

JANUARY  
2026



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## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE



### INDEX

- IMPORTANT DAYS
- APPOINTMENTS
- BOOKS AND AUTHOR
- MILITARY EXERCISES AND DEFENCE NEWS
- SPORTS AND GAMES
- NATIONAL NEWS
- INTERNATIONAL NEWS
- SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
- INDEX AND REPORTS
- MISCELLANEOUS FACTS




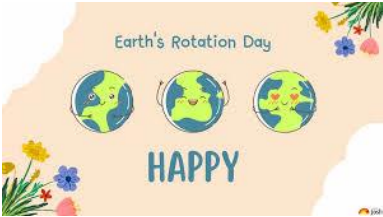


## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

### IMPORTANT DAYS

DAY	CELEBRATED AS	SIGNIFICANCE
Jan 3	<b>Savitribai Phule Jayanti</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Savitribai Phule Jayanti, honoring the birth anniversary of India's first woman teacher and a pioneer of women's education</li> </ul>
Jan 4	World Braille Day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marks the birth of Louis Braille; highlights Braille as a human right for the visually impaired</li> <li>It serves as a reminder to promote inclusivity, with organizations and schools globally using the day to promote Braille literacy.</li> <li><b>Bridging Accessibility in a Digital-First World</b></li> <li><b>Theme "Bridging Accessibility in a Digital-First World"</b></li> </ul>
Jan 5	National Birds Day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Bird Day is celebrated to raise awareness of the value of tiny tweets in the ecosystem. The Avian Welfare Coalition, which works hard to promote awareness for birds that are captured or produced in captivity for either financial gain or for human amusement, is behind this initiative.</li> <li><b>Theme "A Bird in Flight is Poetry in Motion"</b>. This theme highlights the grace of birds in their natural state while advocating against the captivity and illegal trade of wild birds. The day emphasizes conservation, habitat protection, and the right of birds to fly freely.</li> </ul>
Jan 6	<b>Guru Gobind Singh Jayanti</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is celebrated as the birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh and this year it falls on January 06. He was the tenth Guru out of a total of ten Sikh Gurus.</li> <li>On 22 December 1666, he was born in Patna, Bihar as per the Julian calendar.</li> </ul>



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

		
<p>Jan 8</p>	<p>Earth Rotation Day</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every year, January 8 is recognized as Earth Rotation Day. This day marks the anniversary of French physicist Leon Foucault's 1851 proof that the Earth revolves on its axis.</li> </ul>
<p>Jan 9</p>	<p>Pravasi Bharatiya Divas</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commemorates Mahatma Gandhi's return from South Africa (1915). Honors the Indian Diaspora's contribution.</li> </ul>
<p>Jan 11</p>	<p>National Human Trafficking Awareness Day</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is observed on 11 January to spread awareness about the persistent issue of human trafficking. This day aims is to raise awareness about the plight of human trafficking victims, as well as to promote and protect their rights.</li> <li>• <b>Theme-Stronger Connections, Stronger Futures</b></li> </ul>



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

<p>Jan 12</p>	<p><b>National Youth Day</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Theme: "Ignite the Self, Impact the World"</b></li> <li>• Significance: Encourages discussion on youth issues, leadership, and social participation.</li> <li>• Who announced: Government of India (in memory of Swami Vivekananda).</li> </ul>
<p>Jan 13</p>	<p><b>Lohri Festival</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lohri is the first festival of the year which marks the beginning of the harvest season. It is celebrated with full enthusiasm in northern India, mainly Punjab, and Haryana.</li> <li>• Lohri festival is celebrated on 13 or 14 January by lighting up a bonfire and dancing around it with friends and relatives. Wheat stalk, rice, rewri, jaggery, and popcorn are offered by the people at the bonfire.</li> </ul>
<p>Jan 14</p>	<p><b>Makar Sankranti</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This year it will be celebrated on 14 January and marks the termination of the winter season and the beginning of a new harvest season.</li> </ul>
<p>Jan 14</p>	<p><b>Pongal Festival</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One of the most popular festivals in India is Pongal and is celebrated widely by the Tamil community across the globe.</li> <li>• As per the Tamil solar calendar, Pongal is celebrated in Tai month. It is a four-day event that is dedicated to the Sun God. It is a four-day festival.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every year 15 January is observed as Indian Army Day</li> </ul>


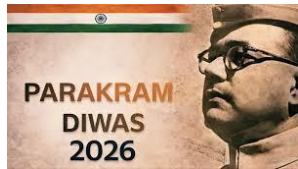




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<p>Jan 15</p>	<p>Indian Army Day</p> 	<p>because on this day in 1949 field Marshal Kodandera M Cariappa took over as the first Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army from General Sir Francis Butcher, the last British Commander-in-Chief.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Theme</b> for the 78th Indian Army Day in 2026 is "<b>Year of Networking and Data Centricity</b>"</li> </ul>
<p>Jan 16</p>	<p>National Startup Day</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared January 16 as National Startup Day in the year 2021. Since then various programs and events are organized by government and non-government organizations to applaud and promote the Indian startup ecosystem.</li> <li>• <b>Theme</b> of a "<b>Decade of Impact</b>" and "<b>A Decade of Startup India</b>"</li> </ul>
<p>Jan 19</p>	<p><b>Kokborok Day</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On January 19th, the Indian State of Tripura observes Kokborok Day, also known as Tripuri Language Day, to foster the Kokborok language. This day honours the year 1979 when Kokborok became officially recognized for the first time.</li> <li>• It serves to promote, develop, and preserve the native language of the Tripuri people, which is a Tibeto-Burman language.</li> </ul>
<p>Jan 19</p>	<p>Martin Luther King Jr Day</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Martin Luther King Jr Day is a federal holiday in the United States that takes place on the third Monday in January. It honors the life and legacy of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.</li> </ul>
<p>Jan 21</p>	<p>Tripura, Manipur, and Meghalaya Foundation Day</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On 21 January 1972, the states of Tripura, Manipur, and Meghalaya became full-fledged states under the North Eastern Region (Re-organisation) Act, of 1971. Therefore, Tripura, Manipur, and Meghalaya celebrate their Statehood Day on 21 January.</li> <li>• <b>Themes</b> of "<b>Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat</b>" (<b>One</b></li> </ul>



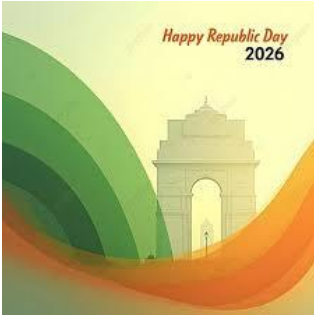


## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

		<p><b>India, Great India), unity in diversity, and the cultural heritage of the Northeast.</b></p>
Jan 23	<p>Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Jayanti (<b>Prakaram Diwas</b>)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose was born on 23 January 1897 in Cuttack, Orissa. He was one of the most prominent Indian freedom fighters. His army was known as Indian National Army (INA) or Azad Hind Fauj. He also led an Indian national force from abroad against the Western powers during World War II.</li> <li>• Since 2021, Netaji's birthday is celebrated as the "<b>Day of Courage</b>" to inspire patriotism in the youth.</li> </ul>
Jan 24	<p>National Girl Child Day</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On 24 January every year, National Girl Child Day is celebrated to highlight the inequalities faced by a majority of the girls in India, the importance of education, nutrition, legal rights, medical care and safety of girl children, etc.</li> <li>• Initiated by the Ministry of Women and Child Development. Focuses on inequalities faced by girls and their rights</li> <li>• <b>Theme-Protection and Rights of the Girl Child</b></li> </ul>
Jan 24	<p>International Day of Education</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International Day of Education is observed on 24 January every year to support transformative actions for inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all.</li> <li>• <b>Theme: "The power of youth in co-creating education.</b> UNESCO has focused the 2026 theme on the role of youth as active participants in designing the future of learning environments. The power of youth in co-creating education" Announced by UNESCO. Recognizes education as a fundamental human right and a driver for peace</li> </ul>
Jan 25	<p>National Voters Day</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every year on 25 January National Voter's Day or Rashtriya Matdata Diwas is celebrated to encourage</li> </ul>






## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

		<p>young voters to participate in the political process. In 2011 the first time this day was celebrated to mark Election Commission's Foundation Day.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>My India, My Vote</b> Announced by the Election Commission of India. Encourages electoral participation among young voters</li> </ul>
<p>Jan 25</p>	<p>National Tourism Day</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every year on 25 January National Tourism Day is celebrated in India to raise awareness and educate people about the importance of tourism and the role it plays in the Indian economy.</li> <li>• Established By: The Indian Government, specifically the Ministry of Tourism.</li> <li>• <b>Theme</b> - National Tourism Day 2026 will encourage both domestic and international tourists to embrace mindful travel and contribute positively to the places they visit, preserving both the environment and cultural heritage.</li> </ul>
<p>Jan 26</p>	<p>Republic Day</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On 26 November, 1949 the Indian Constituent Assembly adopted the Constitution the supreme law of the land and replaced the Government of India Act 1935. It came into effect on 26 January 1950 with a democratic government system. This day marks the largest parade that took place at Rajpath, Delhi every year.</li> <li>• The theme for the 2026 parade specifically pays tribute to the 150th anniversary of the national song, Vande Mataram, written by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay. Chief Guests for the parade are Antonio Costa (President of the European Council) and Ursula von der Leyen (President of the European Commission).</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International Customs Day (ICD) is celebrated every</li> </ul>







## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

<p>Jan 26</p>	<p>International Customs Day</p> 	<p>year on 26 January by Customs Organisation to recognize the role of customs officials and agencies in maintaining border security. It also focuses on the working conditions and challenges that customs officers face in their jobs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Theme "Customs protecting society through vigilance and commitment"</b></li> <li>• Who announced: World Customs Organization.</li> </ul>
<p>Jan 27</p>	<p>National Geographic Day</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every year on January 27, National Geographic Day is observed all across the country. It is a day set aside to honour the "National Geographic Magazine," which has been published continuously for more than a century.</li> <li>• <b>Theme- exploration, geography, science, wildlife, and environmental conservation</b></li> </ul>
<p>Jan 28</p>	<p>Birth Anniversary of Lala Lajpat Rai</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lala Lajpat Rai was born on 28 January, 1865 in Punjab. He was a prominent nationalist leader who played an important role in India's struggle for freedom.</li> <li>• He also earned the title of '<b>Punjab Kesari</b>' or '<b>the Lion of Punjab</b>'.</li> <li>• He initiated the foundation of the Punjab National Bank. He died on 17 November 1928, due to serious injuries.</li> <li>• The University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences in Hisar, Haryana is named after Lala Lajpat Rai.</li> </ul>
<p>Jan 28</p>	<p>K.M Cariappa Jayanti</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 28 January in Indian and World History is celebrated, observed, and remembered for various reasons, and one of them is the birth anniversary of Kodandera Madappa Cariappa.</li> <li>• He was the first Commander-in-chief of the Indian Army. And today we are commemorating his 124th birth anniversary.</li> </ul>





## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

		
<p>Jan 28</p>	<p>Data Privacy Day</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What it is: Annual awareness day on data protection &amp; privacy.</li> <li>• <b>Theme: Take control of your data</b></li> <li>• Significance: Encourages individuals/organisations to safeguard personal information.</li> <li>• It was Initiated by Council of Europe; recognised in multiple countries.</li> </ul>
<p>Jan 29</p>	<p>Indian Newspaper Day</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A day set aside to honour the beginning of newspapers in India is known as Indian Newspaper Day. This day is intended to raise awareness of Indian newspapers. Indian Newspaper Day, which is observed on January 29th each year, is today. However, there is no theme to observe this important occasion.</li> <li>• <b>Theme-Role of Print Media in the Digital Age</b></li> </ul>
<p>Jan 30</p>	<p>Martyrs Day or Shaheed Diwas</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 30 January is celebrated as Martyr's Day or Shaheed Diwas every year in memory of Mahatma Gandhi and the sacrifice of three revolutionaries of India. As, of 30 January 1948, the 'Father of Nation' was assassinated. And on 23rd March 3 heroes namely Bhagat Singh, Shivaram Rajguru, and Sukhdev Thapar of the nation were hanged to death by the British.</li> <li>• Martyrs' Day (Shaheed Diwas) is officially recognized by the <b>Government of India</b> to honor freedom fighters</li> <li>• <b>Themes include "Gandhism: A Voice of Humanity Amid Hatred"</b></li> </ul>



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

<p>Jan 30</p>	<p>World Leprosy Day</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>World Leprosy Day is observed on the last Sunday of January to focus on the target of zero cases of leprosy-related disabilities in children. As we know disabilities do not occur overnight but happen after a prolonged period of undiagnosed disease.</li> <li>World Leprosy Day was established in 1954 by French philanthropist and author Raoul Follereau to raise global awareness of the disease and combat the stigma associated with it. It is observed annually on the last Sunday of January, with the 2026 observation falling on January 25.</li> <li><b>Theme: "Leprosy is curable; the real challenge is stigma".</b></li> </ul>
<p>Jan 31</p>	<p>International Zebra Day</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>International Zebra Day, celebrated annually on <b>January 31st</b>, aims to raise awareness about the conservation of zebras and their habitats.</li> <li>The day focuses on addressing threats like habitat loss, poaching, and climate change, particularly for endangered species like the Grévy's zebra.</li> <li>The purpose of the day is to spread knowledge about how you can support the conservation of this animal.</li> </ul>

## AWARDS

### 1. Sukhatme National Award in Statistics

What it is

- The Sukhatme National Award in Statistics is a prestigious Indian award given to outstanding statisticians for significant contributions to the field of statistics

#### Purpose

- To recognize and honour excellence in statistical research, application, teaching, and methodology that advances knowledge and practice in statistics.



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

### Named After

- It is named in honour of Dr. P.V. Sukhatme, a distinguished Indian statistician renowned for his contributions to biometrics, survey sampling and agricultural statistics. He played a pivotal role in shaping modern statistical practice in India.

### Award Components

- The award typically includes a citation, trophy/medal, and a cash prize (amount may vary as per government notification).
- It is conferred by the Government of India through relevant scientific/statistical bodies.

### Eligibility & Selection

- Open to Indian statisticians - typically researchers, academicians, or practitioners with outstanding published work or impactful contributions.
- Selection is done by a committee of experts based on merit and contribution to statistical science.

### Significance

- Encourages high-quality research and innovation in statistics.
- Highlights the role of statistics in policy design, planning, data analysis, official statistics, and decision-making across sectors.

Promotes statistical education and professional excellence among young researchers and practitioners.

### 2. Indira Gandhi Peace Prize for 2025

- The award has been conferred upon **Graça Machel**, a globally respected **Mozambican human rights activist, humanitarian leader, and advocate for women and children**.
- She is internationally recognised for her **lifelong commitment to social justice and human development**, particularly in developing and conflict-affected regions.



### Areas of Contribution

- **Education:** Championed access to quality education for children, especially girls, in Africa and other developing regions.
- **Healthcare & Nutrition:** Worked extensively on child health, maternal care, and nutrition security, addressing long-term developmental challenges.
- **Women's Empowerment:** A leading global voice for women's rights, gender equality, and female leadership.



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

- **Humanitarian Support:** Actively involved in peacebuilding, post-conflict rehabilitation, and protection of vulnerable communities.
- The honour acknowledges her **sustained, multi-impact** rather than a single achievement.
- Highlights the importance of **human-centric development**, linking education, health, and equity as pillars of sustainable growth.
- Reinforces global recognition of **African leadership humanitarian and social reform efforts.**



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### 3. First Indian to Receive Rare Samurai Martial Arts Honour

Pawan Kalyan, the **current Deputy Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh**, has become the **first Indian** to receive a **rare Samurai martial arts honour** from Japan.

About the Honour

- The recognition has been conferred for excellence and dedication in **Kenjutsu**, a traditional **Japanese Samurai sword martial art**.
- **Kenjutsu** is one of the oldest martial disciplines of Japan, forming the foundation of later sword arts such as Kendo.
- The art emphasises **discipline, precision, mental focus, and warrior ethics (Bushidō)**.
- Marks the **first time an Indian** has been formally recognised in this rare Samurai martial tradition.
- Reflects **cross-cultural respect and exchange** between India and Japan in traditional martial arts.
- Highlights India's growing soft power and cultural connections beyond conventional diplomacy.
- Adds a unique cultural dimension to the public profile of an Indian political leader.

### 4. PADMA AWARDS 2026

The Padma Awards 2026 were announced by the Ministry of Home Affairs, with President Droupadi Murmu approving 131 civilian honours across three categories - Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan, and Padma Shri - to recognise distinguished service and exceptional contributions in various fields.

#### What Are the Padma Awards?

The **Padma Awards** are among the highest civilian honours in India, conferred to recognise **exceptional and distinguished service** in various fields of human endeavour. They are awarded annually on the occasion of **Republic Day** (26 January).



