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Economics

Davos 2026 — World Economic Forum Annual Meeting Key Takeaways

Introduction

- The World Economic Forum (WEF) 2026 Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland, brought together nearly 3,000 leaders from government, business, economics, and civil society.
- Held under the theme “A Spirit of Dialogue,” it aimed to encourage cooperation amid geopolitical tensions, technological disruption, and economic uncertainty.
- The discussions are relevant for students preparing for competitive government exams, covering international relations, global economic trends, technology governance, and multilateral cooperation.

Why in news?

- Dialogue and cooperation over confrontation defined the summit, with multilateralism central to many sessions.
- Geopolitical tensions took centre stage, with major attention on US President Donald Trump’s positions and debates on Greenland, tariffs, and international security alliances.
- Artificial Intelligence (AI), trade restructuring, supply-chain resilience, and strategic partnerships—including prospects for deeper EU–India cooperation—were prominent.
- Workforce transformation through reskilling received strong support, notably via the WEF’s Reskilling Revolution.
- Climate change remained on the agenda but drew less attention than security and economic instability.
- High-level participation reaffirmed Davos as a key platform for global policy dialogue.

Background

- Multilateralism—countries working together through international platforms—was emphasised as essential for handling trade disputes, security tensions, and technology governance.
- Concerns were raised that rising unilateral actions could weaken the rules-based global order, referring to international systems like the United Nations and trade agreements that guide peaceful interaction.
- Davos serves as a forum that shapes international policy direction, even though decisions are not legally binding.

Significance

- Peace through diplomacy was foregrounded, with visibility for the proposed “Board of Peace” to advance negotiation and mediation and prevent military escalation.
- Structural shifts in global trade were highlighted, focusing on resilient, secure supply chains, diversification, and strategic autonomy.
- AI was presented as a driver of growth, innovation, and productivity, while raising concerns about job displacement, misinformation, data privacy, and ethical risks, prompting calls for balanced regulation.
- Reskilling was framed as essential for inclusive growth and social stability, prioritising digital literacy, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, with increased investment urged from governments and companies.
- Long-term growth strategies linked innovation, support for startups, digital infrastructure, and industrial transformation to build resilient economies.
- The agenda reflected how geopolitical and economic stress can shift priorities, connecting climate policy with energy security and geopolitics.
- The summit reinforced that continuous dialogue is vital as armed conflicts, economic inequality, and technological disruption remain unresolved.

Facts/General knowledge

- Participation: Nearly 3,000 global leaders; among the highest recent attendance by heads of state and senior leaders.
- Theme: “A Spirit of Dialogue.”
- Peace initiative: Proposed “Board of Peace” as a structured diplomatic forum for conflict resolution.
- Trade and partnerships: Emphasis on supply-chain resilience, economic diversification, and strategic autonomy; discussions pointed to potential deepening of EU–India cooperation in trade, technology, and green energy.

- Technology: AI's potential for growth alongside risks; governments called for balanced regulation; AI governance is a key topic in competitive exams.
- Workforce: Strong backing for the WEF's Reskilling Revolution; highlighted need for digital literacy, critical thinking, and problem-solving.
- Climate and security: Climate remained part of the agenda but received less attention than geopolitical security and economic instability.
- Role of Davos: A central venue for global policy dialogue, shaping international direction without legally binding decisions.

Science and technology

ISRO PSLV-C62/EOS-N1 Mission Anomaly

Introduction

- Science and technology update on ISRO's PSLV-C62 mission carrying the EOS-N1 earth observation satellite with co-passenger satellites and a technology demonstrator.

Why in news?

- The PSLV-C62/EOS-N1 mission encountered an anomaly during the third stage.
- It marked the 64th flight of the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV).
- It was the 9th dedicated commercial mission undertaken by New Space India Limited (NSIL).

