, producing a dramatic darkening and often turning the Moon reddish, popularly known as a Blood Moon.

Significance

1. Astronomical Importance- Helps scientists study Earth's atmosphere and light scattering effects.
2. Observation Safety- Unlike solar eclipses, lunar eclipses are safe to observe with the naked eye.

3. Blood Moon Phenomenon- The reddish colour occurs due to Rayleigh Scattering, where Earth's atmosphere scatters shorter blue wavelengths while bending longer red wavelengths toward the Moon.
4. Educational Value- Provides an opportunity for public engagement and awareness about celestial mechanics and Earth-Moon-Sun alignment.

Mod Inks ₹5,083 Crore Defence Contracts

Context- The Ministry of Defence signed contracts for Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH) Mk-III (Indian Coast Guard) and Shtil missiles (Indian Navy).

ALH Mk-III (Maritime Role)

1. Acquisition- Contract worth ₹2,901 crore with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) under the Buy (Indian-Indigenously Designed Developed and Manufactured) category.
2. Features -
 1. An advanced twin-engine, multi-role, new-generation helicopter
 2. Capable of missions from both shore-based airfields and ships at sea.
3. Significance-
 1. Enhances Indian Coast Guard (ICG) capabilities in protecting artificial islands, offshore installations, and the marine environment.
 2. Reinforces commitment to *Aatmanirbhar Bharat* and the *Make-in-India* initiative.

Vertical Launch – Shtil Missiles

1. It is a naval, ship-based medium-range air defence system.
2. It is derived from the Buk Missile System family
3. Origin- Valued at Rs 2,182 crore; signed with JSC Rosoboronexport, Russian Federation.
4. Features- Surface-to-Air Vertical Launch
5. Importance-
 1. Strengthen the layered air defence architecture of the Indian Navy's frontline warships.
 2. Provides a rapid-reaction, all-weather engagement capability against diverse aerial threats.