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

### Categories

There are **three categories**, in descending order of prestige:

1. **Padma Vibhushan** – For *exceptional and distinguished service*
2. **Padma Bhushan** – For *distinguished service of high order*
3. **Padma Shri** – For *distinguished service in any field*

The only civilian honour higher than these is the **Bharat Ratna**. The awards are not titles and cannot be used as prefixes or suffixes.

### Selection Process

- Nominations are invited from the *public*, central and state governments, previous awardees, and institutions; self-nominations are also permitted.
- A **Padma Awards Committee**, appointed annually by the **Prime Minister** and chaired by the **Cabinet Secretary**, screens and recommends names.
- Final approval is given by the **President of India**.
- The list is usually announced on the **eve of Republic Day** (25 January).
- The awards are *conferred* in a formal ceremony at **Rashtrapati Bhavan** later (typically in March/April).
- Awardees receive a **Sanad (certificate)** and a **medallion**.

### Padma Awards 2026 — Key Facts

- **Total awards approved: 131**
- **Breakup:**
  1. 5 **Padma Vibhushan**
  2. 13 **Padma Bhushan**
  3. 113 **Padma Shri**
- There are **19 women** awardees, **6 foreigners/NRI/OCI/PIO**, and **16 posthumous** honours.
- Includes **2 duo recognitions** (counted as one each).

### Padma Vibhushan Awardees 2026

(The second-highest civilian honour)

1. **Dharmendra Singh Deol (Posthumous)** – *Art* (Bollywood cinema legend known for his iconic contribution to Indian film)
2. **K. T. Thomas** – *Public Affairs* (Veteran jurist and public figure)
3. **N. Rajam** – *Art* (Renowned violinist and classical musician)
4. **P. Narayanan** – *Literature & Education* (Scholar and educator from Kerala)
5. **V. S. Achuthanandhan (Posthumous)** – *Public Affairs* (Veteran political leader and social activist)



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

**Significance:** These recipients represent *exceptional lifetime contributions* to national life in arts, education, and public service.

### Padma Bhushan Awardees 2026

(Third-highest civilian honour)

1. **Alka Yagnik** – Art (Legendary playback singer)
2. **Bhagat Singh Koshyari** – Public Affairs (Former Governor and administrator)
3. **K. R. Palaniswamy** – Medicine (Distinguished gastroenterologist)
4. **Mammootty** – Art (Veteran Malayalam cinema actor)
5. **Dr. Nori Dattatreyyudu** – Medicine (Eminent medical professional in the USA)
6. **Piyush Pandey (Posthumous)** – Art (Advertising legend and cultural influencer)
7. **S. K. M. Maeilanandhan** – Social Work (Philanthropist and rural development leader)
8. **Shatavadhani R. Ganesh** – Art (Scholar of classical arts and literature)
9. **Shibu Soren (Posthumous)** – Public Affairs (Veteran political figure)
10. **Uday Kotak** – Trade & Industry (Banker and industrial leader)
11. **V. K. Malhotra (Posthumous)** – Public Affairs
12. **Vellappally Natesan** – Public Affairs
13. **Vijay Amritraj** – Sports (Tennis legend from the USA)

**Significance:** Padma Bhushan honours those whose work has had a *broad and distinguished impact* nationally and globally.

### Padma Shri Awardees 2026

(Fourth-highest civilian honour)

There are **113 Padma Shri awardees**, recognising *notable and distinguished service* across fields such as:

- **Science & Engineering** (e.g., A E Muthunayagam, Kerala)
- **Art & Culture** (e.g., Anil Kumar Rastogi, Uttar Pradesh)
- **Social Work** (e.g., Anke Gowda M., Karnataka)
- **Sports** (e.g., R. Madhavan received Padma Shri — actor and social contributor)
- **Public Affairs, Literature & Education, Medicine, etc.**

These include a mix of highly accomplished professionals, grassroots contributors, innovators, and cultural figures.

### Overall Significance of Padma Awards

- Celebrate *national excellence* in broad domains — arts, science, education, public service, sports, medicine, literature, and more.
- Encourage citizens and residents to contribute meaningfully to society beyond personal achievement.
- Reflect India's evolving recognition of *unsung heroes* alongside renowned figures.



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

### Categories of Gallantry Awards

#### 1. Wartime Gallantry Awards

These are awarded for exceptional bravery in the presence of the enemy during war or war-like situations:

- Param Vir Chakra (PVC): India's highest wartime gallantry award.
- Maha Vir Chakra (MVC): Second in precedence.
- Vir Chakra (VrC): Third in precedence.

#### 2. Peacetime Gallantry Awards

These recognize bravery outside formal war, including anti-terrorism operations, internal security duties, and rescue operations:

- Ashoka Chakra (AC): Highest peacetime gallantry award.
- Kirti Chakra (KC): Second highest.
- Shaurya Chakra (SC): Third highest.

#### 3. Distinguished Service Decorations

These include awards like Param Vishisht Seva Medal, Ati Vishisht Seva Medal and Vishisht Seva Medal for distinguished service of varying orders, but these are separate from gallantry awards (though often mentioned in the broader honours list).

### Recent Announcements & Significance

The Gallantry Awards 2025/26 were conferred by the President of India on Republic Day — the traditional occasion for such announcements — to honour personnel for bravery in diverse theatres like operations in Jammu & Kashmir, counter-terrorism actions, and border engagements.

Recipients include army and paramilitary troops, and occasionally civilians, for acts such as rescue during terrorist attacks, valorous firefights with armed militants, and life-risking conduct during operational deployments. These awards serve both to publicly acknowledge extraordinary courage and to inspire morale and professionalism within the security services.

### Award Process & Ceremonial Aspects

- Recommendations originate from service headquarters and are vetted by committees before approval by the President of India as the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces.
- Awards are announced on Republic Day (26 Jan) and Independence Day (15 Aug), and presented at investiture ceremonies by the President at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

### Importance in National Narrative

Gallantry awards symbolize national gratitude and recognition of sacrifice. They underline the Indian state's respect for those who confront extreme danger in service of protecting citizens, territorial integrity, and democratic values.



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

### Key Gallantry Medals Announced

1. **Ashoka Chakra** – India’s highest peacetime gallantry award

- **Recipient (2026): Astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla**
- Awarded for **most conspicuous bravery or supreme sacrifice** outside the battlefield.



2. **Kirti Chakra** (3 recipients)

- Second-highest peacetime gallantry honour, awarded for **conspicuous gallantry** not in the face of the enemy.

3. **Shaurya Chakra** (13 recipients, including one posthumous)

- Third-highest peacetime gallantry decoration, for **acts of valour or self-sacrifice** away from direct combat.

4. **Bar to Sena Medal (Gallantry)** – 1 instance (indicating a **subsequent gallantry award**)

5. **Sena Medal (Gallantry)** – 44 recipients (including *five posthumous*)

6. **Nao Sena Medal (Gallantry)** – 6 recipients

7. **Vayu Sena Medal (Gallantry)** – 2 recipients



### How Gallantry Awards Are Selected and Presented

- Gallantry awards are recommended through military channels based on **verified acts of bravery** involving to life.
- Recommendations are scrutinised by service headquarters, then by a central committee.
- Final approvals are made by the **President of India**.
- Announcements are made on Republic Day eve, and medals are *presented in ceremonies* often accompanying Republic Day celebrations.

### BOOKS AND AUTHOR:

#### 1. Biography of Droupadi Murmu

The biography traces the **life journey of India’s first tribal woman President**, from humble beginnings in Odisha to the highest constitutional office.

#### Released by

The book’s launch by a **sanitation worker at Andhra University** deliberately foregrounded the dignity of labour and social equality.



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

### Significance

- The launch symbolism reinforced the constitutional ideals of **equality, social justice, and inclusion**.
- It aligns with India's democratic narrative of upward mobility and representation of marginalised communities.

### 2. "The One: Cricket, My Life and More" – Shikhar Dhawan

A candid account of Dhawan's **personal struggles, international cricket career, and mental resilience**.

### Released by

Authored and released by Shikhar Dhawan himself.

### Significance

- Goes beyond statistics to explore **athlete mental health**, pressure, failures, and recovery.
- Reflects the changing discourse around **sports psychology and post-retirement identity**.

### 3. Sahitya Akademi – Hindi Translation of "The Last Day"

Promotes **linguistic inclusivity and cross-language literary exchange**.

### Released by

Sahitya Akademi.

### Significance

- Supports India's multilingual literary ecosystem.

### 4. "History That India Ignored" (Second Edition)

Attempts to **revisit overlooked or marginalised narratives** in Indian history.

### Released by

Launched by Pramod Sawant.

### Significance

- Raises questions on **colonial historiography vs indigenous perspectives**.

### 5. "The Lonely Lions"

Explores the **psychological and structural struggles of Indian entrepreneurs**.

### Released by

Launched on **National Startup Day**.

### Elaboration & Significance

- Humanises the startup ecosystem beyond success stories.
- Highlights MSME challenges, innovation stress, and policy gaps.

### 6. "Sanatan Sanskriti Ki Atal Drishti"

Presents the **cultural and civilisational worldview of Atal Bihari Vajpayee**.

### Released by

Released by the Vice-President of India.



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

### Significance

- Connects political leadership with **Indian civilisational ethos**.

### 7. "Palanivelu GUTS" (Hindi Edition)

A **leadership and resilience narrative**, translated into Hindi.

### Released by

Released by the Vice-President of India.

### Significance

- Highlights the role of **translation in democratising knowledge**.
- Supports India's multilingual and inclusive cultural framework.



### PERSONALITIES:

#### 1. Madhav Gadgil

**Madhav Dhonddev Gadgil** is one of India's most influential ecologists and environmental thinkers, widely regarded as a pioneer of **ecology-based conservation** and **people-centric environmental governance** in India.

#### Early Life & Education

- **Born:** 24 April 1942
- **Education:**
  1. B.Sc. (Zoology) – University of Poona
  2. PhD in Biology – Harvard University
- Trained as a theoretical ecologist with strong grounding in evolutionary biology.

#### Academic & Professional Career

- Founder Director of the **Centre for Ecological Sciences (CES)** at the **Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru**.
- Former member of the **Scientific Advisory Council to the Prime Minister of India**.
- Served on several national and international environmental committees and biodiversity panels.

#### Major Contributions

1. **Community-Based Conservation**
  - Strong advocate of involving **local communities and indigenous knowledge** in conservation.
  - Criticised top-down, exclusionary conservation models.
2. **Biodiversity Research**
  - Conducted extensive work on **ecology, biodiversity, conservation biology, and human–nature interactions**.
  - Co-authored the landmark book *"Ecology and Equity"*.



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

### 3. Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP)

- Chaired the **Gadgil Committee (2010)** on conservation of the **Western Ghats**.
- Recommended classifying the Western Ghats into **Ecologically Sensitive Zones (ESZs)** with graded restrictions on mining, dams, and large-scale development.
- Emphasised **decentralised decision-making** and sustainability.

#### Gadgil Committee vs Kasturirangan Committee

- Gadgil Report:
  - Strong environmental safeguards
  - Local governance-led conservation
- Kasturirangan Report:
  - Diluted ecological restrictions
  - Favoured development-centric approach
- The dilution sparked debates on **environment vs development**, still relevant in policy discussions.

#### Awards & Recognition

- **Padma Shri (1981)** – for contributions to ecology
- **Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement (2024)** – often called the “Nobel Prize for Environment”
- Fellow of the Indian Academy of Sciences and other global scientific bodies.
- Believes environmental protection must align with **social justice and equity**.
- Argues that ecological degradation disproportionately affects the poor.
- Vocal critic of unsustainable infrastructure projects in ecologically fragile regions.

#### Significance

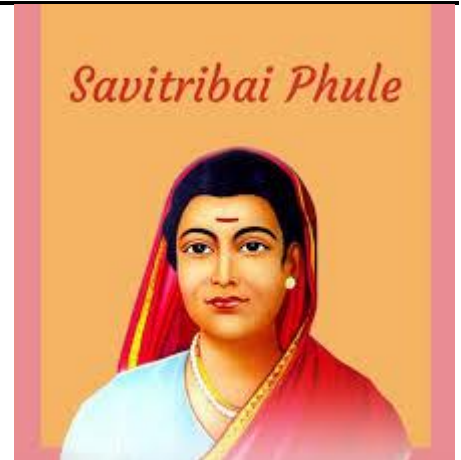
- Shaped India’s modern environmental discourse.
- Influenced policies on biodiversity, forest rights, and sustainable development.
- Continues to inspire debates on climate change, conservation, and federal environmental governance.

### 2. Savitribai Phule



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

**Savitribai Phule** (3 January 1831 – 10 March 1897) was a pioneering **Indian educator, social reformer, feminist and poet**, widely recognised as *India's first female teacher* and a key force in championing women's education and social equality during the 19th century. Born in **Naigaon, Satara (Maharashtra)**, she defied entrenched caste and gender norms to transform the landscape of education and social reform in British India. Phule's educational journey began after her husband, **Jyotirao Phule**, taught her to read and write -a bold step given the era's widespread resistance to women's education. Together, they founded the **first girls' school in Pune in 1848**, offering education to girls and children from marginalised communities irrespective of caste or social standing. Through these efforts, she laid the foundation for women's education long before formal state-sponsored systems existed.



- Beyond schooling, Savitribai Phule was a **relentless advocate for social reform**. She campaigned against **child marriage, caste discrimination, the Sati practice**, and supported **widow remarriage**. She also co-founded the **Satyashodhak Samaj** ("Society of Truth Seekers") alongside her husband in 1873 to promote equality and eradicate caste-based oppression. Her life and work were rooted in the belief that education was the most effective tool for social liberation.
- Phule's courage often drew hostility; she faced social ostracism, verbal and physical attacks while teaching girls in public. Despite this, she persisted, opening multiple schools and inspiring broader movements for women's rights and social justice.
- On her **birth anniversary this year**, political leaders and public figures honoured her legacy -with renewed calls, including from party leaders in Andhra Pradesh, to confer India's *highest civilian award, the Bharat Ratna*, on her for her trailblazing role in education and social reform. Savitribai Phule's legacy endures as a cornerstone of **women's empowerment, equality, and the fight against social oppression** in India.

### 3. Rani Velu Nachiyar

Rani Velu Nachiyar (3 January 1730 – 25 December 1796) was a queen of the Sivaganga estate in present-day Tamil Nadu and is historically recognized as the first Indian queen to wage an armed struggle against the British East India Company -decades before the 1857 Revolt.

Tamils often call her "Veeramangai" (brave woman) for her courage and leadership.

#### Early Life & Background



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

- Born as princess of the Ramnad Kingdom (Ramanathapuram), she was the only child of Raja Chellamuthu Vijayaragunatha Sethupathy and Rani Sakandhimuthal.
- She received extensive training in martial arts and warfare -skills in Valari, Silambam, archery, horse riding, and weapons -and was also a scholar fluent in multiple languages like French, English, and Urdu.
- Married at 16 to Muthu Vaduganatha Periyavudaya Thevar of Sivaganga.

### Struggle Against the British

- In 1772, her husband was killed by forces of the British East India Company and allies, forcing her to flee with her daughter and regroup.
- During exile, she forged critical alliances -notably with Hyder Ali of Mysore -and built an army that included one of the earliest known all-women military units.
- In 1780, she successfully attacked and defeated the British forces, reclaiming Sivaganga and becoming an inspirational early anti-colonial leader.

One dramatic moment during her campaign involved Kuyili, her commander, carrying out what is sometimes described as an early instance of a suicide attack to destroy a British ammunition depot.



### Rule & Legacy

- After reclaiming Sivaganga, she ruled for about a decade, and in 1790 handed over authority to her daughter Vellacci, continuing as mentor. She remains an icon of resistance, women's leadership, and early anti-colonial struggle in Indian history

### 4. Rash Behari Bose

**Rash Behari Bose** (1886-1945) was an Indian revolutionary who played a key role in the early armed resistance against British rule and later became one of the main architects behind the **Indian National Army (INA)** movement in its formative stage.

#### Early Life

- Born on **25 May 1886** in **Bengal Presidency** (present-day West Bengal).
- Educated in Bengal and worked in government-related jobs, but soon shifted towards revolutionary activities.

#### Revolutionary Activities in India

Rash Behari Bose became deeply involved with secret revolutionary groups and was one of the key figures behind the **attempted assassination of Lord Hardinge**, the Viceroy of India.



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### Delhi Conspiracy Case (1912):

- A bomb was thrown at Lord Hardinge's procession in Delhi.
- Hardinge survived, but the attack shook British administration.
- Bose was a prime suspect and had to go underground.

He was also associated with efforts to organise a large-scale uprising:

### Ghadar-inspired Revolt Plan (1915):

- Bose worked with revolutionaries to trigger a mutiny in the British Indian Army.
- The plan was leaked, leading to mass arrests, but Bose escaped.