Background

- NSIL is a wholly owned Government company incorporated in 2019 under the administrative control of the Department of Space and is the commercial arm of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).
- The mission included the launch of the EOS-N1 earth observation satellite along with 15 co-passenger satellites from domestic and international customers.
- EOS-N1 is designed to strengthen space-based monitoring capabilities.
- It also demonstrated KID (Kestrel Initial Technology Demonstrator) from a Spanish start-up, a small-scale prototype of a re-entry vehicle slated to re-enter the Earth's atmosphere towards splashdown in the South Pacific Ocean.
- EOS-N1 and 14 co-passenger satellites were to be injected into a Sun Synchronous Orbit, and the KID capsule into a re-entry trajectory.

Significance

- EOS-N1 enhances space-based monitoring capabilities.
- KID provides a demonstration of a small-scale re-entry vehicle through atmospheric re-entry and splashdown.

Facts/General knowledge

- PSLV is a third-generation launch vehicle and the first Indian launch vehicle equipped with liquid stages; it is considered the workhorse of ISRO.
- It has consistently delivered satellites to Low Earth Orbits and can take up to 1,750 kg of payload to Sun-Synchronous Polar Orbits of 600 km altitude.
- Stages in PSLV:
  First Stage: S139 solid rocket motor augmented by six solid strap-on boosters.
- Second Stage: Earth storable liquid rocket engine known as the Vikas engine, developed by the Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre.
- Third Stage: Solid rocket motor providing high thrust to the upper stages.
- Fourth Stage: Uppermost stage comprising two Earth storable liquid engines.
- Notable PSLV missions include Chandrayaan-1, Mars Orbiter Mission, Aditya-L1 and Astrosat; PSLV set a world record by launching 104 satellites in a single mission in 2017.

AyulSAT in-orbit refuelling demonstration

Introduction

- AyulSAT is a dedicated tanker-satellite and target spacecraft designed to demonstrate in-orbit transfer using a standardised docking and refuelling interface.
- It aims to prove in-orbit propellant transfer and docking readiness and to lay the foundation of an on-orbit space economy.

Why in news?

- India is set to demonstrate in-orbit satellite refuelling for the first time as Chennai-based OrbitAid's AyulSAT is launched onboard ISRO's PSLV-C62.

Background

- Developed by OrbitAid Aerospace, a Chennai-based Indian space start-up founded by Sakthikumar Ramachandran.
- Intended to enable satellite servicing.
- Commercially oriented, deploying India's first commercial docking and refuelling interface in orbit.

Significance

- Extends the operational life of satellites in LEO and GEO by enabling refuelling instead of abandonment.
- Reduces space debris by preventing dead satellites from becoming orbital junk, supporting Debris-Free Space Mission 2030.

Facts/General knowledge

- Mass: 25 kg.
- Internal refuelling demonstration transfers fuel between tanks within the same satellite to study fluid behaviour in microgravity.
- Uses OrbitAid's Standard Interface for Docking and Refuelling Port (SIDRP) for future spacecraft-to-spacecraft refuelling.
- Enables multi-utility transfer: fuel, power and data.
- RPOD-ready target satellite for a future chaser that will dock and perform actual in-orbit refuelling by end-2026.
- Topic: COSMO-SkyMed Second Generation (CSG-FM3) Launch by SpaceX

Introduction

- On 2 January 2026, SpaceX launched the COSMO-SkyMed Second Generation-Flight Model 3 (CSG-FM3) Earth observation satellite for the Italian Space Agency (ASI) and the Italian Ministry of Defence.
- The mission used a Falcon 9 rocket from Vandenberg Space Force Base, California, United States of America.
- This satellite is the third in the COSMO-SkyMed Second-Generation series.
- The upper stage deployed the satellite into a sun-synchronous low Earth orbit at around 620 kilometres altitude.

Why in news?

- It is SpaceX's first mission of 2026.
- It is the first orbital rocket launch globally in 2026.