### Escape to Japan

To avoid arrest, Rash Behari Bose escaped to **Japan in 1915**. The British demanded his extradition, but Japan refused. He lived there for decades and became an important link between Indian revolutionaries and Japanese leaders.

He even:

- Married a Japanese woman and settled in Japan.
- Gained strong political support, which later helped the Indian independence movement abroad.

### Role in INA and Azad Hind Movement

His biggest contribution came during World War II:

- Bose led the formation of the **Indian Independence League (IIL)** in Southeast Asia.
- He helped organise Indian expatriates and prisoners of war to support the freedom struggle.
- He laid the groundwork for the **Indian National Army (INA)**.



Later, he handed over leadership to **Subhas Chandra Bose** in 1943, recognising that Subhas had greater mass appeal and military leadership potential.

### Death and Legacy

- Died on **21 January 1945** in Japan.
- Remembered as a revolutionary who kept the freedom struggle alive internationally when many leaders were imprisoned in India

### 5. Veer Surendra Sai — Odisha's Tribal Freedom Fighter

**Veer Surendra Sai (23 January 1809 – 28 February 1884)** was a prominent **Indian revolutionary and freedom fighter** from what is now **Odisha**, celebrated for his prolonged and determined resistance against British colonial rule. He was born into the **Chauhan royal lineage** in **Khinda village, Sambalpur district**, and was a direct descendant of **King Madhukar Sai** of Sambalpur.



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After the death of the ruler of Sambalpur in 1827, the British refused to recognise Surendra Sai's legitimate succession claim and instead installed puppet rulers. This denial, coupled with exploitative policies under British administration, sparked local resentment. Surendra Sai began organising armed resistance against British authority as early as **1827**, two decades before the Indian Rebellion of 1857. He mobilised tribal communities such as the **Gond and Binjhal**, along with local zamindars, creating a broad base of support for his revolt.

During the **1857 Revolt**, Sepoys from Ramgarh jailbreak freed him, and he intensified his guerrilla campaign against the British in Western Odisha, sustaining the struggle even after the widespread suppression of the rebellion elsewhere. His forces fought through guerrilla warfare until 1862 and he was finally betrayed, captured, and incarcerated in Asirgarh Fort, where he spent his final two decades and died in prison in **1884**.

Surendra Sai's legacy is significant for several reasons:

- He led one of the **longest sustained anti-British resistances** in India, spanning over three decades.
- His movement symbolised **grassroots tribal resistance** and the struggle for sovereignty long before and after the 1857 uprising.
- His contributions are increasingly recognised in contemporary discourse, including national commemorations and plans to develop his birthplace as a "field of inspiration" for future generations.

Veer Surendra Sai remains an emblematic figure of **patriotism, courage, and unwavering commitment** to India's freedom struggle, especially in the regional history of Odisha.

### 6. Lala Lajpat Rai – Personality in News

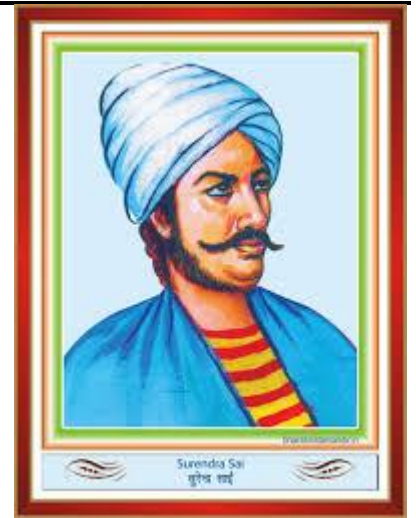
Lala Lajpat Rai (28 January 1865 – 17 November 1928) was a prominent Indian nationalist leader, freedom fighter, politician, author and social reformer, widely revered as "**Punjab Kesari**" (**Lion of Punjab**) for his fierce patriotism and leadership in the struggle against British rule.

#### Early Life & Education

- Born in Dhudike (now in Moga district, Punjab) into a middle-class family; father was a schoolteacher.
- Received legal education and practised law before devoting himself fully to nationalist politics.

#### Role in the Freedom Struggle

- A leader of the "extremist" faction within the Indian National Congress, advocating Swaraj (self-rule), Swadeshi, and direct mass agitation as part of India's independence movement.
- He was part of the famous **Lal-Bal-Pal** triumvirate along with Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal, which energised nationalist sentiment across India.





## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

- Elected President of the Indian National Congress at the Calcutta Session (1920) and also led the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC).

### Key Contributions & Organisations

- Founded the Servants of the People Society (1921) to train and support social workers devoted to national service.
- Played a role in setting up institutions such as Punjab National Bank (to foster indigenous enterprise) and supported educational initiatives.
- Authored several nationalist writings and used journalism to mobilise public opinion against colonial policies.

### Simon Commission Protest & Martyrdom

- In 1928, Rai led a peaceful protest against the British-only Simon Commission, which had no Indian members – a symbol of colonial arrogance.
- During the protest in Lahore, he was severely injured in a police lathi charge and succumbed to his injuries on 17 November 1928.

### Legacy

Lala Lajpat Rai's fearless leadership, advocacy for self-rule, social reform efforts and sacrifice for the nation continue to inspire generations and are celebrated annually on his birth anniversary across India.

### 7. Subhas Chandra Bose (Netaji)

**Subhas Chandra Bose was one of the most prominent leaders of the Indian freedom struggle and a radical nationalist who believed in armed resistance against British rule.**



### Basic Information

- **Born:** 23 January 1897, Cuttack (Odisha)
- **Died:** 18 August 1945 (official version; controversial)
- **Popularly known as:** Netaji
- **Political Affiliation:** Indian National Congress (earlier), Forward Bloc
- **Slogan:** "Give me blood, and I will give you freedom"

### Role in Freedom Struggle

- Resigned from the **Indian Civil Services (ICS)** in 1921 to join the freedom movement.
- Became **President of the Indian National Congress** in 1938 (Haripura) and 1939 (Tripuri).
- Differences with Mahatma Gandhi over the strategy of non-violence led to his resignation.

### Indian National Army (INA)

- Revived and led the **Indian National Army (Azad Hind Fauj)** with Japanese support.



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- Formed the **Provisional Government of Free India (Azad Hind Government)** in 1943.
- INA slogan: "*Delhi Chalo*"
- Established the **Rani of Jhansi Regiment**, the first women's military unit in India.

### Ideology and Vision

- Believed freedom could not be achieved solely through non-violence.
- Advocated **socialism**, strong central government, and national unity.
- Emphasised discipline, sacrifice, and nationalism.

### Death Controversy

- Officially believed to have died in a plane crash in Taiwan in 1945.
- Multiple commissions (Shah Nawaz, Khosla, Mukherjee) investigated the issue.
- Remains one of the biggest unresolved mysteries of modern Indian history.

### Legacy and Significance

- Inspired generations with militant nationalism and sacrifice.
- INA trials (1945–46) weakened British authority over Indian armed forces.
- Celebrated as a symbol of **assertive nationalism and revolutionary leadership**.

## INDICES AND REPORTS:

### 1.The Financial Stability Report (FSR) is released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)

- It is Released by Reserve Bank of India (RBI) twice a year.
- It was Prepared by Sub-Committee of the Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC).To assess risks and resilience of the Indian financial system and identify emerging vulnerabilities.

### Important Takeaways

- **Banking Sector Health:**  
Gross NPA ratio remains **low and declining**; capital adequacy **well above regulatory norms**
- **Credit Growth:**  
Strong growth in **personal loans & services sector**, moderated industrial credit



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

- **Systemic Risks:**

Global uncertainties, commodity prices, and geopolitical tensions flagged as major risks

### 2. Responsible Nations Index (RNI)

The Responsible Nations Index (RNI) is India's first globally anchored index that evaluates countries on responsible governance, environmental stewardship, and global responsibility, moving beyond traditional power- or GDP-centric rankings.

It has been developed by the World Intellectual Foundation (WIF), in collaboration with institutions like Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Indian Institute of Management Mumbai (IIM Mumbai), and the Dr. Ambedkar International Centre.

Core dimensions of the Index

1. Internal Responsibility – assesses dignity, justice and well-being of citizens.
2. Environmental Responsibility – evaluates stewardship of natural resources and climate action.
3. External Responsibility – measures a nation's contribution to peace, multilateral cooperation and global stability.

Coverage & methodology

- The RNI covers 154 countries using transparent, globally sourced data to allow credible comparability.

Significance

- It redefines how national performance is measured by prioritising ethical and value-based indicators over purely economic or military metrics.
- India's rank in the first edition places it at 16 out of 154 countries, highlighting responsible performance relative to many developed and developing states.

### 3. Henley Passport Index 2026

The Henley Passport Index 2026 is released by Henley & Partners

- Ranks passports based on visa-free travel access.

India's Rank

- India: 80th
- Visa-free / visa-on-arrival access: 55 destinations

Key Indicators

- Number of destinations accessible without prior visa
- Diplomatic mobility

### 4. Asia Manufacturing Index 2026

The Asia Manufacturing Index 2026 is released by an Asian economic assessment body (reported via multilateral sources)



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

### India's Rank

- 6th among 11 Asian economies

### Key Indicators

- Manufacturing output
- Industrial competitiveness
- Supply chain resilience

### 5. Power Gap Index

The Power Gap Index is released by the Lowy Institute

### India's Rank

- 3rd in Comprehensive National Power
- Recognised as a "Major Power" for the first time
- Ahead of Japan, Russia, EU states

### Key Indicators

- Military capability
- Economic resources
- Diplomatic influence

### 6. Numbeo Safety Index 2026

The Numbeo Safety Index 2026 is released by Numbeo

### India Highlights

- Mangaluru ranked as the safest Indian city

### Key Indicators

- Crime perception
- Personal safety
- Law & order environment

### 7. Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)

The Corruption Perceptions Index is released by Transparency International

### India's Rank

- 96th

### Key Indicators

- Perceived corruption in public sector
- Transparency & accountability

### 8. Global Peace Index

The Global Peace Index is released by the Institute for Economics and Peace



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

### India's Rank

- 115th

### Key Indicators

- Internal conflict
- Militarisation
- Societal safety

### 9. Gender Inequality Index

The Gender Inequality Index is released by the UNDP

### India's Rank

- 131st

### Key Indicators

- Reproductive health
- Education levels
- Labour force participation

### 10. World Inequality Report 2026

The World Inequality Report 2026 is released by the World Inequality Lab

### Key Findings

- Sharp rise in wealth inequality in India.
- Top 1% hold a disproportionate share of wealth.

## DEFENCE AND EXERCISE

### 1. Key Facts of INSV Kaundinya

**INSV means** Indian Naval Sailing Vessel (INSV). **It was Operated by** Indian Navy

#### Key Highlights:

- Part of India's **offshore sail training fleet** used for long-distance oceanic voyages.
- Built to support **sail training and experiential leadership missions** for naval officers and cadets.
- Plays a role in enhancing **maritime skills, endurance, and navigation expertise**.
- Follows in the lineage of other INSVs like *INSV Mhadei* and *INSV Tarini* which completed notable circumnavigation voyages.

### 2. INS Vaghsheer – Indian Naval Submarine

#### About:

- **INS Vaghsheer** is an **Indian Navy diesel-electric attack submarine** commissioned under Project-75.



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

• It is the **fifth submarine** in the **Kalvari-class** of Scorpène-design submarines built in India and it was **commissioned into the Indian Navy**.

### Key Facts:

- **Designed by:** French shipbuilder **Naval Group** under technology transfer to India.
- **Built by:** **Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd (MDL)**, Mumbai.
- **Class:** **Kalvari-class** (based on Scorpene design).
- **Type:** Conventional diesel-electric attack submarine with air-independent propulsion potential.

### Significance:

It Enhances India's **undersea warfare capabilities** in the Indian Ocean Region and it strengthens the **naval deterrence** and maritime security along key sea routes.

### 3. YJ-20 is a new-generation Chinese hypersonic missile

The YJ-20 is a new-generation **Chinese hypersonic missile** that has attracted strategic attention after its recent test-firing, signalling China's growing emphasis on long-range precision strike and anti-ship warfare in the Indo-Pacific.

- Country / Developer: People's Liberation Army (China)
- Type: Hypersonic cruise / anti-ship missile
- Speed class: Greater than Mach 5 (hypersonic range)
- Likely propulsion: Advanced high-speed engine (possibly scramjet / combined-cycle)
- Capability: Mid-flight manoeuvring — harder to intercept than ballistic missiles

### 4. Exercise Sanjha Shakti

Exercise Sanjha Shakti is a Military–Civil Fusion (MCF) exercise conducted by the Indian Army to strengthen coordination, interoperability, and joint response between military forces and civilian agencies during security and emergency situations.

- Venue: Diggi Range, Khadki Military Station, near Pune
- It was Conducted under the Southern Command (Maharashtra, Gujarat & Goa Area)

### Participants

- Indian Army
- 16 civilian agencies, including:
  1. Maharashtra Police
  2. Force One (Special Force)
  3. Fire & Emergency Services
- 350+ civilian personnel alongside Army troops

### Objectives

- Improve civil–military coordination



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

- Test communication protocols and interoperability
- Validate Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
- Enhance readiness for disaster management, public safety, and internal security scenarios

### Key Activities

- Realistic security and emergency simulations
- Joint decision-making and rapid response drills
- Rear-area security and HADR (Humanitarian Assistance & Disaster Relief) preparedness

## 5. Bhairav Battalions — Indian Army's New High-Impact Combat Units

### What they are:

Bhairav Battalions are a new class of compact, high-tech combat units of the Indian Army designed for swift, surprise, and high-impact operations.

### Key Features

- **Size & Composition:** Each Bhairav Battalion comprises roughly around 250 soldiers drawn from various arms including infantry, artillery, air defence, signals, and other combat support elements.
- **Role:** These units are meant to be lean, lethal and highly mobile, tailored for rapid tactical action at short notice.
- **Operations:** They are trained for rapid strikes, swift border response, reconnaissance, and high-tempo tactical missions, often in challenging terrain.
- **Deployment:** Bhairav Battalions are being placed under corps and division-level formations in sensitive regions such as Rajasthan, Jammu, Ladakh, and the Northeast.
- **Bridge Capability:** These units act as a bridge between regular infantry and elite Special Forces, freeing up special forces for deeper strategic missions.
  - For the first time, a Bhairav Battalion will march down Kartavya Path and salute the Supreme Commander during the Republic Day parade—a public debut highlighting their operationalisation.

### Strategic Rationale

- The battalions support India's shift towards a proactive and agile combat doctrine that emphasises rapid tactical responses rather than static defence.
- Their creation aligns with broader Army modernisation efforts to handle multi-domain and hybrid threats at the border.

## 6. Operation Pawan

### What was Operation Pawan?

Operation Pawan was a military operation conducted by the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) in Sri Lanka (1987–1990) to enforce the terms of the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord and disarm the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). It involved direct combat between the IPKF and the LTTE.



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### When and Why?

- The operation began in October 1987 after the signing of the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord on 29 July 1987 between India and Sri Lanka.
- The Accord aimed to end the Sri Lankan civil war by devolving power to Tamil regions and ending hostilities.
- Under the Accord, the IPKF was deployed to disarm militant groups, primarily the LTTE, who refused to lay down arms.

### Who was involved?

- The Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) — comprising Indian Army units plus support elements — was tasked with peace enforcement duties.
- The principal adversary became the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam), which opposed the Accord and resisted disarmament.

### How did the Operation proceed?

- Initially welcomed by some Tamil groups, IPKF soon faced stiff resistance from the LTTE.
- The operation involved intense jungle and urban warfare, including search-and-destroy missions against well-armed LTTE cadres.
- As fighting escalated, the IPKF found itself engaged in sustained combat rather than purely peacekeeping tasks.

### Outcome and Exit

- The operation saw heavy casualties on both sides and widespread controversy over civilian impact.
- By March 1990, India began withdrawing the IPKF following changes in Sri Lankan politics and public debate in India.
- The mission ended without fully disarming the LTTE, which later resumed hostilities until 2009.

### Strategic Significance

- Operation Pawan was India's most significant overseas military engagement post-Independence.
- It highlighted the challenges of peace enforcement versus peacekeeping in complex ethnic conflicts.
- The experience influenced India's subsequent policies on external interventions and peace operations.

## 7. ICGS Sankalp

### About

- **ICGS Sankalp** is an **offshore patrol vessel (OPV)** of the **Indian Coast Guard**.
- It was **commissioned in 2008** and was **indigenously built** by **Goa Shipyard Limited**.
- The ship's name—*Sankalp*—symbolises determination in serving maritime security and law enforcement.

### Purpose & Functions

- Designed primarily for **extended maritime surveillance**, protection of India's **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)**,



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

### search and rescue (SAR) and maritime law enforcement.

- It supports policing of illegal activities at sea, environmental protection, and humanitarian missions.

#### Features

- Length: **105 meters**; displacement **~2,325 tonnes** at full load.
- Endurance: **~6,500 nautical miles**—enabling long-range deployments.
- Navigation and communication systems: **state-of-the-art equipment**.
- Aircraft: It can operate **HAL Chetak/HAL Dhruv helicopters** for aerial surveillance and SAR.
- Armament: **Two 30 mm CRN-91 twin-barrel naval guns** and **machine guns** for surface engagement and deterrence.
- Deploys up to **five high-speed interceptor boats** for rapid response missions.

### 8. BRICS Plus Naval Exercise

#### What it is

The BRICS Plus Naval Exercise is a multilateral maritime drill involving the naval forces of the BRICS grouping (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) and selected partner countries ("Plus" participants). It enhances cooperation, interoperability, and maritime security collaboration among friendly navies.

#### Objectives

- Strengthen maritime cooperation among BRICS and partner nations
- Enhance interoperability and coordination in multi-national naval operations
- Practice joint manoeuvres, search and rescue (SAR), anti-piracy drills, and communication protocols
- Promote regional stability and maritime security in common waters
- Share best practices in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) operations

#### Significance

1. Geopolitical Collaboration
  - Reinforces strategic partnerships among BRICS members and observer/guest navies
  - Signals unity and cooperative engagement in maritime security beyond bilateral ties
2. Operational Readiness
  - Improves tactical coordination and shared protocols in complex naval scenarios
  - Joint drills expose navies to diverse operating procedures and technologies
3. Maritime Security Goals
  - Focus on key threats like piracy, maritime terrorism, trafficking, and unregulated fishing
  - Enhances collective capability to respond to emergencies at sea



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

### 4. Diplomatic Messaging

- Demonstrates political will to uphold freedom of navigation, peaceful uses of seas, and international law
- Provides a platform for defence diplomacy and confidence building

### Typical Activities in BRICS Plus Naval Drills

- Sea-phase exercises: Tactical manoeuvres, fleet formations
- HADR simulations: Evacuations, medical aid, disaster response
- SAR operations: Coordination between ships and aircraft
- Communication drills: Common protocols for secure, seamless interaction
- Boarding and inspection exercises: For safety and maritime law enforcement

### India's Role & Strategic Interest

- India's participation showcases its commitment to collective maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and beyond
- Aligns with India's SAGAR doctrine (Security And Growth for All in the Region)
- Strengthens defence ties with fellow BRICS members and Plus partners
- Provides exposure to Indian naval personnel on multinational interoperability and strategic dialogue

## 9. Operation Megaburu - Anti-Maoist Counter-Insurgency Operation in Jharkhand

### What is it?

Operation Megaburu is a large-scale counter-insurgency operation launched by Indian security forces against left-wing extremism, specifically the Communist Party of India (Maoist), in Jharkhand's dense Saranda Forests and adjoining areas.

### When & Where:

- Launched: January 2026.
- Location: Kumdi area under Kiriburu police station limits, West Singhbhum district, Jharkhand - one of the last major Maoist strongholds in eastern India.

### Who is conducting it?

- The operation is being carried out jointly by the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) - especially its elite CoBRA (Commando Battalion for Resolute Action) units - and the Jharkhand Police, backed by specific intelligence inputs.

### What happened?

- In intense engagements over several days, dozens of Maoist cadres were neutralised. Initial reports counted 16 killed, including top Maoist leader Patiram Manjhi (aka Anal Da) with a bounty of over ₹2.35 crore on his head.

### About Operation MegaBuru

Operation MegaBuru is a **large-scale counter-insurgency operation** carried out against **CPI (Maoist)** in **Jharkhand**.

**Location:** The operation is being conducted in the **Kumdi** area under **Kiriburu police station** limits in **West Singhbhum district, Jharkhand**.

**Launched in:** The operation was launched in **January 2026**.

**Conducted by:** The operation is jointly conducted by the **Central Reserve Police Force** and **Jharkhand Police**.



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

• Subsequent operations raised the toll to 17 Maoists, including several female commanders. Many carried significant bounties, indicating the elimination of senior extremists.

### Why is it significant?

- This is one of the most impactful anti-Naxal actions in recent times - striking deep within the Saranda forest belt that has historically been a Maoist hub.
- Neutralising senior leaders disrupts organisational command structures, potentially weakening the insurgency in Jharkhand and neighbouring states.

### Strategic Context:

- The operation aligns with the government's broader policy to address left-wing extremism through sustained intelligence-driven operations rather than ad-hoc responses.
- CoBRA units, specially trained for guerrilla terrain and jungle warfare, play a crucial role.

### Key Takeaways :

- Internal Security: Left-wing extremism as a threat to domestic stability.
- Counter-Insurgency: Use of intelligence and elite forces in dense forest terrain.
- Security Strategy: Integration of state and central forces for coordinated action

## 10. Long Range Anti-Ship Hypersonic Missile (LR-AShM)

### What it is:

The **Long Range Anti-Ship Hypersonic Missile (LR-AShM)** is an **indigenously developed hypersonic glide missile** by India's **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** designed primarily to enhance India's **maritime strike and sea-denial capabilities**. It was publicly showcased for the first time at the **77th Republic Day Parade on 26 January 2026** in New Delhi.

### Key Features

#### Hypersonic Glide Missile

- **Hypersonic speed:** Reaches **Mach 10** initially and averages **Mach 5** during flight.
- **Trajectory:** Follows a **quasi-ballistic trajectory** — combining high-speed boost and low-altitude glide with manoeuvrability that makes detection and interception difficult.
- **Low-altitude flight:** Low radar cross-section and skip-glide flight profile enhances stealth and survivability against defence systems.

#### Range and Targeting

- **Range:** Approximately **1,500 km** in current configuration, with *future variants potentially extending to ~3,500 km*.





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- **Targets:** Capable of engaging both **static and moving naval targets**, including **warships and carrier battle groups**.
- **Warhead & sensors:** Designed to carry different payloads with advanced seekers for terminal homing on moving targets.

### Design and Technology

- **Two-stage propulsion:** Uses a solid rocket booster to reach hypersonic velocity, followed by an unpowered hypersonic glide phase for terminal engagement.
- **Maneuverability & survivability:** Mid-flight course corrections and low-altitude flight reduce interception likelihood.
- **Stealth features:** High aerodynamic efficiency and low observability improve penetration of enemy air and maritime defence systems.

### Strategic Role and Significance

- **Maritime deterrence:** Fills a critical capability gap for the **Indian Navy and coastal defence**, particularly in the strategically vital **Indian Ocean Region (IOR)** against potential adversaries with expanding naval forces.
- **Sea-denial weapon:** Designed to deny adversary naval dominance by targeting high-value ships before they can strike.
- **Indigenous capability:** Demonstrates DRDO's advancement into **next-generation hypersonic weapons**, placing India among a select group of nations with operational hypersonic missile technology.



### 11.Operation Sahyadri Checkmate

#### What it is:

Operation Sahyadri Checkmate was a targeted anti-narcotics enforcement action conducted by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) — India's apex anti-smuggling intelligence and investigation agency under the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC).

#### Who launched it:

- Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) — specialised in combating smuggling of contraband (including narcotics) and enforcing customs laws in India.



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### Where it took place

- The operation was carried out in the Sahyadri Ranges of Satara district in Maharashtra — a rugged terrain in the Western Ghats that facilitated concealment of illicit activity.

### What happened

- Acting on developed intelligence, DRI teams located and dismantled a clandestine, mobile mephedrone manufacturing laboratory.
- The lab was camouflaged as a poultry farm and designed to frequently shift locations, making detection difficult.

### Seizures & Arrests

- Nearly 21.912 kg of mephedrone in various forms (liquid, semi-liquid, crystalline) was seized.
- Raw materials (about 71.5 kg) capable of producing additional finished narcotics were also confiscated.
- The estimated illicit market value of the seized drugs is around ₹55 crore.
- Five people were arrested in the operation.

### Significance

- Anti-narcotics enforcement: The operation highlights the DRI's role in combating drug trafficking and clandestine narcotics manufacturing, which has serious social and security implications.
- Adaptive smuggling challenges: The use of mobile and concealed labs reflects evolving tactics by narcotics networks to evade law enforcement — requiring proactive intelligence and coordinated raids.
- Economic security: Synthetic drugs like mephedrone are part of India's illegal drug ecosystem, impacting youth and public health, and generating huge illegal revenues.



## SPORTS

### 1. FIDE World Rapid Chess Championship 2025

The FIDE World Rapid Chess Championship 2025 was hosted in Doha, Qatar under the aegis of the International Chess Federation (FIDE), the global governing body for chess.

#### Format & Rules

- Conducted in Swiss format, allowing players to compete against opponents with similar scores.
- Rapid time control: 15 minutes per player with a 10-second increment per move.
- This format balances speed, strategic depth, and mental stamina.

#### Key Highlights



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

- Magnus Carlsen (Norway) won the Open Rapid title with a dominant score of 10.5 out of 13, reaffirming his supremacy in faster formats of chess.
- Arjun Erigaisi (India) secured the bronze medal in the Open Rapid event.
- Koneru Humpy (India) won bronze in the Women's Rapid Championship.

### Significance

- Arjun Erigaisi became only the second Indian male, after Viswanathan Anand, to podium at the World Rapid Chess Championship.
- Confirms India's emergence as a global chess powerhouse, especially among younger players.

### 2. ICC Replaces Bangladesh with Scotland for T20 World Cup

The International Cricket Council (ICC) confirmed that Scotland replace Bangladesh in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026.

#### Context & Decision

- Bangladesh declined participation under the pre-match schedule.
- ICC exercised its authority under tournament regulations continuity and fairness.

#### Why It Matters

- Alters group composition, scheduling, and logistics for the tournament.
- Demonstrates how global sports bodies enforce discipline, compliance, and governance norms.

### 3. Vidarbha Clinches Maiden Vijay Hazare Trophy Title

Vidarbha won its first-ever Vijay Hazare Trophy, defeating Saurashtra by 38 runs in the final held in Bengaluru.

#### Details

- The Vijay Hazare Trophy is India's premier domestic one-day cricket tournament.
- Vidarbha displayed batting depth, bowling discipline, and tactical maturity.
- 

#### Significance

- Reflects the strengthening of India's domestic cricket structure beyond traditional powerhouses.
- Highlights the talent pipeline feeding the national team.

### 4. 44th Junior National Kho Kho Championship, Bengaluru

The 44th Junior National Kho Kho Championship was held at the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Stadium, Gunjur (Bengaluru).

#### Participation

- Nearly 1,000 young athletes from multiple states and union territories.



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### 5. India's Heavy T20 Cricket Calendar in 2026

India's cricket calendar in 2026 is among the busiest globally, with plans to host 146 T20 matches in six months.

#### Components

- ICC Men's T20 World Cup
- Multiple T20 Internationals
- IPL and Women's Premier League (WPL)

### 6. ICC U-19 Men's Cricket World Cup 2026

The ICC U-19 Men's Cricket World Cup 2026 will be co-hosted by Zimbabwe and Namibia.

#### India's Role

- India's U-19 team began its campaign against the USA in Bulawayo on January 15.

### 8. Other Sports Headlines

- 9th Asian Winter Games – host country.
- National Games 2027 – host state.
- National Snooker Championship – winner (often Pankaj Advani-related).
- BBC Indian Sportswoman of the Year 2024 – e.g., PV Sindhu.

### 9. Global Multi-Sport Events in 2026

#### 2026 Winter Olympics

- Host: Milan & Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy
- Dates: 6–22 February 2026
- Significance: Climate, infrastructure, and sustainability debates.

#### 2026 Commonwealth Games

- Host: Glasgow, Scotland
- Dates: 23 July – 2 August 2026
- Features expanded para-sports and mixed events, highlighting inclusivity.

## NATIONAL

### 1. Privatisation and Policy Gaps Threaten India's Public Health System

India's healthcare system is undergoing a **quiet but profound structural shift**. The expanding role of private hospitals, insurance-led service purchasing, public-private partnerships (PPPs), and private medical education is steadily pushing healthcare toward a **market-driven model**. The problem is not private participation per se—the problem is that this transition is occurring **without strong regulation, adequate public investment, or a clear public-health-first strategy**. The result is a system that risks undermining equity, affordability, and long-term population health outcomes.



### 1. Chronic Underfunding of Public Healthcare

India's public health expenditure remains **below 2.5% of GDP**, far lower than most middle-income countries. This chronic underinvestment weakens government hospitals, primary health centres, and public health infrastructure. Staffing shortages, inadequate facilities, and overstretched services are the norm rather than the exception. As public capacity erodes, citizens are **pushed—not choosing—to depend on private providers**, especially for secondary and tertiary care.

This creates a vicious cycle: weak public systems justify private expansion, and private dominance further reduces political urgency to invest in public care.

### 2. Rising Out-of-Pocket Expenditure and Medical Impoverishment

Over **60% of total health spending in India is out-of-pocket**, one of the highest rates globally. Private healthcare costs—diagnostics, medicines, hospitalisation—regularly push households into debt or poverty. While insurance schemes such as **Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY** aim to reduce this burden, their design often **channels public funds to private hospitals** without strengthening public facilities.

Insurance coverage does not automatically mean financial protection. Patients frequently face hidden charges, exclusions, and post-hospitalisation expenses, while public hospitals remain under-resourced and unable to compete.

### 3. Fragmentation and Weak Regulation

India lacks **robust, uniformly enforced regulation** of private healthcare. There is no effective national framework for price caps, standard treatment protocols, or quality assurance across states. Regulatory bodies are often understaffed, weak, or inconsistently applied. As a result, private hospitals operate with significant autonomy, leading to **over-treatment, variable quality, and exploitative pricing**.

Instead of a coordinated health system, India is drifting toward a **fragmented healthcare market**, where profit incentives override public health priorities.

### 4. Systematic Neglect of Preventive and Primary Care

Private healthcare investment overwhelmingly targets **curative and high-end services**—surgeries, diagnostics, specialty hospitals—because these are profitable. Core public health functions such as **disease surveillance, immunisation, nutrition, sanitation, preventive outreach, and primary care** receive far less attention.

This imbalance weakens the very foundation of health security. A system focused on treating disease rather than preventing it is **costlier, less equitable, and less resilient**, as seen during pandemics and public health emergencies.

### 5. Deepening Inequities in Access

Privatisation amplifies **urban–rural and rich–poor disparities**. Private hospitals cluster in cities and affluent regions, while rural and low-income populations struggle to access even basic services. Healthcare access increasingly depends on **ability to pay rather than medical need**, undermining the constitutional promise of social justice.



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India is not merely privatising healthcare—it is doing so **without the guardrails needed to protect public interest.**

Without strong regulation, sustained public investment, and a decisive focus on primary and preventive care, privatisation risks hollowing out the public health system. The real challenge is not choosing between public and private care, but ensuring that **private participation serves public health goals, not replaces them.** Without course correction, India risks building a healthcare system that is technologically advanced yet socially fragile.

### 2.M.S. Sahoo Committee: Rethinking Pension Security under NPS

The M.S. Sahoo Committee is a high-level expert panel constituted by the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) to design a framework for assured and predictable pension payouts under the National Pension System (NPS).

#### Why the Committee Was Formed

NPS is a defined contribution, market-linked pension scheme, meaning retirement income depends on market performance. There is no guaranteed pension, exposing retirees to volatility. The committee was tasked with exploring how legally enforceable, market-compatible guaranteed or predictable payouts could be introduced without undermining financial sustainability.

#### Composition

- 15-member expert panel
- Chairperson: M. S. Sahoo, former Chairperson of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI).
- Members drawn from actuarial science, finance, insurance, law, capital markets, and academia.

#### Key Objectives

- Design assured / predictable pension products under NPS.
- Define rules on lock-in periods, pricing, withdrawals, risk management, and disclosures.
- Ensure a smooth transition from the accumulation phase (savings) to the decumulation phase (pension payouts).
- Strengthen consumer protection and prevent mis-selling of “guarantees”.

#### Significance

The committee’s work could fundamentally transform India’s pension architecture, shifting NPS from pure market exposure toward retirement income stability, increasing trust and participation among subscribers.

### 3.Secretary-General of the Rajya Sabha: Pillar of Parliamentary Administration

The Secretary-General of the Rajya Sabha is the administrative head of the Rajya Sabha Secretariat, the permanent institutional body supporting the Upper House of Parliament.

#### Appointment and Rank

- Appointed by the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha (the Vice-President of India).
- Holds a rank equivalent to the Cabinet Secretary, the highest civil service position in India.



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

### Key Responsibilities

- Administrative Head:**  
Oversees staffing, recruitment, service conditions, and financial powers related to the Rajya Sabha Secretariat.
- Custodian of Records:**  
Maintains official records, documents, and proceedings of the Rajya Sabha.
- Parliamentary Functions:**
  - Prepares the List of Business for each sitting.
  - Signs and transmits messages between the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha.
  - Issues summons to Members for sessions.
- Advisory Role:**  
Advises the Chairman and presiding officers on constitutional provisions, parliamentary rules, and precedents.
- Election Duties:**  
Acts as Returning Officer for Presidential and Vice-Presidential elections, alternating with the Lok Sabha Secretary-General.