Background

- COSMO-SkyMed is managed by ASI and Italy's Ministry of Defence and operated by Telespazio, capturing high-resolution images day and night in all weather conditions.
- The first-generation COSMO-SkyMed constellation comprised four satellites launched from 2007 to 2010 for disaster monitoring, environment, agriculture, and defence over the Mediterranean.
- The second-generation CSG satellites (around 2,205 kilograms) are upgraded versions with more advanced Synthetic Aperture Radar sensors and improved imaging capabilities.
- The system was designed from the start as a dual-use constellation, supporting both civilian and defence applications 24 hours a day, in all weather conditions.

Significance

- CSG-FM3 strengthens the COSMO-SkyMed Second-Generation constellation developed by Italy to enhance global radar imaging capabilities.
- It supports national security, maritime surveillance, border monitoring, and strategic planning.
- It enables real-time tracking of natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, landslides, and wildfires, and monitors glacier movement.
- It assesses forest health, crop conditions, and soil moisture.
- It provides high-resolution radar maps for cartography, urban planning, land use, and infrastructure monitoring.

Facts/General knowledge

- Falcon 9 is a reusable first-stage booster capable of carrying satellites to low Earth orbit and beyond, supporting commercial, scientific, and government missions worldwide.
- SpaceX: Chief Executive Officer – Elon Musk; Headquarters – Texas, United States of America; Establishment – 2002.

Mpemba Effect and JNCASR Simulations

Introduction

- The Mpemba effect is the phenomenon where hotter water freezes faster than colder water.

Why in news?

- Scientists from the Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for

Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR), an autonomous institute under the Department of Science and Technology (DST), have developed the first supercomputer-powered simulations to explain the Mpemba effect.

Background

- Aristotle first noted the effect in Meteorologica.
- It was rediscovered in the 20th century by Erasto Mpemba, after whom it is named.

Significance

- The findings confirm that the Mpemba effect is real.
- The effect is not limited to water and can occur in other fluid-to-solid phase transitions.
- The study deepens understanding of out-of-equilibrium phenomena.
- It offers insights for better cooling and thermal control in next-generation electronics.
- It marks a major breakthrough in nonequilibrium physics, resolving long-standing experimental and theoretical debates.

Facts/General knowledge

- Water does not freeze directly but passes through short-lived intermediate molecular states.
- Depending on the starting temperature, water can remain trapped in these states for different durations.
- Hotter water can sometimes bypass these delays and reach ice nucleation faster than colder water.

DRDO's SWaDeS Portable Water Purifier for Soldiers

Introduction

- India's defence research ecosystem has developed a portable water purification system for troops in extreme and remote conditions.
- Designed mainly for soldiers, it converts saline water into safe drinking water.
- Ensures reliable hydration during long patrols and deployments in water-scarce regions.

Why in news?

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation has developed a hand-operated Sea Water Desalination System (SWaDeS).
- It addresses the drinking water needs of soldiers in remote, coastal, and high-altitude areas.

Background

- The system has been developed by the Defence Laboratory, Jodhpur.
- It is lightweight and suitable for field conditions.

Significance

- Enhances self-sufficiency of soldiers in the field.
- Supports long-range patrols and isolated deployments.
- Useful for naval operations and coastal installations.
- Can be deployed in inland saline areas like Pangong Tso in Ladakh.
- Supports troops near borders and in remote terrain.
- Designed for regions with limited freshwater availability.

Facts/General knowledge

- The system is named Sea Water Desalination System (SWaDeS).
- It can operate manually or using an engine.
- The manual version can be carried by a single soldier.
- The manual version can meet emergency water needs of 10–12 personnel.
- The engine-operated version can support 20–25 soldiers.
- It reduces water salinity from 35,000 mg/L TDS to below 500 mg/L.
- It purifies saline water into potable drinking water.

Param Shakti Supercomputing Facility

Introduction

- 'Param Shakti' is a 3.1 petaflop, indigenously developed and manufactured supercomputing system.
- Launched by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology at the Indian Institute of Technology Madras.
- Funded under the National Supercomputing Mission.

Why in news?

- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology launched 'Param Shakti' at the Indian Institute of Technology Madras.