### Overall Significance:

The Secretary-General ensures procedural integrity, institutional memory, and smooth legislative functioning, providing stability to parliamentary democracy irrespective of political change.

### 4. Secularism in India — Meaning, Practice & Challenges

#### What is Secularism?

- Secularism means separation of religion from the workings of the state and equality of all religions before the law.
- In India, secularism implies that the state does not have an official religion and treats all religious communities impartially.

#### Meaning of Secularism in the Indian Context

Unlike Western secularism (which often implies strict separation), Indian secularism is based on equal respect (sarva dharma sama bhava) for all religions — the state can engage with religion but must not favor or discriminate.

#### Key features include:

- No state religion.
- Freedom of religion guaranteed under Articles 25–28 of the Constitution.
- Equality before law (Article 14) and non-discrimination on religion (Article 15).
- Cultural and educational rights of minorities (Articles 29–30).

Thus, Indian secularism is positive secularism rather than rigid separation — the state can intervene in religious practices to ensure reform and protect rights, but must remain neutral among religions.

#### Constitutional Guarantees Supporting Secularism



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- Article 25–28: Freedom of religion (practice, profess, propagate) and protection of religious places.
- Article 14–16: Equality before law; no discrimination on the grounds of religion.
- Article 15(1): Prohibits discrimination on religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.
- Article 29–30: Rights of minorities to conserve culture and establish institutions.

### Practice of Secularism in India

India's secular practice reflects in:

- Policies ensuring religious freedom.
- Personal laws for communities co-existing with uniform civil code debates.
- State intervention for social reform (e.g., abolishing untouchability, reforming temples).
- Government support for festivals/events of all religions.
- Judicial pronouncements that uphold secular ethos.

### Challenges to Secularism in India

1. Communalism and Sectarian Politics
  - Politics often becomes religion-based, leading to polarization and mobilization along religious lines.
2. Religious Violence and Riots
  - Communal clashes and periodic tensions weaken secular harmony.
3. Personal Law vs Uniform Civil Code
  - Debate over a common civil code raises questions on secularism, equality, and minority rights.
4. Majoritarian Assertions
  - Assertions of one religion's cultural dominance can conflict with neutrality.
5. Conversion and Anti-Conversion Laws
  - Some states have restrictive laws on religious conversion, raising concerns about freedom of religion.
6. Love Jihad, Cow Vigilantism etc.
  - Minoritarian anxieties and majoritarian moral policing challenge secular balance.

### Judicial Interpretation

The Supreme Court has reiterated secularism as part of the basic structure doctrine, meaning it cannot be amended out of the Constitution. Key principles clarified by courts include:

- The state must be neutral and not promote any religion.
- Equal treatment to all religions while enforcing public order and morality.

### Significance of Secularism

- Ensures social harmony and unity in a multi-religious society.
- Upholds individual freedom of conscience and belief.



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- Enables peaceful coexistence of diverse religious communities.
- Supports democratic ethos and equality.

### 4. University Grants Commission's New Rules Against Caste Discrimination

The **University Grants Commission (UGC)** - India's statutory body for higher education - has **notified the University Grants Commission (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2026** to tackle **caste-based discrimination** and promote equity across universities and colleges. These replace the earlier 2012 anti-discrimination framework and mark a structural shift toward enforceable compliance rather than advisory guidelines.

#### Why It Matters:

Caste-based discrimination in campuses has remained a persistent issue, with reports of social exclusion, biased evaluation, hostel segregation and hostile atmospheres disproportionately affecting Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs). These challenges were highlighted in petitions connected to the suicides of Rohith Vemula and Payal Tadvi, prompting judicial scrutiny and directions to update anti-discrimination norms.

#### Key Provisions of the 2026 Regulations:

- **Broad Definition of Discrimination:** Any unfair or differential treatment - direct or indirect - on grounds such as caste, religion, race, gender, place of birth or disability that impacts equality in education or human dignity is prohibited. SCs, STs and OBCs are explicitly covered, addressing earlier gaps.
- **Institutional Mechanisms:** Every higher education institution (HEI) must establish an **Equal Opportunity Centre (EOC)** and an **Equity Committee** chaired by the head of the institution, with mandatory representation from SCs, STs, OBCs, persons with disabilities and women to ensure inclusivity in decision-making and grievance redressal.
- **Accountability and Reporting:** EOCs must submit bi-annual reports, while HEIs must file an annual equity report to UGC, strengthening institutional accountability.
- **National Monitoring:** A national oversight committee under the UGC will review implementation, complaints and suggest preventive measures.



#### Enforceability:

Non-compliance can attract serious consequences, including **debarment from UGC schemes, prohibition on offering degree programmes, or even loss of UGC recognition**. This elevates the regulations from advisory to enforceable rules.



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In sum, the 2026 UGC equity regulations aim to transform how higher education institutions in India prevent caste bias, embedding structural accountability mechanisms and clear consequences for violations.

### 5. Republic Day 2026 - Special Guests

For India's 77th Republic Day Parade on 26 January 2026, the Government of India invited a large group of special guests - nearly 10,000 people from diverse fields including innovators, researchers, students, farmers, scientists, and achievers in social and community work. These invitees are being recognised for their exceptional contributions to nation-building, innovation, social development, community empowerment and public service. Specific examples include students from Atal Tinkering Labs and individuals like Aesha Singh, a 'Water Warrior' recognised for pioneering work in Ganga conservation and community engagement.

#### What Is a "Special Guest"?

Special guests are domestic citizens or groups invited to attend the Republic Day parade as honorees. They are usually everyday achievers - scientists, athletes, innovators, social workers, beneficiaries of flagship schemes, and other contributors to public good - who are acknowledged by the state for their outstanding service or achievements. This initiative aims to promote Jan Bhagidari (public participation) in national celebrations and highlight contributions of citizens from all walks of life.

#### How Are Special Guests Different from Chief Guests?

- Chief Guest: A foreign head of state or government leader specially invited by the Indian government to attend the Republic Day parade as a symbol of diplomatic goodwill and strategic partnership. For 2026, the chief guests were Ursula von der Leyen (President of the European Commission) and António Costa (President of the European Council), representing the European Union's leadership.
- Special Guests: Domestic invitees or groups from within India recognised for exemplary contribution to society, not foreign dignitaries. The special guest category broadens participation beyond official state invites by honouring citizens whose work aligns with national priorities and values.

### 6. 16th Census of India — Houselisting & Housing Phase

The 16th Census of India marks a crucial revival of India's demographic data system after a prolonged delay caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The government has notified the houselisting and housing phase, which forms the foundational stage of the Census process. This phase involves mapping every structure and household across the country and collecting baseline data on housing conditions, amenities, and household characteristics.

Scheduled for April–September 2026, the houselisting phase creates the sampling frame for the main population enumeration phase. It is administratively critical because all future census operations, surveys, and demographic assessments depend on the





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accuracy of this base database. Without this structural mapping, population data collection lacks reliability, representativeness, and policy utility.

The Census is not merely a demographic exercise; it is a core governance instrument. Census data directly influences:

- Allocation of public resources
- Welfare scheme targeting
- Infrastructure planning
- Urban development
- Education and health policy
- Electoral delimitation (indirectly through population data)
- Evidence-based policymaking

The prolonged gap since the 2011 Census has created a data vacuum, affecting planning accuracy, welfare delivery efficiency, and long-term development strategies. In this context, the resumption of census operations restores institutional data credibility and governance capacity.

The houselisting phase also reflects the digital transformation of governance, with increasing use of technology for mapping, geotagging, and data integration. This aligns with India's broader shift towards data-driven governance and digital public infrastructure.

Strategically, the 16th Census is not just about numbers; it represents a recalibration of state capacity, restoring the foundational demographic knowledge required for inclusive development, fiscal planning, social justice policies, and sustainable governance. In a country of India's scale and diversity, census data remains indispensable for rational policymaking and democratic accountability.

### 7. What is the Governor's Address to the State Legislature?

The Governor's Address is a constitutional speech delivered at the beginning of a state legislature session in India. It is similar in purpose to the President's Address to Parliament and marks the formal commencement of legislative business.

#### Constitutional Provision

**Article 176 of the Constitution of India** mandates the Governor's address:

- At the first session after each general election to the Legislative Assembly, and
- At the first session of each year.

In states with a Legislative Council (bicameral legislature), the Governor addresses a joint sitting of both Houses.

**Article 175** further empowers the Governor to address either House or both Houses and to send messages to the legislature, e.g., about pending bills.



### Purpose of the Address

- Inform the Legislature of the causes of its summons – i.e., why it has been convened.
- Outline the government's achievements, and its policy priorities and legislative agenda for the upcoming session.
- Provide a formal communication link between the executive (State government) and the legislature.

Although delivered by the Governor, the speech is prepared by the Council of Ministers, reflecting the policies of the elected state government – not the Governor's personal views.

### Constitutional Context & Conventions

- As the constitutional head of the State, the Governor's role is largely ceremonial, acting on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers (Article 163).
- The practice originates from the British parliamentary system (speeches from the throne), adapted to India's republican context with the Governor (state level) and President (Union level).

### Why It's in the News (2026)

Recently, Governors in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka have become part of controversies for not reading the full customary address prepared by elected state governments – either by omitting paragraphs, shortening the speech, or walking out of the Legislature. This has sparked political disputes and debates about:

- The extent of the Governor's discretionary powers in such addresses,
- The principle of aid and advice of the Council of Ministers, and
- The federal balance between the Centre, Governors, and States.

Some state leaders have even called for a constitutional amendment to abolish the Governor's address, arguing it can be misused for political ends rather than fulfilling a constitutional duty.

### 8. Split Verdict on Section 17A

Recently, the Supreme Court of India delivered a split verdict on the constitutional validity of Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988. The controversy revolves around whether this provision, inserted through the Anti-Corruption Laws (Amendment) Act, 2018, was consistent with the Constitution, particularly regarding arbitrariness and the rule of law. The matter assumes great significance for India's anti-corruption framework and judicial process.



## What is Section 17A?

Section 17A, added to the Prevention of Corruption Act in 2018, requires prior government approval to investigate all serving and retired public servants for offences tied to official recommendations or decisions

### TOP COURT SPLIT ON PROVISION

Justice BV Nagarathna

- Section 17A is contrary to binding precedents of the Supreme Court, further noting that the mechanism is fundamentally incompatible with fair investigation.
- Mandating prior approval even before the initiation of an inquiry undermines the rule of law and enables the executive to exercise control over investigative agencies in a manner previously disapproved by the court



Justice KV Viswanathan

- Striking down Section 17A could lead to policy paralysis as fear of criminal investigation could drive honest officers into a "play-it-safe" mode
- Provision could be constitutionally sustained if complaints are first subjected to independent screening, preventing frivolous or motivated complaints while ensuring that genuine cases of corruption are not stifled at inception



### What is Section 17A?

Section 17A was introduced in 2018 to curb frivolous corruption cases and protect public servants from undue harassment. It mandates that a public servant cannot be prosecuted for offences under the Prevention of Corruption Act without prior sanction from the appropriate authority (e.g., the government or department head). The aim was to create a pre-inquiry filter, allowing only well-founded allegations to proceed to prosecution.

### Arguments for Striking Down Section 17A

One set of judges in the Supreme Court held that Section 17A was unconstitutional because:

1. Arbitrariness and Vagueness: The provision was unclear about the standard and procedure for granting sanction, making it susceptible to executive discretion without judicial oversight.
2. Violation of Rule of Law: The requirement of prior sanction could protect guilty public servants while preventing timely prosecution, undermining accountability.
3. No Objective Criteria: There were no clear benchmarks for sanction authorities to assess whether to permit prosecution, leading to potential misuse and delays.

According to this view, Section 17A weakened the anti-corruption regime by placing undue hurdles in the path of justice.



### Arguments Upholding Section 17A

The other judge upheld Section 17A as constitutional, reasoning that:

1. Protection Against Malicious Prosecution: Public servants are frequently subject to vexatious complaints. Section 17A ensures that only cases with prima facie merit proceed, safeguarding honest public servants.
2. Legitimate Policy Choice: The legislature has the authority to prescribe pre-conditions for prosecution to balance competing interests - public accountability and protection from arbitrary arrests.
3. No Absolute Bar: Section 17A does not confer blanket immunity; rather, it ensures that reasonable administrative scrutiny occurs before criminal prosecution.

### Split Verdict and Implications

Since the Supreme Court's constitutional bench delivered a split verdict, the issue will now be referred to a larger bench for final adjudication. The outcome will have far-reaching implications:

- Anti-corruption enforcement: A decision striking down Section 17A may ease prosecution of corrupt officials, but could also increase frivolous complaints.
- Judicial Review and Federal Balance: The case raises questions about the extent of judicial scrutiny over legislative policy choices in criminal justice.
- Rule of Law and Accountability: The balance between protecting honest public servants from harassment and ensuring accountability for corruption lies at the core of the debate.

The split verdict on Section 17A reflects a larger tension in India's legal framework: how to simultaneously protect public servants from abuse of process and ensure robust action against corruption. The final outcome, to be decided by a larger bench, will clarify the constitutional contours of anti-corruption law and the doctrine of reasonable restrictions, and will shape India's fight against corruption for years to come.

### 9. Thadou Tribe

The **Thadou Tribe** is an indigenous ethnic community primarily located in the **hill country surrounding the Imphal Valley in Manipur**, Northeast India. They are among the **largest tribal groups in the state**, ranking second in population only to the Meitei community there. Thadous are also found in **Nagaland, Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and parts of Delhi**.

### Cultural & Linguistic Identity

The **Thadou language** belongs to the **Tibeto-Burman family of the Sino-Tibetan languages** and is closely related to Chin-Kuki-Mizo linguistic traditions. While many Thadou speakers refer to themselves as part of the larger *Kuki* language cluster, distinct identity movements emphasise that Thadou culture, history, and dialect justify independent recognition



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

Traditionally, Thadou society centred around **forest settlements**, with villages located on or near ridge tops without formal urban planning. The **village chief's house** is usually the largest, with an adjoining platform where men discuss community matters and mediate disputes.

### Economic & Social Practices

The Thadou economy is largely **subsistence-based**, involving **animal domestication, cultivation, hunting, and fishing**. The predominant agricultural method is **jhum (slash-and-burn) cultivation**, adapted to the hilly terrain of the Northeast.

### Religion & Festivals

Historically, the Thadou practiced *animistic belief systems* focused on nature spirits and a supreme god, *Pathen*. Today, **Christianity is the dominant faith** among the community. The **Hun-Thadou festival**, celebrated at the start of the New Year, reflects rich cultural traditions preserved through communal celebration.

### Current Developments

- In a **recent administrative initiative**, Prasar Bharati sought inputs from All India Radio (AIR) in Imphal to **resume broadcasts in the Thadou language and other local dialects**, highlighting a push to strengthen representation of tribal languages in public media.
- Separately, **Thadou leaders and activists** have been asserting the tribe's unique ethnic identity amid broader Northeast India socio-political discussions. Movements and conventions have produced **declarations seeking protection of their distinct heritage** and clarity on tribal classification, particularly in relation to the *Kuki* grouping.
- These developments underline ongoing efforts to **preserve tribal identity, language, and cultural heritage** while integrating it into national frameworks for recognition and representation.

## 10. Policy focus on Climate-Resilient Agriculture (CRA) as a strategic necessity to safeguard India's food security

### Why in News?

There is renewed policy focus on Climate-Resilient Agriculture (CRA) as a strategic necessity to safeguard India's food security, protect farmer livelihoods, and ensure long-term sustainability in the face of increasing climate risks. Recent initiatives — particularly the BioE3 Policy (Biotechnology for Economy, Environment and Employment) — have highlighted the need for a coherent national roadmap to scale climate-resilient agricultural practices across the country.

### Summary



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

- Climate-Resilient Agriculture (CRA) is critical for India because a large share of its agriculture is rain-fed and highly vulnerable to climate variability, rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, and projected crop productivity losses.
- CRA focuses on building resilience through diversification of crops and livelihoods, improving soil-water management, promoting climate-smart technologies, and strengthening institutional and financial safety nets for farmers.
- India already has a foundational CRA ecosystem through programmes such as NICRA (National Innovations in Climate Resilient Agriculture), NMSA (National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture), digital agriculture initiatives, and climate-smart village models.

However, scaling CRA requires a unified national strategy, stronger global and regional cooperation, improved digital inclusion, and scientific resource-management approaches to ensure resilient food systems and sustainable farmer incomes.

### 11. PENCH TIGER RESERVE

Pench Tiger Reserve has been featured in current affairs due to its biodiversity significance and recent conservation developments (such as management initiatives, habitat protection, and co-existence strategies). It derives its name from the Pench River which flows through the reserve and forms an integral part of its ecosystem.