Background

- Built using the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing's RUDRA series of servers.
- Operates on an open-source software stack, including AlmaLinux.
- Recognised among the most powerful computational systems available in Indian academic institutions.
- National Supercomputing Mission (launched in 2015) aims to connect national academic and R&D institutions with a grid of over 70 high-performance computing facilities.
- Supercomputers under the Mission are networked on the National Supercomputing grid over the National Knowledge Network.
- The Mission is jointly steered by the Department of Science and Technology and the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, and implemented by the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing, Pune, and the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru.

Significance

- Expected to support complex research in aerospace engineering.
- Enables advanced work in materials science and climate modelling.
- Facilitates drug discovery and advanced manufacturing research.

Facts/General knowledge

- PARAM 8000 is India's first supercomputer.
- Param Pravega is the largest supercomputer.
- Param Shivay is the first indigenously built supercomputer.
- AIRAWAT is a common computer platform for AI research and knowledge assimilation.

Kavach 4.0 Expansion in Indian Railways

Introduction

- Kavach is India's indigenous Automatic Train Protection (ATP) system, with Version 4.0 being the most advanced iteration.
- It enhances train operations through continuous monitoring and automated safety interventions.

Why in news?

- Indian Railways commissioned 472.3 route kilometres of Kavach Version 4.0 in a single day, the highest-ever rollout achieved in a day and month.
- The commissioning covered key sections on Western, Northern, and East Central Railways.
- Total Kavach 4.0 coverage has expanded to 1,306.3 route kilometres across five railway zones.

Background

- Developed since 2012 as the Train Collision Avoidance System (TCAS) and later rechristened as Kavach, meaning "armour".
- Version 4.0 has evolved through continuous upgrades based on operational feedback.

Significance

- Designed for India's high-density, multi-line rail network, offering faster response and higher reliability.
- Provides seamless integration with existing signalling and interlocking systems.
- Automatically prevents Signal Passing at Danger (SPAD), controls overspeeding, and applies brakes to avert collisions.
- Ensures safe operation in low visibility and adverse weather, and alerts the loco pilot about wrong-direction movements and level-crossing gates.
- Complies with Safety Integrity Level (SIL)-4 and is approved by the Research Designs and Standards Organisation (RDSO).

Facts/General knowledge

- Technology base integrates microprocessors, Global Positioning System (GPS), and radio communication to track train position, speed, and signalling status.

Defence and military exercise

Indian Navy base at Haldia

Introduction

- The Indian Navy will establish a new naval base at Haldia in West Bengal.

Why in news?

- The decision reflects a response to evolving regional security considerations in the Bay of Bengal.

Background

- Increasing Chinese naval activity in the Indian

Ocean Region.
- Changing security dynamics involving Bangladesh and Pakistan.

Significance

- Boosts maritime security across the Bay of Bengal region.
- Enhances the Indian Navy's regional presence.
- Provides direct access to the Bay of Bengal, reducing dependence on the Hooghly river route and improving response time.

Facts/General knowledge

- The base will leverage the existing Haldia dock complex.
- The facility is expected to host Fast Interceptor Crafts (FICs) and New Water Jet Fast Attack Crafts (NWJFACs) for quick-response and coastal defence missions.

China's Xiaokang border villages and India's border security

Introduction

- China is constructing 628 dual-use 'Xiaokang' villages along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) to strengthen territorial claims through incremental "salami-slicing" tactics.
- These settlements enable military–civil fusion and constant surveillance, creating sustained pressure on India's northeastern borders.
- India views these villages as permanent, fortified outposts that pose a long-term security and sovereignty challenge.

Why in news?

- India's military leadership has warned that China's rapid build-up of Xiaokang villages, with about 90% of the cluster facing Arunachal Pradesh, is intended to solidify claims via civilian settlement.
- In response, India is accelerating the Vibrant Villages Programme and the Arunachal Frontier Highway to bolster strategic deterrence.