- Location: several districts of Madhya Pradesh and partially in Maharashtra.
- The area was declared a Tiger Reserve in 1992 under Project Tiger, India's flagship tiger conservation programme. It lies in the Satpura-Maikal landscape, an important biological corridor connecting forest tracts in central India.
- PTR is characterised by dry deciduous forests, open grassy glades, and riverine habitat, making it ideal for tigers as well as a variety of ungulates.
- Major wildlife species include Bengal tiger, Indian leopard, sloth bear, wild dog (dhole), gaur, sambar, spotted deer, and chital.
- Pench is also known for rich avian diversity, with many resident and migratory bird species.
- The reserve has faced conservation challenges such as human:wildlife conflict, habitat fragmentation, and poaching, and management focuses on habitat improvement, prey base enhancement, and community engagement.
- PTR gained international visibility after being the inspiration for Rudyard Kipling's "The Jungle Book".





## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

- It is part of India's efforts to maintain tiger populations and ecological balance, aligning with global conservation goals and commitments under the Global Tiger Forum.

### 12. Shaksgam Valley

China has recently **rejected India's territorial claim over the Shaksgam Valley**, asserting the area is part of Chinese territory and defending its ongoing infrastructure development there, including road projects. India has firmly protested these activities and reiterated that the region is Indian territory.

#### Location and Geography

The **Shaksgam Valley**, also known as the **Trans-Karakoram Tract**, is a high-altitude region situated north of the **Siachen Glacier**, bordering **Xinjiang (China)** to the north and **Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (POK)** to the south and west.

#### Historical Background

Before 1947, the valley was part of the larger **Jammu & Kashmir** region. During the **First India-Pakistan War**, Pakistan gained control of the area. In **1963**, Pakistan and China signed a **boundary agreement** under which Pakistan **ceded about 5,180 sq km** of the region to China. India has

never recognised this agreement, calling it **illegal and invalid**, on the ground that Pakistan did not have the sovereign right to cede territory that belongs to India.

#### India and China Positions

- **India's stance:** New Delhi asserts that the Shaksgam Valley is an **integral part of Indian territory** within the erstwhile state of Jammu & Kashmir. It rejects the 1963 China-Pakistan agreement and disputes any infrastructure or development activities by China in the area.
- **China's stance:** Beijing maintains the territory belongs to China and defends its activities there as legitimate, dismissing India's objections and upholding the China-Pakistan boundary agreement.

#### Strategic Importance

The valley is strategically located near the **Siachen Glacier**, the world's highest battlefield, and offers potential **access routes** toward the Karakoram Pass and broader Karakoram range. Control or influence in this region affects the **military posture and logistics** of India, Pakistan, and China in the broader **Himalayan security theatre**.

The dispute over Shaksgam Valley intersects with larger geopolitical tensions involving the unresolved **Kashmir issue**,





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India-Pakistan relations, and India-China border dynamics. India's rejection of the **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)**, which passes through parts of POK including near this area, also features in its objections.

### 13. Kaziranga Elevated Corridor and Bagurumba Dwhou

#### Kaziranga Elevated Corridor

- Proposed/implemented to ensure safe and uninterrupted wildlife movement across National Highway stretches near Kaziranga National Park (Assam)

- Helps reduce animal deaths due to vehicle collisions (roadkills)

- Supports connectivity between fragmented habitats (animal corridors)

- Key species benefited: One-horned rhinoceros, elephant, tiger, deer and other fauna

- Usually involves elevated road/underpasses, fencing, speed regulation and eco-sensitive planning

- Linked with Kaziranga's status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a major biodiversity hotspot

Bagurumba Dwhou (Bagurumba Dance)

- Bagurumba is a traditional folk dance of the Bodo community in Assam

- Performed mainly by women, especially during Bwisagu festival (Bodo New Year/spring festival)

- Known for graceful hand movements and synchronized group formations

- Music instruments used: Kham (drum), Siphung (flute), Jotha (cymbals), Serja (violin-like instrument)

- Theme: nature, agriculture, youthfulness, joy and community celebration

- Important for preserving Bodo cultural identity and heritage



### 14. Snowfall Deficit in the Western Himalayas (Geography)

#### Why in News?

Western Himalayas are witnessing below-normal snowfall, affecting rivers, agriculture, hydropower, ecosystems, and disaster risk.

#### What is the Western Himalayas region?

Includes mainly:

- Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand

Key snow-fed basins:

- Indus system (Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas, Sutlej)

Also supports Ganga headwaters through Himalayan snow/glacier systems.



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

### What is "snowfall deficit"?

- Snowfall received is lower than the long-period average (LPA) for the season.
- Measured through snow cover area, snow depth, SWE (Snow Water Equivalent), and precipitation data.

### Main Causes of Snowfall Deficit

- Weak Western Disturbances (WDs): fewer/less intense storms reaching NW India
- Rising temperatures: more precipitation falls as rain instead of snow
- Shorter winter season and early snowmelt
- Climate change + variability (El Niño influence sometimes)
- Changing jet stream patterns impacting storm tracks

### Why Western Disturbances matter?

- WDs are extratropical storms originating near the Mediterranean/West Asia
- They bring winter rain/snow to NW India and Himalayas
- They are crucial for Rabi crops and mountain snowpack

### Impacts of Snowfall Deficit

#### Water & Rivers

- Reduced spring–summer meltwater → lower river flows
- Water stress in downstream plains and hill towns

#### Agriculture

- Less soil moisture and irrigation support → affects wheat, apple orchards, horticulture

#### Hydropower

- Lower reservoir inflows → reduced electricity generation

#### Disasters

- Higher risk of forest fires due to dry conditions
- Unstable snowpack patterns can increase avalanches in some cases
- More rain-on-snow events → flash floods/landslides

#### Ecology & Tourism

- Stress on alpine ecosystems, wetlands
- Shorter winter tourism season (skiing, snow-based livelihoods)

### Why it matters for India

- Threat to Himalayan water security
- Affects Indus basin stability (strategic + transboundary relevance)
- Links with climate adaptation, disaster management, and sustainable development

### What can be done?



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

- Improve snow monitoring using satellites + ground stations
- Strengthen early warning systems for floods/avalanches
- Promote water conservation + spring rejuvenation in hill areas
- Better reservoir planning and hydropower scheduling
- Climate-resilient agriculture (crop diversification, micro-irrigation)
- Reduce emissions + protect Himalayan ecosystems (long-term)

### 15. Chatergala Pass — Geography, Strategic Significance & Recent Developments

Chatergala Pass is a high mountain pass located in the Himalayan region of India, specifically in Himachal Pradesh on the India–Pakistan Line of Control (LoC) in the Chamba district. It lies at an altitude of approximately 3,400–3,600 metres above sea level and forms part of the rugged Pir Panjal Range, which separates the Kashmir Valley from the Himachal hills. The pass is one of several lesser-known but strategically important mountain routes that historically connected valleys and served as local access points for pastoral movement and trade before modern roads were built.

#### Strategic and Security Importance

Chatergala Pass holds considerable strategic significance due to its location on or near the LoC, the de facto military boundary between India and Pakistan established after the Simla Agreement (1972). Control over mountain passes like Chatergala affects troop deployments, surveillance, patrol routes and the ability of security forces to monitor movements across high mountain terrain. Its proximity to sensitive border sectors makes it relevant not just for physical security but also for logistical planning and high-altitude mobility.

#### Terrain and Climatic Challenges

The region around Chatergala is characterised by steep slopes, narrow valleys, heavy snowfall and unpredictable weather, which create substantial barriers for civilian travel and for military operations. These terrain challenges influence infrastructure feasibility, line-of-sight communications, and the establishment of posts and roads. Owing to extreme winter conditions, the pass remains snow-bound for long periods, limiting accessibility and necessitating specialised high-altitude deployment training for security forces.

#### Infrastructure and Connectivity

While traditional caravan trails once traversed Chatergala Pass, modern road connectivity is minimal or non-existent, reflecting broader difficulties in the border regions of the Western Himalayas. Recent strategic emphasis on improving border infrastructure — such as all-weather roads, bridges, tunnels and connectivity projects under the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) and the Ministry of Defence — indirectly impacts the operational relevance of passes like Chatergala by altering logistics, mobility and patrol effectiveness in adjacent sectors.

### 16. Sela Pass – High-Altitude Strategic Mountain Pass

#### Location & Geography



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

- Sela Pass is a high-altitude mountain pass in Arunachal Pradesh, India – on the border between Tawang and West Kameng districts. It lies at an elevation of about 4,170 m ( $\approx$ 13,700 ft) above sea level.
- The pass forms part of the Himalayan mountain system and carries National Highway 13 (NH 13), connecting Tawang with Dirang and further to Guwahati in Assam.
- It is one of India's highest motorable passes and remains snow-covered for much of the year, although it is usually kept open with maintenance by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO).

### Strategic Importance

- Sela Pass is a vital link for military logistics and troop movement to the Tawang region, which is close to the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China.
- It featured prominently during the 1962 Sino-Indian War and continues to be crucial for infrastructure and defence preparedness in India's eastern sector.
- The Sela Tunnel, constructed below the pass at around 3,000 m, provides all-weather connectivity, significantly reducing travel time and ensuring year-round access to Tawang even during heavy snowfall.

### Sela Lake – High-Altitude Glacial Lake

#### Location & Features

- Sela Lake (often called Paradise Lake) is a high-altitude glacial lake situated near the summit of Sela Pass in the Tawang district of Arunachal Pradesh.
- It is perched at roughly 4,160 m ( $\approx$ 13,700 ft) and often freezes in winter due to extreme cold, reflecting the surrounding snow-clad Himalayan peaks.
- The lake is surrounded by sparse alpine vegetation and serves as a summer grazing ground for yaks.



#### Cultural & Environmental Note

- The region around Sela Pass is known to have many glacial lakes that are considered sacred in Tibetan Buddhism and hold scenic beauty that attracts visitors during the brief warmer months.

#### Why It Matters

#### Strategic Geography & Defence

- Sela Pass is a frontier link critical to India's defense logistics in the northeastern Himalayan region, especially in the context of India–China border dynamics.
- Infrastructure like the Sela Tunnel enhances all-weather connectivity, a key element of India's push for border readiness and operational mobility.



### Physical Geography

• The pass and lake illustrate high-altitude glacial and alpine environments, seasonal snow cover, and impacts on vegetation and accessibility in the Himalayas – relevant for physical geography and climate topics.

### Cultural & Tourism Aspect

• The pass and nearby lakes are part of scenic and cultural landscapes in Arunachal Pradesh, linking geography with tourism potential in high Himalayan terrains.

#### 17. Hanle Dark Sky Reserve (HDSR)

The **Hanle Dark Sky Reserve (HDSR)**, located in eastern Ladakh within the Changthang region, is **India's first officially designated Dark Sky Reserve**. It was established to preserve the area's exceptionally low light pollution and promote astronomical research, scientific tourism, and environmental awareness.

- Hanle's high altitude (over 4,500 metres), cold desert climate, dry air, and minimal cloud cover create **ideal conditions for astronomical observations**. The reserve hosts the **Indian Astronomical Observatory**, which includes the Himalayan Chandra Telescope and other advanced instruments used for optical, infrared, and cosmic studies.
- Dark Sky Reserves are protected areas committed to **controlling artificial light pollution**, which otherwise interferes with astronomical observations, disrupts wildlife behaviour, and affects human circadian rhythms. HDSR thus serves both **scientific and ecological objectives**.
- Recent observations from Hanle have captured rare atmospheric and space phenomena, such as **high-latitude auroral events**, enhancing India's contribution to global space science. The reserve also supports **astro-tourism**, creating livelihood opportunities for local communities without damaging the fragile Himalayan ecosystem.
- Strategically, HDSR strengthens India's presence in **high-altitude scientific research**, complements space missions, and aligns with sustainable development by balancing conservation with knowledge generation.



In a broader sense, the Hanle Dark Sky Reserve demonstrates how **environmental protection, indigenous livelihoods, and frontier science** can coexist, making it a model for science-led sustainable development in ecologically sensitive regions.

#### 18. Refugees in Their Own Country: The Gutti Koyas' Constitutional Predicament

##### Who Are the Gutti Koyas?

The **Gutti Koyas** are an **Adivasi tribal community** historically linked to the **Koya and Muria Gond tribes** of central India. Originally concentrated in **Chhattisgarh's Bastar region**, many Muria/Koya people fled conflict and



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

displacement beginning in the mid-2000s, especially around state-sponsored counter-insurgency operations like the **Salwa Judum**.

They now live primarily in forested areas of **Telangana and Andhra Pradesh (Godavari valley and agency districts)** but remain **invisible administratively** despite possessing Aadhaar and voter ID cards

### Why Are They in a Constitutional Limbo?

#### ST Status and Article 342

Under the Constitution, **Scheduled Tribe (ST) status is state-specific**. A community recognised as ST in one state (e.g., Muria Gonds in Chhattisgarh) does **not automatically retain that status** after migrating to another state. The President, in consultation with the Governor, must notify a community as ST for each state under **Article 342**.

Because the Gutti Koyas migrated **after 1950**, they cannot use the cut-off criteria of "ordinary residence prior to the first Presidential Order of 1950" to claim ST status in **Telangana or Andhra Pradesh**. This legal mismatch **strips them of constitutional safeguards and entitlements**.

### Consequences of the Limbo: Loss of Constitutional and Legal Rights

Without ST recognition in their current states:

- They are **ineligible for reservations** in education and government jobs.
- They cannot access tribal welfare schemes.
- They are often classified as "**Other Traditional Forest Dwellers**" (**OTFD**) instead of STs, which under the **Forest Rights Act (FRA) 2006** requires much stricter proof of residence (three generations/75 years) to claim rights — *an impossible standard for recent conflict refugees*.

As a result, the Gutti Koyas who live, work and cultivate forest land are treated legally as "encroachers," facing **risk of eviction and loss of livelihoods**.

### 19. What Are the Piprahwa Relics?

- The **Piprahwa relics** consist of relic deposits and gem-encrusted reliquaries discovered in **1898** at **Piprahwa** in **Siddharthnagar district**, Uttar Pradesh — a site archaeologically linked with **ancient Kapilavastu**, believed to be part of the region where **Gautama Buddha** spent his early life before enlightenment. These relics include bone fragments, ashes, gemstones, gold sheets, and ancient containers linked to the Buddha's remains.
- During the colonial period, parts of these relics were taken abroad and housed in foreign collections, while some became part of Indian museum holdings. After sustained diplomatic, legal, and cultural efforts by the Government of India, these sacred relics were **repatriated to India** in 2025 and are now on display in a unified exhibition.



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

### Significance of the Exhibition

Prime Minister Modi emphasised that these relics are *not mere artifacts*, but an **inseparable part of India's civilisation, spiritual heritage, and cultural identity**. He noted that their return and exhibition represent a **victory for India's cultural diplomacy**, showcasing the country's role as the *custodian and living carrier of Buddhist traditions*.

The event has wider **civilisational and diplomatic implications**:

- It reinforces India's **soft power** by highlighting its civilisational link to Buddhism, a religion with global followers across Asia and beyond.
- It strengthens cultural ties with Buddhist-majority countries, promoting peace, heritage, and spiritual dialogue.
- For India, it symbolises the successful **repatriation and preservation of cultural heritage** taken during colonial times.

The exhibition will run for several weeks, allowing scholars, practitioners, and the general public to engage with early Buddhist history and India's rich spiritual heritage.

### 20. Kathputli Puppetry – Overview

**Kathputli** is a **traditional string puppetry art form** originating in the **Indian state of Rajasthan**. It is one of the **most popular and distinctive forms of Indian puppetry**.

Meaning & Form

- *Kathputli* literally means **"wooden doll"** (*kath* = wood, *putli* = doll/puppet).
- It is a **string marionette** where puppets are controlled by a **single string** from above.
- The puppets are typically made from **wood, cotton cloth**, and **metal wire**, and often dressed in **bright, traditional Rajasthani costumes**.



History & Cultural Roots

- Kathputli is believed to be an **ancient art form**, practised for **over a thousand years** by traditional communities like the **Bhat** and **Nat** of Rajasthan.
- Performances traditionally featured **folk tales, mythological narratives, historical stories, and local legends**, weaving entertainment with storytelling.
- Under **royal patronage**, the art flourished, with puppeteers often performing for kings and nobles in the past.

Performance Style

- Kathputli shows are known for their **vibrant visuals, lively music, narration, and expressive puppetry**.
- The lead puppeteer often produces **distinctive voices** using a **reed or bamboo instrument** to add drama to the characters.



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

- These performances are common at **village fairs, festivals, and social gatherings** in Rajasthan and neighboring regions.

### Puppeteers & Tradition

- Puppeteers, also called **putliwalas**, traditionally supported themselves by traveling to villages with portable puppet theatres.
- The tradition was **passed down through generations**, preserving folk narratives and cultural expressions.

### Cultural Legacy

- The **Kathputli Colony** in **Delhi's Shadipur Depot** was named after this art because it became home to puppeteers and other folk performers who settled there.

## 21. Bhadrakali Inscription

### What it is:

The *Bhadrakali Inscription* is a **12th-century epigraphic record** carved in **1169 CE** (Valabhi Samvat 850 / Vikram Samvat 1255) on the wall of the **Bhadrakali Temple** at **Prabhas Patan, Gujarat**. It is currently protected by the **State Department of Archaeology, Gujarat**.

### Historical Context:

The inscription is **eulogistic (prashasti)** in nature, composed in praise of **Param Pashupata Acharya Shriman Bhavabrihaspati**, the **spiritual preceptor** of **Maharajadhiraj Kumarapala**, the Solanki king of Anhilwad Patan.

### Contents & Significance:

- It **documents the ancient and medieval history of the Somnath Temple**, one of India's most important Shiva shrines.
- The record narrates the **legendary construction of the temple in all four yugas** — gold in Satya Yuga by Chandra (Soma), silver in Treta Yuga by Ravana, wood in Dvapara Yuga by Krishna, and the artistic **stone temple in Kali Yuga by King Bhimdev Solanki**, followed by Kumarapala's reconstruction.
- It reflects the **devotion of the Solanki dynasty and scholars** like Bhavabrihaspati, and underscores Solanki patronage to the temple's revival and cultural prominence.

### Archaeological Value:

The inscription is a **crucial epigraphic source** linking historical memory with mythology and statecraft, particularly highlighting the **Solanki era's contribution** to Somnath's architectural and cultural legacy. It complements other



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

records and remnants preserved in the Prabhas Patan region, reinforcing the **heritage continuity of Somnath through periodic destruction and reconstruction.**

### Location & Protection:

Found on the Bhadrakali Temple wall at **Prabhas Patan, Gujarat**, the inscription remains preserved under the **State Department of Archaeology.**

### 22. Launch of Aadhaar Mascot: Strengthening Digital Identity Outreach



The Unique Identification Authority of India (**UIDAI**) has introduced a **dedicated Aadhaar mascot** as part of its efforts to improve public awareness and engagement around Aadhaar, India's biometric digital identity system.

### What Is the Initiative About?

The mascot is designed as a **friendly, recognisable visual symbol** to make Aadhaar-related communication more accessible to citizens. Instead of relying solely on technical notices or formal advisories, UIDAI is using the mascot to simplify messaging around **biometric usage, authentication, security practices, and citizen services.**

### Key Objectives

- **Enhance trust:** A relatable mascot helps humanise a large digital system, addressing concerns around complexity and misuse.
- **Improve citizen engagement:** Visual communication works better across age groups, literacy levels, and languages.
- **Support awareness campaigns:** The mascot will feature in outreach programmes, digital literacy drives, and public communication on safe Aadhaar usage.

### Why It Matters

Aadhaar underpins a wide range of **public service delivery and digital governance platforms**, from welfare transfers to identity verification. As usage expands, **public confidence and informed participation** become critical. The mascot is a soft but strategic tool to reinforce clarity, trust, and ease of interaction with the Aadhaar ecosystem.

### Broader Context

This initiative aligns with UIDAI's broader push for **citizen-centric digital governance**, where technology adoption is accompanied by **clear communication, awareness, and safeguards**, ensuring that digital identity remains inclusive and secure rather than intimidating or opaque.

### 23. Battery Pack Aadhaar Number (BPAN)

Battery Pack Aadhaar Number (BPAN) is a proposed unique digital identity system for battery packs introduced in India, especially electric vehicle (EV) batteries. Under draft guidelines issued by the Ministry of Road Transport &



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Highways (MoRTH), each battery pack will be assigned a 21-character Aadhaar-like code that enables detailed tracking throughout its lifecycle - from manufacturing to recycling or disposal.

The system is being developed to boost traceability, transparency, accountability and sustainability in the fast-growing battery and EV ecosystem.

### Key Features of BPAN

#### 1. Unique Digital ID Code

- Every battery pack (including EV batteries and industrial batteries above a certain capacity) will be assigned a unique 21-character BPAN.
- In addition to the alphanumeric code, a QR code will be attached to the battery pack for easy scanning and data access.

#### 2. Lifecycle Traceability

The BPAN will track a battery's entire lifecycle, including:

- Source of raw materials
- Manufacturing details
- Usage history and performance data
- Repurposing, recycling, or final disposal data

#### 3. Static and Dynamic Data

- Static information - manufacturer, battery specifications, material composition, carbon footprint.
- Dynamic data - performance metrics like state of health, charge-discharge cycles, and thermal events stored centrally and updated over time.

#### 4. Institutional & Regulatory Scope

- Producers and importers must assign and register a BPAN before the battery is sold or used.
- The system is proposed to be rolled out through the Automotive Industry Standard (AIS) process under the Automotive Industry Standards Committee, ensuring regulatory integration.

### Why BPAN Matters

#### 1. EV Ecosystem & Circular Economy

- With India's EV market expanding rapidly, lithium-ion batteries comprise the bulk of demand. A standardized identification system helps manage performance, safety and compliance issues.
- It strengthens battery recycling and second-life usage, helping reduce waste and resource depletion.

#### 2. Traceability & Accountability

- Enables monitoring from raw-material sourcing to end-of-life disposal, discouraging counterfeit batteries and ensuring safer battery management



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

### 24. Pradhan Mantri–Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (PM-RKVY)

The **Pradhan Mantri–Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (PM-RKVY)** is a **centrally sponsored scheme** aimed at promoting **holistic agricultural development**, improving farmers' incomes, and encouraging **states to invest strategically in agriculture and allied sectors**. It represents a shift from input-centric subsidies to **outcome-oriented agricultural planning**.

- Launched originally as **Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY)** in 2007, the scheme was restructured and renamed as **PM-RKVY** to align with the national objective of **doubling farmers' income** and fostering **state-specific agricultural priorities**. It operates on the principle of **flexibility to states**, allowing them to design projects based on local agro-climatic conditions.

A key feature of PM-RKVY is its **two-component structure**:

1. **RKVY-Core**, which supports essential agricultural infrastructure, productivity enhancement, and post-harvest management.
  2. **RKVY-Detailed Project Reports (DPRs)**, which fund innovative, high-impact projects such as agri-startups, precision farming, value-chain development, and climate-resilient agriculture.
- The scheme follows a **shared funding pattern** between the Centre and States (90:10 for North-Eastern and Himalayan states, 60:40 for others), ensuring cooperative federalism in agricultural governance. Funds are released based on **performance and utilisation**, encouraging accountability.
  - PM-RKVY is significant in the context of **climate change, fragmented landholdings, and market volatility**, as it promotes diversification into **horticulture, livestock, fisheries, and agro-processing**. By focusing on innovation, infrastructure, and farmer-centric planning, PM-RKVY strengthens India's transition towards **sustainable, competitive, and income-secure agriculture**.

PM-RKVY is not a subsidy scheme—it is a **flexible, reform-oriented investment framework** for agricultural transformation

### 25. One Station One Product (OSOP) - Transforming Railway Stations into Economic Hubs

The One Station One Product (OSOP) initiative is a policy launched by Indian Railways under the Ministry of Railways first announced in the Union Budget 2022-23. The core idea is simple: transform railway stations from mere transit points into local economic showcases where regional products are displayed and sold. It takes the logic of the successful One District One Product (ODOP) concept and adapts it to the massive footfall of railway networks.

- Under this scheme, dedicated outlets, kiosks, or stalls are provided at identified stations where local and indigenous products—such as handicrafts, handlooms, traditional foods, agricultural goods, and artisan items—are exhibited and sold directly to passengers. These stalls are typically designed by the National Institute of Design (NID), Ahmedabad to ensure a uniform and appealing presentation. Allotments are made on a



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

rotational basis to eligible applicants, including artisans, self-help groups, potters, weavers, and small producers.

- The pilot began on March 25, 2022, and has since been expanded extensively. From an initial set of stations, the scheme has grown with outlets at over 2,000 railway stations by early 2026, indicating a rapid scaling across India's rail network. This expansion directly correlates with increased market access for producers who previously lacked exposure to large customer bases.

### Economic and Social Impact:

- The OSOP scheme aligns with the government's "Vocal for Local" vision, designed to reduce dependency on intermediaries and enable producers to capture better price realization and stable incomes. It has generated additional income opportunities for thousands of artisans and micro-entrepreneurs, contributing to rural and semi-urban employment and supporting the preservation of traditional crafts and regional identities.

In essence, OSOP leverages the extensive reach of Indian Railways not just for mobility, but as a nationwide marketplace, tying infrastructure to inclusive economic growth

### 26. Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)

A **Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)** is a **digital form of sovereign currency** issued and regulated by a country's **central bank**. Unlike private cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin, a CBDC is **legal tender**, backed by the government, and has the same value as physical cash. In simple terms, it is "digital cash" that can be used for payments and settlements in an official, secure, and regulated way.

CBDCs are broadly of two types: **Retail CBDC** and **Wholesale CBDC**. A **Retail CBDC** is meant for the general public for daily transactions like buying goods, paying bills, and transferring money. A **Wholesale CBDC** is designed for banks and financial institutions for large-value interbank settlements, improving efficiency in financial markets.

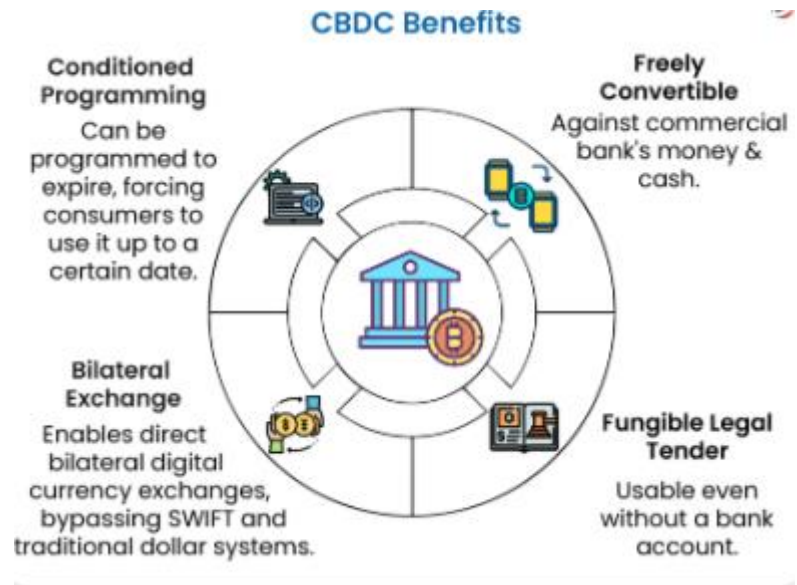
The main objective of CBDC is to modernize the payment system and provide a safe digital alternative to cash. A well-designed CBDC can reduce the cost of printing, transporting, and managing physical currency. It can also enable **faster, cheaper, and more transparent payments**, including cross-border remittances. Another major advantage is improving **financial inclusion**, especially for people who lack access to traditional banking but can use digital wallets through mobile devices.



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

- CBDCs can also help governments strengthen the fight against **black money, corruption, and tax evasion**, since digital transactions leave traceable records. However, this depends on the design-some CBDCs may allow limited anonymity like cash, while others may be fully traceable.

- In India, the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has launched the **Digital Rupee (₹)** as a CBDC under pilot projects. India is exploring both **₹-Retail** for citizens and **₹-Wholesale** for institutional settlements. The digital



rupee aims to strengthen India's digital payment ecosystem, reduce dependency on cash, and provide a reliable government-backed digital payment instrument.

- Despite its benefits, CBDCs also raise concerns. One major issue is **privacy**, because excessive tracking could lead to surveillance-like outcomes. Another concern is **cybersecurity**, as digital currency systems can be targets for hacking. CBDCs may also impact banks if people shift deposits from banks to CBDC wallets, potentially reducing bank liquidity and affecting lending.

Overall, CBDC is a major innovation in monetary systems. If implemented with strong safeguards, it can improve payment efficiency, promote inclusion, and strengthen economic transparency while maintaining trust in sovereign money.

### 27. PM SVANidhi Credit Card

#### What it is:

The PM SVANidhi Credit Card is a UPI-linked RuPay credit card launched under the restructured PM Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) scheme to provide immediate access to credit for urban street vendors who have successfully repaid their second tranche loan.

#### Background: PM SVANidhi Scheme (Context)

- PM SVANidhi was launched on 1 June 2020 by the Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs to support street vendors whose livelihoods were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- It offers collateral-free working capital loans and encourages digital inclusion with incentives like cash-backs on digital transactions.



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- The scheme's lending period has been extended till 31 March 2030 with enhanced loan tranches and expanded coverage.

### Why the Credit Card Was Introduced

- Street vendors traditionally lack access to formal credit and often rely on informal moneylenders at high rates.
- The credit card gives these economically vulnerable micro-entrepreneurs a reliable liquidity tool to manage expenses and urgent needs without high-cost borrowing.

### Eligibility

- The card is available only to registered PM SVANidhi beneficiaries who have:  
Successfully repaid their second loan tranche (up to ₹25,000) under the scheme.

### Main Features & Benefits

- ✓ UPI-linked RuPay credit card: Works like a standard credit card linked to UPI for easy payments and transactions.
- ✓ Immediate liquidity: Helps vendors meet business and personal cash-flow needs without waiting for loan disbursement.
- ✓ Interest-free period: Typically offers a short interest-free window (revolving credit) to manage purchases efficiently.
- ✓ Enhanced financial inclusion: Strengthens participation of informal workers in the formal financial system through digital payments and credit history creation.
- ✓ Improves purchasing power: Vendors can buy inventory, meet daily expenses, and build credit records

## INTERNATIONAL

### 1. India's BRICS+ Presidency (2026): Shaping Global South Priorities in a Fragmented World

India has assumed the **BRICS+ Presidency for 2026**, placing it at the centre of one of the most influential non-Western multilateral groupings comprising BRICS—Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa—along with an expanded set of **BRICS+ partners** from the Global South. This presidency gives New Delhi a critical platform to shape economic cooperation, development finance, and geopolitical narratives at a time when the international system is increasingly polarised.

### Strategic Significance of India's Presidency

India's leadership of BRICS+ comes amid **intensifying US–China strategic competition**, weakening multilateral institutions, and growing demands from developing countries for fairer representation in global governance. For India, the presidency is an opportunity to:

- Reinforce its role as a **bridge between the Global South and major powers**;
- Push for **development-centric agendas**—trade facilitation, digital public infrastructure, climate finance, and reform of global institutions;
- Balance relations within BRICS itself, especially given internal asymmetries and political tensions among member states.



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By steering BRICS+ discussions, India can shape priorities beyond ideology, focusing on **pragmatic cooperation** rather than bloc confrontation.

### Geopolitical Fault Lines in the Background

India's presidency unfolds against a backdrop of persistent global instability:

- **Iranian volatility:** Ongoing protests and internal unrest in Iran, combined with economic pressures and renewed warnings from the United States, underscore how domestic instability in key regional powers can spill into wider geopolitical tensions affecting energy markets and regional security.
- **Strategic undersea infrastructure: Undersea internet and communication cables** have emerged as critical global chokepoints. These cables carry the vast majority of international data traffic, making them essential to finance, defence communications, and digital economies. Their vulnerability to sabotage or disruption has added a new dimension to strategic competition.

### Geography Redefined: From Physical to Digital

These developments highlight a fundamental shift in how geography shapes power. It is no longer limited to land, sea, and air. **Digital geography**—control over data flows, cyber infrastructure, and invisible networks beneath oceans—has become equally decisive. States now compete over **intangible but vital infrastructure** that directly influences economic resilience, military readiness, and political influence.

India's BRICS+ Presidency in 2026 places it at a strategic crossroads. It must navigate traditional geopolitics, emerging digital vulnerabilities, and internal diversity within BRICS while advancing Global South interests. If handled effectively, the presidency can strengthen India's image as a **responsible agenda-setter**, capable of articulating a multipolar vision rooted in development, strategic autonomy, and cooperative security in an increasingly contested world order.

## 2. U.S.–Venezuela geopolitical crisis

In a dramatic and highly controversial military intervention on **3 January 2026**, the **United States** launched a **large-scale strike and special operations mission** against Nicolás Maduro's government in Venezuela—marking a watershed moment in U.S.–Latin American relations. The operation, publicly confirmed by Donald Trump, resulted in the **capture of Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores**, who were subsequently removed from power and taken to the United States for prosecution on charges including narcoterrorism and drug trafficking.

### What Happened

According to official statements and independent reporting:

- In the early hours of **3 January**, U.S. forces conducted **airstrikes and a targeted ground raid in Caracas and northern Venezuela** under a mission reportedly called *Operation Absolute Resolve*. The assault disabled air defenses and key military infrastructure to ensure rapid extraction of the Venezuelan president.