Background

- Xiaokang Border Defence Villages: Chinese 'Xiaokang' villages are a category of border settlements built or upgraded mainly in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) along disputed frontiers; "Xiaokang" means "moderately prosperous" or "well-off".
- Launched around 2017 by the TAR government, the project spans 628 villages across 21 border counties with about 30 billion yuan in state investment.
- Though framed as rural revitalisation, they serve dual-use purposes by housing People's Liberation Army (PLA) personnel and enabling rapid military mobilisation.
- Backed by China's 2022 Land Border Law, which mandates stronger border defence and coordination with social and economic development.
- They operate as a "Great Wall of Villages" to reinforce de facto control through "grey-zone" tactics.
- The approach facilitates demographic engineering to tighten Chinese Communist Party control, monitor cross-border activity, and promote Sinicisation in Tibet by populating sensitive zones.
- Infrastructure includes roads, electricity, water supply, and communications, corroborated by satellite imagery.
- Line of Actual Control (LAC):
- The LAC is a notional, de facto line separating Indianand Chinese-controlled territories, emerging from post-1962 positions without a formally delineated border.
- First proposed by Zhou Enlai in 1959, it was formally accepted by India in the 1993 Border Peace and Tranquility Agreement (BPTA).
- It is divided into Western (Ladakh/Aksai Chin), Middle (Uttarakhand/Himachal Pradesh), and Eastern (Arunachal Pradesh/Sikkim) sectors, with the Eastern Sector largely following the McMahon Line.
- India recognises the 1914 Simla Convention's McMahon Line; China rejects this and refers to Arunachal Pradesh as "South Tibet".
- A perception gap persists: India estimates the LAC at 3,488 km, while China claims about 2,000 km, creating overlapping "grey zones".

Significance

- How the villages pose a threat to India: Territorial assertion by establishing settled populations in disputed areas to strengthen legal claims under the 2022 Land Border Law, altering the status quo without open conflict.
- Perceived breach of the 2005 India–China

Agreement on Political Parameters and Guiding Principles, undermining mutual security and peace along the border.
- Dual-use infrastructure at sites such as Zhuangnan and Majiduncun operates like forward operating bases with logistics, communications, and housing for rapid PLA mobilisation.
- Military–civil fusion leverages residents as "eyes and ears" for surveillance, early warning, and intelligence collection on Indian movements.
- Strategic pressure near sensitive zones, including Tawang and the Siliguri Corridor ("Chicken's Neck"), challenges India's northeastern connectivity.
- Psychological warfare through visibly modernised villages can project governance superiority and highlight disparities with Indian border communities.
- India's ongoing initiatives:
- Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP).
- India–China Border Roads (ICBR) Programme.
- Border Infrastructure and Management (BIM) Scheme.
- Border Roads Organisation (BRO) projects, including the Zojila Tunnel and Sela Tunnel.
- Steps India needs to take:
- Strategic logistical connectivity: accelerate ICBR Phase III and the 1,840 km Arunachal Frontier Highway for all-weather mobilisation and logistics.
- Civilian-led defence: expand VVP (Phase II) to develop 1,954 border villages as self-sufficient hubs and create a civilian monitoring layer.
- High-altitude infrastructure: prioritise strategic tunnels and all-weather rail links for year-round access and movement of heavy weaponry.
- Aerial and multimodal readiness: upgrade Advanced Landing Grounds (ALGs) like the Nyoma airbase and expand helipad networks for heavy-lift operations and high-resolution reconnaissance.
- Technological surveillance integration: deploy a multi-layered ISR framework using 150+ new satellite assets, AI-driven analytics, and drones.
- Energy and institutional synergy: install renewable energy micro-grids at forward posts and use the PM GatiShakti framework to expedite clearances for BRO projects.
- Diplomatic deterrence: sustain engagement via the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC) to manage tensions and prevent escalation.

Facts/General knowledge

- The Xiaokang initiative focuses on the TAR's disputed frontiers and is designed for dual-use, integrating civilian settlement with military functionality.
- State investment approximates 30 billion yuan across 628 villages in 21 border counties.
- The 2022 Land Border Law underpins strengthened border defence and integration with socio-economic development.
- The LAC's sectoral division sees the Western Sector as the most friction-prone and the Middle Sector as the least disputed.
- Friction points include Depsang Plains, Galwan Valley, and Pangong Tso.