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- **Maduro and Flores were captured** by U.S. special operations units and transferred out of the country; in Venezuela, Vice-President Delcy Rodríguez was declared acting president by the Supreme Tribunal of Justice. Post-capture, Maduro appeared in U.S. federal court and pleaded not guilty to the charges against him.

### Domestic and Regional Reactions

Venezuelan authorities denounced the intervention as “**a blatant violation of sovereignty**” and **criminal aggression** that contravenes the UN Charter. They accused the U.S. of attempting to **control Venezuela’s strategic resources**, especially its vast oil reserves—a narrative echoed by allied states including Russia and Iran.

### Across Latin America and the world:

- Several governments called for an emergency meeting of the **United Nations Security Council** to address the legality and implications of the strikes.
- Analysts and human-rights experts said the intervention represents a **serious breach of international norms**, arguing that it undermines the UN Charter prohibition on the use of force without Security Council approval or clear self-defence justification.

### Geopolitical and Economic Implications

The crisis has deep strategic ramifications:

- **Regional stability:** The operation shattered decades of U.S. reluctance to conduct direct military action in South America, prompting fears of **destabilisation, refugee flows, and political polarisation** across the Western Hemisphere.
- **Oil markets:** Venezuela, holder of some of the world’s largest crude reserves, remains economically pivotal. Political upheaval, shifting control of oil infrastructure, and evolving U.S.–Venezuela energy policy raise questions about **global oil investment and market volatility**.
- **Diplomacy and norms:** World reactions revealed sharp divides between states asserting **non-intervention principles** and those framing the operation as part of a **broader security or anti-crime agenda**.



### Legal and Normative Debates

International lawyers and policy analysts have widely debated the legality of the intervention, with many asserting that unilateral military force absent Security Council backing sets a **dangerous precedent** and erodes established legal norms governing state sovereignty and the use of force.

The **U.S.–Venezuela crisis** of January 2026 stands as one of the most consequential geopolitical flashpoints of the year. It pits questions of **sovereignty, international law, regional stability, and resource geopolitics** against evolving U.S. strategic priorities. Whatever the long-term outcome, the intervention reshapes diplomatic relationships



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across the Americas and highlights the fragility of post-World War II norms in a world marked by shifting power dynamics and contested legal orders.

### 3. What is the Monroe Doctrine?

The **Monroe Doctrine** is a **U.S. foreign policy principle** first articulated by **President James Monroe** on **December 2, 1823** in his annual message to the U.S. Congress. It is one of the most long-lasting doctrines in American diplomacy

#### Core Ideas (1823)

The Monroe Doctrine asserted that:

1. **The Western Hemisphere is distinct** from Europe and should not be subject to further European colonization.
2. **European interference in the political affairs of the Americas** would be regarded as a hostile act against the United States.
3. The United States would **not interfere in European internal affairs** or conflicts.
4. The U.S. would **recognize existing European colonies** in the Americas but oppose new ones.

At the time, the U.S. did not have the military capability to enforce this doctrine fully - but *Britain's naval power* helped make it effective in discouraging European colonial expansion in Latin America.

#### Why It Was Significant

- It marked a **geopolitical break** from European interventionism and laid the groundwork for asserting U.S. influence in the **Western Hemisphere**.
- Over time it became a foundation for further U.S. foreign policy maneuvers in the Americas.

#### Evolution of the Doctrine

- **Roosevelt Corollary (1904):** President *Theodore Roosevelt* expanded it to justify U.S. intervention in Latin America as an "international police power" to maintain stability.
- **Cold War era:** It was reframed to oppose *communist influence* in the region.
- Throughout the 20th century, it became a *cornerstone of U.S. hemispheric policy* and was cited by several presidents to justify diplomatic or military actions.

In **late 2025 and early 2026**, the Monroe Doctrine and its *extensions* returned to the spotlight:

- The U.S. **National Security Strategy** under President Trump referenced a revived role for the Monroe Doctrine, sometimes termed a "**Trump Corollary**" or "*Donroe Doctrine*", to justify a more interventionist posture in the Western Hemisphere.
- This interpretation was used to frame U.S. actions in **Venezuela** (including a military operation in early 2026 involving the capture of President Nicolás Maduro) as aligned with Monroe Doctrine principles, now expanded to counter influence from external powers, not just European ones.



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- U.S. defense leadership has publicly stated that the Doctrine's emphasis on the Western Hemisphere remains strong, reflecting a strategic pivot toward *regional dominance and deterrence*. However, this modern usage is **controversial**:

Many critics see it as a justification for **U.S. unilateral intervention** and an assertion of hegemony in Latin America beyond the original anti-colonial intent of the 1823 policy.



### 4. Countries Bordering the Baltic Sea

- Major littoral states include **Germany, Estonia, Sweden, Finland, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Denmark, and Russia**.
- Belarus and the United Kingdom do not border the Baltic Sea**

### Physical Features

- Low salinity (brackish water)** - due to river inflow + limited ocean exchange
- Frozen in winter** in northern parts
- Shallow sea** compared to world oceans

### Major gulfs:

- Gulf of Bothnia
- Gulf of Finland
- Gulf of Riga



### Significance:

The Baltic Sea is geopolitically important for Europe's commerce, security cooperation (especially NATO and EU states), and energy routes

### 5. International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)

#### What it is:

The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) is an intergovernmental organisation established to support and accelerate the global transition to renewable energy. It serves as a platform for international cooperation, policy advice, technology sharing, and capacity building in the renewable energy space.

It is a non-NGO international organisation that was founded in 2009 (the law entered into force in 2010) and has its headquarters in United Arab Emirates, Masdar City, Abu Dhabi. India is one of the founding members of the European Union, which has more than 170 members.

**UN Status:** An official UN observer organisation.

#### Objectives & Functions

IRENA's primary goals are to:



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- Promote the adoption and sustainable use of renewable energy worldwide.
- Support countries in their energy transition, climate mitigation, and energy security efforts.
- Provide policy advice, data and statistics, and technology analysis to member states.
- Act as a repository of knowledge and a centre of excellence for renewable energy matters.

IRENA's work covers all major forms of renewables — solar, wind, hydropower, geothermal, bioenergy and ocean energy — to support sustainable development, energy access, and low-carbon growth.

### 6. European Union

#### What it is

- The **European Union (EU)** is a political and economic union of **27 member countries** in Europe that cooperate on policies, trade, and laws while retaining national sovereignty.

#### Origins

- Evolved after World War II to promote peace, economic cooperation, and prevent future conflicts.

#### Key Institutions

- **European Council** – Heads of state/government set strategic direction.
- **European Commission** – Proposes laws and implements policies.
- **European Parliament** – Elected body representing citizens.
- **Council of the EU** – Ministers from member states approve laws.
- **Court of Justice of the EU** – Interprets EU law.

#### Features:

- **Single Market** – Free movement of goods, services, capital, and people across member states.
- **Eurozone** – Group of EU states that use the **euro (€)** as their currency.
- **Schengen Area** – Zone of passport-free travel (not all EU states are in Schengen, and some non-EU states are).



#### Policy Areas

- Trade & customs union, competition rules, agriculture (CAP), environmental standards, digital market, regional development funds.

#### Significance

- One of the world's largest economic blocs.
- Regularly negotiates trade deals as a bloc.
- Works on climate goals and digital regulation.



## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

### 7. United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

What it is

- The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations (UN).
- It serves as the central platform for promoting international economic and social cooperation and development.

Mandate & Functions

#### 1. Policy Dialogue & Coordination

- Provides policy recommendations to member states and the UN system on economic, social, and environmental issues.
- Coordinates the work of the UN's specialized agencies, functional commissions, and regional commissions.

#### 2. Advisory Role

- Reviews global economic and social trends and makes policy suggestions to the UN General Assembly.
- Acts as a forum to debate and formulate international development agendas.

#### 3. Follow-up on Global Development Goals

- Plays a key role in monitoring and advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Reviews progress and challenges on poverty eradication, healthcare, education, gender equality, climate action, etc.

#### 4. Stakeholder Engagement

- Engages with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society, private sector entities and academic groups through consultative status.
- Promotes inclusive dialogue among diverse actors.

#### Structure

##### Membership

- ECOSOC has 54 member states elected by the UN General Assembly for three-year terms.
- Members are elected on a regional representation basis.

##### Sessions & Subsidiary Bodies

- The council meets annually in regular session and can hold special sessions.
- Has multiple functional commissions (e.g., Commission on the Status of Women, Statistical Commission) and regional commissions (e.g., Economic Commission for Africa).

#### Significance

##### Promoting Development

- ECOSOC provides a global policy framework for international cooperation on development issues.

##### Inclusive Multilateralism

- Brings together governments and stakeholders (UN agencies, NGOs, civil society) for shared solutions on socioeconomic challenges.



### Implementation Support

- Helps guide and coordinate implementation of international agreements like the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

### Bridge Between Global Policy & Ground Action

- Converts high-level global commitments into operational action plans with specialized agencies and member states.

### 8.COP30 (30th UNFCCC Conference) – Background

The UN Climate Change Conference (COP30) was held in Belém, Brazil, bringing together nearly 200 countries to accelerate action on climate goals under the Paris Agreement. It emphasized implementation, equity, finance, and adaptation, though key negotiations saw varying degrees of consensus on fossil fuels and food systems.

### Climate Justice – What It Means

Climate justice is the principle that the impacts of climate change should be addressed in a fair and equitable way, recognizing:

- **Historical responsibility:** Developed countries have contributed most to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and should take the lead in mitigation and finance.
- **Differentiated capacities:** Developing nations like India require policy space to grow and adapt without being penalized for development activities.
- **Equity in finance and technology:** Developing countries need access to predictable climate finance, technology transfer, and capacity building to adapt and transition sustainably.

At COP30, India's diplomacy strongly pushed these climate justice principles – stressing fair burden-sharing, inclusive finance, and respect for national development priorities.

### Agriculture's Role in Climate Justice

#### 1) Climate Impacts on Indian Agriculture

Indian agriculture is highly climate-sensitive. Farmers face:

- Heat stress, erratic monsoons and droughts
- Groundwater depletion and yield losses
- Livelihood insecurity and rising debt

These risks are unequal – small and marginal farmers suffer disproportionately, making climate justice central to agricultural policy.

#### 2) COP30 Negotiations on Agriculture

Agriculture has been a contentious and underserved topic in climate talks:

- Food systems – including growing, processing, distribution and waste – account for major emissions but were weakly addressed in COP30 texts.
- India successfully resisted binding methane targets in agriculture, ensuring reporting remains voluntary and flexible



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in recognition of developmental and food security priorities.

- The final outcome did feature references to food security and rural livelihoods, a diplomatic win for India that brings farmers' concerns into the climate dialogue.

### Climate Finance & Policy Space

A key element of climate justice at COP30 was the call for:

- Reliable, predictable climate finance from developed countries.
- Safeguarding policy space for emerging economies to pursue growth while adapting to climate change.
- Inclusive technology transfer without conditionalities that hinder sovereign decision-making.

India's stance reiterated that finance is a decisive battlefield – without adequate resources, climate justice and just transitions in agriculture cannot be realized.

### Future of Agriculture in India – Key Implications

#### Adaptation & Resilience

- Climate-resilient agriculture (drought-tolerant varieties, efficient water use, climate services) must be mainstreamed.
- Investment in weather risk markets and crop insurance can protect farmers from climate-induced volatility.

#### Equity & Small Farmers

- Policy must prioritise smallholder farmers' rights, land access, and knowledge systems.
- Climate justice requires that adaptation resources reach those most vulnerable, not just national GHG accounting targets.

#### Sustainable Food Systems

- There is a pressing need to integrate agriculture fully into climate frameworks – tackling emissions, deforestation, and food system sustainability – areas that COP30 fell short on but spotlighted as necessary for future negotiations. COP30 highlighted that achieving climate justice is inseparable from securing the future of agriculture for millions in India. While the summit made some progress (e.g., food security inclusion, voluntary methane reporting), it also exposed gaps in addressing food systems emissions, climate finance, and equity. For India, balancing development, climate resilience, and justice in agricultural policies remains a priority – shaping both domestic reforms and future international climate negotiations.

## 9. SOLAR STORMS

### What is a Solar Storm?

A solar storm refers to a sudden eruption of energy, charged particles, and magnetic fields from the Sun's atmosphere into space. These eruptions occur when the Sun's magnetic field lines become twisted and then rapidly reconnect, releasing vast amounts of energy.

Solar storms typically include three main phenomena:

- Solar Flares – intense bursts of electromagnetic radiation across the spectrum.



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- Radiation Storms – high-speed charged particles (electrons, protons) ejected outward.
- Coronal Mass Ejections (CMEs) – massive clouds of plasma and magnetic field that can travel through space.

Together, these are often referred to as space weather events.

### How They Affect Earth

When a CME or high-speed solar wind reaches Earth, it interacts with and disturbs the magnetosphere (Earth's magnetic shield). This produces a geomagnetic storm — a major magnetic disturbance.

Effects include:

- Disruption of radio communications and GPS/navigation systems.
- Power grid fluctuations or outages due to induced currents.
- Damage or degradation of satellites and space infrastructure.
- Auroras (Northern and Southern Lights) at unusually low latitudes.
- Increased radiation risk for astronauts and high-altitude flights.

Earth's magnetic field and atmosphere generally shield humans at the surface from direct harm, but technological systems remain vulnerable.

### Causes & Solar Cycle

- Solar storms are associated with sunspots — cooler, magnetically active regions on the Sun's surface.
- They are more frequent and intense during solar maximum, the peak phase of the ~11-year solar cycle when sunspot numbers are high.

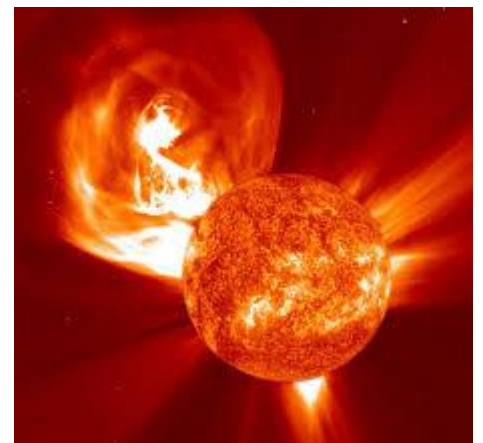
### 10. G4 (Severe) Geomagnetic Storm: Causes, Impacts, and Significance

A **geomagnetic storm** is a large-scale disturbance in Earth's magnetosphere—the magnetic shield that protects Earth from charged particles emitted by the Sun. Such storms occur when intense bursts of solar material, known as Coronal Mass Ejection (**CME**), collide with Earth's magnetic environment, transferring enormous amounts of energy into it and triggering widespread magnetic fluctuations.

#### Classification and Intensity

Geomagnetic storms are classified using the NOAA Space Weather Prediction Center **Space Weather Scale**, which ranges from **G1 (Minor)** to **G5 (Extreme)** based on the **Kp index**, a global measure of geomagnetic activity.

A **G4 (Severe) geomagnetic storm** corresponds to a **Kp index of 8**, making it the second-strongest category. At this level, geomagnetic disturbances are intense enough to affect technological systems on a continental scale.





## JANUARY 2026 CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

### Why It Was in the News

On **19–20 January 2026**, a powerful CME erupted from the Sun and reached Earth, compressing the magnetosphere and triggering a **G4 (Severe) geomagnetic storm**. The storm resulted from strong coupling between the CME's magnetic field and Earth's own field, allowing large amounts of solar energy to penetrate the magnetosphere.

### Impacts and Effects

#### 1. Auroras and Atmospheric Phenomena

G4 storms significantly expand the auroral oval, producing vivid **auroras** visible far beyond polar regions—sometimes even at **mid-latitudes**, where such displays are rare.

#### 2. Technology and Infrastructure Risks

Severe geomagnetic activity can disrupt **satellite operations, GPS accuracy, and radio communications** due to ionospheric disturbances. Power grids are particularly vulnerable, as **geomagnetically induced currents (GICs)** can overload transformers, cause voltage instability, and in extreme cases lead to blackouts.

#### 3. Effects on Spacecraft

Increased heating of Earth's upper atmosphere raises **atmospheric drag**, affecting satellites in low Earth orbit and forcing orbital corrections. Energetic charged particles can also cause **surface charging and electronic degradation** in spacecraft systems.

### Underlying Causes

Geomagnetic storms are primarily driven by **CMEs** and, in some cases, **high-speed solar wind streams** from coronal holes. When these disturbances interact with Earth's magnetic field, they inject energy into the magnetosphere, setting off large-scale magnetic and electrical fluctuations.

### Why It Matters

G4 storms highlight Earth's vulnerability to space weather and underline the importance of **space weather forecasting, resilient power infrastructure, and satellite protection strategies** in an increasingly technology-dependent world.