India's First Open-Sea Marine Fish Farming Project in the Andaman Sea

Introduction

- India has launched its first open-sea marine fish farming project in the Andaman Sea as a science-led, livelihood-oriented initiative under the Blue Economy.
- It is a pilot open-sea aquaculture initiative involving marine finfish and seaweed farming in natural oceanic conditions using indigenously developed cages and marine technologies.

Why in news?

- The project marks a major step in advancing the Blue Economy through the utilisation of ocean resources for sustainable livelihoods and marine-based economic growth.

Background

- Location: North Bay, near Sri Vijaya Puram, in the Union Territory of Andaman & Nicobar Islands.
- Implementing agencies: Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) and the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT).
- Aim: To unlock ocean-based economic potential, generate sustainable coastal

livelihoods, and build technical feasibility for scaling open-sea aquaculture under India's Blue Economy vision.

- Key features:
  Open-sea finfish farming using NIOT-designed cages resilient to natural ocean conditions.
- Deep-water seaweed cultivation with seed distribution to local fishers.
- Livelihood-centric pilot integrating science, technology, and community participation.
- PPP-ready model for future scale-up based on feasibility and field experience.

Significance

- Strengthens marine food security and employment for coastal communities.
- Enhances coastal resilience through diversified, sustainable ocean-resource utilisation.
- Establishes technical feasibility and a model for scaling open-sea aquaculture in India.

Facts/General knowledge

- The Andaman Sea is a marginal sea of the north-eastern Indian Ocean, historically significant for trade and strategically important for maritime connectivity and regional ecology.
- Location: North-eastern Indian Ocean, adjoining South-East Asia.
- Bordering regions: Irrawaddy River delta, Myanmar and Thailand, Sumatra (Indonesia), and the Strait of Malacca.
- Key features:
  Large marginal sea (~7.98 lakh sq km) enabling ocean circulation, sediment deposition, and marine resource utilisation.
- Andaman–Nicobar Ridge (active subduction zone) where the Indian Plate subducts beneath the Burma microplate, shaping seismic and volcanic characteristics.
- Deep submarine valleys (>4,400 m) formed by tectonic movement.
- Shallow northern continental shelf influenced by extensive sediment deposition from the Irrawaddy River, affecting salinity, turbidity, and marine habitats.

Topic: Indian Army: Year of Networking & Data Centricity – 2026

Introduction

- The Indian Army has declared 2026 as the 'Year of Networking & Data Centricity' to modernise operational capabilities.
- Announced under the leadership of the Chief of the Army Staff, General Upendra Dwivedi, as part of a long-term vision for a future-ready, technology-driven force.
- Emphasises digital integration, real-time data sharing, and data-driven decision-making for modern warfare.

Why in news?

- Official declaration made in January 2026 by the Indian Army.
- Important for government job aspirants and competitive exam candidates under defence reforms, technology in security, and current affairs.

Background

- The initiative treats data as a critical operational asset and leverages advanced networking systems for connectivity across command and operations.
- Primary objective: enhance situational awareness, accelerate decisions, and improve combat effectiveness through integrated digital networks and real-time data flow.
- Builds on the 2024–25 'Year of Technology Absorption', which familiarised troops with new technologies; 2026 focuses on operationalising these through networking and data-centric frameworks.
- Aligns with broader reform goals that include jointness, indigenisation, and digital integration.

Significance

- Modern warfare hinges on information dominance; faster collection, processing, and action on data provide a decisive advantage.
- Promotes joint operations among the Army, Navy, and Air Force via shared data platforms and interoperable communication systems.
- Prioritises indigenisation through indigenous communication systems, Battlefield Management Systems, and secure defence networks, supporting Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India).
- Ensures integration of legacy systems with modern digital platforms without compromising security.

Facts/General knowledge

- Networking in military operations connects soldiers, command and control centres, sensors and surveillance systems, weapon platforms, and intelligence and logistics units for instant communication and coordinated action.
- Data-centric operations involve real-time battlefield data collection, rapid processing and analysis, and secure information sharing to enable quick, informed, and precise decisions in complex, fast-changing combat situations.

International Relation

Uganda Presidential Election: Museveni Secures Seventh Term

Introduction

- Uganda concluded a closely watched presidential election in which veteran leader Yoweri Museveni was declared winner for a seventh term.
- The outcome was contested by the main opposition, citing irregularities, internet shutdowns, and alleged harassment of polling agents.

Why in news?

- Uganda's election commission declared President Museveni winner with 71.65 per cent of votes.
- Opposition leader Bobi Wine (Kyagulanyi Ssentamu) received 24.72 per cent, rejected the results alleging fraud, and called for peaceful protests.

Background

- Museveni, aged 81, is among Africa's longest-serving leaders; his rule began in 1986.
- Constitutional amendments removed presidential term and age limits, allowing repeated contests.
- Critics argue political rivals have been jailed, sidelined, or weakened, limiting genuine competition.
- Analysts note Bobi Wine mounted a strong symbolic challenge, but the opposition remains fragmented, while Museveni retains firm control over the ruling party and the armed forces.

Significance

- The wide margin of victory has intensified debates over political competition and fairness in Uganda's electoral system.
- Authorities hailed the poll as successful, yet the disputed outcome has put Uganda's democratic process under global scrutiny.

Facts/General knowledge

- Uganda follows a presidential system where the head of state is elected by popular vote.
- The Electoral Commission oversees voting, counting, and result declaration.
- The Supreme Court hears election petitions.
- The election was conducted nationwide, including urban opposition strongholds such as Kampala.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz's India visit

Introduction

- High-level diplomatic engagement between India and Europe is intensifying amid escalating foreign policy tensions.
- German Chancellor Friedrich Merz's visit marks a concerted push to strengthen India–Europe relations.
- The visit forms part of broader efforts to align on trade, strategic cooperation, and investment.

Why in news?

- Merz became the first significant European leader to visit Delhi in this phase of outreach.
- Preparations are underway for the EU–India Summit, with the Presidents of the European Commission and Council expected at India's Republic Day parade.
- Plans are being finalised for French President Emmanuel Macron's visit focused on an AI summit in February.

Background

- Talks continue on a long-awaited EU–India trade agreement, with Germany central as the EU's largest economy.
- Efforts to deepen Indo-Pacific dialogue face complexity due to Germany's substantial trade with China, affecting diversification.
- Wider geopolitical tensions frame the

engagement, shaping priorities and pace of cooperation.

Significance

- Reinforces momentum on trade, defence collaboration, and investments between India and Europe.
- Broadens strategic dialogue to include pressing global geopolitical issues.
- Demonstrates intent to progress cooperation despite identified policy divergences.

Facts/General knowledge

- Merz met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Ahmedabad.
- Ongoing EU–India trade agreement talks were reaffirmed, with Germany's role underscored.
- Both leaders attended a business council meeting advocating increased investments; India–Germany trade is projected to surpass $50 billion in 2024–25.
- Outcomes comprised Joint Declarations of Interest and Memorandums of Understanding, including a Defence Industrial Cooperation Roadmap on defence equipment collaboration.
- Geopolitical discussions covered global issues, particularly actions by the US.
- Areas of divergence include the Ukraine war, Indo-Pacific engagement given Germany's trade with China, and the Ariha Shah custody case.
- The diplomatic calendar includes the EU Commission and Council Presidents' participation in India's Republic Day parade and Macron's planned AI-focused visit in February.

Finke River (Larapinta)

Introduction

- The Finke River, also called Larapinta in the Indigenous Arrente language.
- Located in central Australia, flowing through the Northern Territory and the state of South Australia.
- Originates in the MacDonnell Ranges.
- Runs for more than 640 km.

Why in news?

- Believed to be the world's oldest river system.
- Researchers say it began flowing between 300 and 400 million years ago, long before dinosaurs walked the planet.

Background

- Forms where two smaller creeks, Davenport and Ormiston, meet.
- Intermittent in nature, flowing mainly after heavy rainfall.
- For most of the year, appears as a series of isolated waterholes due to the arid climate.

Significance

- It is the oldest riverbed in the world.
- Forms an important part of the Lake Eyre Basin, one of Australia's major drainage systems, and is one of its four crucial waterbodies.

Facts/General knowledge

- Dated to either the Devonian (419–359 million years ago) period or Carboniferous (359–299 million years ago) era.
- Exhibits a cross-axial (antecedent) drainage pattern, cutting across geological structures rather than following them.

BRICS India 2026 Logo

Introduction

- India has officially launched the BRICS India 2026 logo and website as it prepares to assume the Chairship in 2026.
- The logo is the official visual identity of India's BRICS Chairship, reflecting the country's vision, values and priorities for leading the grouping.

Why in news?

- The unveiling of the logo and website signals India's preparations to lead BRICS during the calendar year 2026.

Background

- Host country: India; Chairship period: calendar year 2026; milestone year: 20th anniversary of BRICS (2006–2026).
- The logo is inspired by India's national flower, the Lotus, symbolising resilience and renewal, unity in diversity, and spiritual and cultural harmony.
- At its core, the logo conveys "togetherness for global welfare", aligning with India's vision of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (One Earth, One Family).

Significance

- Projects India's leadership role in the Global South.
- Reinforces BRICS as a people-centric, development-oriented platform.
- Aligns with India's four priorities for BRICS

2026: Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability.

Facts/General knowledge

- Lotus shape: represents India's civilisational identity and growth from adversity.
- Namaste hands at the centre: symbolise respect, dialogue and cooperation.
- Five coloured petals: represent the founding BRICS nations — Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.
- Balanced design: reflects unity among diverse cultures, economies and political systems.
- Digital platform: the BRICS India website will act as a hub for meetings, initiatives, outcomes and public engagement during India's Chairship.

US Withdrawal from the World Health Organisation

Introduction

- The United States has officially withdrawn from the WHO, a move initiated a year earlier by executive order from President Donald Trump and confirmed by the Department of Health and Human Services and the State Department.

Why in news?

- The withdrawal has taken effect, marking the US exit from the WHO with no current plans to rejoin or to participate as an observer.

Background

- The administration argued the WHO had strayed from its core mission and failed to enact needed reform, accountability, and transparency.
- Criticism centred on the WHO's handling of COVID-19, including a delayed declaration of a global health emergency.
- Officials claimed the WHO acted against US interests and highlighted disproportionate US financial contributions compared with China.

Significance

- Public health experts warn that stepping away from the WHO risks weakening global cooperation against health threats that do not respect borders.
- The move could affect surveillance and response for diseases such as Ebola and seasonal influenza.
- The US intends to continue engaging in global public health outside the WHO framework.

Facts/General knowledge

- UN procedures require one year's notice for withdrawal; the US adhered to this timeline via the executive order.
- The US currently owes over $270 million in unpaid contributions for 2024–2025; the administration contends there is no legal obligation to pay under the WHO constitution.
- HHS has over 2,000 employees working in 63 countries.
- Bilateral agreements with numerous governments will continue efforts in disease surveillance, diagnostics, and outbreak response.
- The WHO's executive board will discuss the implications of the US withdrawal at an upcoming meeting.

India–Bhutan Law Clerks Exchange MoU

Introduction

- The Supreme Court of India has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Bhutan to exchange young legal professionals.
- Chief Justice of India Surya Kant announced the initiative and welcomed law clerks from Bhutan to the Supreme Court, reflecting closer judicial cooperation between the neighbours.

Why in news?

- India and Bhutan have signed an MoU allowing Bhutanese law clerks to work in the Supreme Court of India.
- The initiative focuses on judicial exchange, training, and long-term institutional cooperation.

Background

- Former Chief Justice of India B R Gavai visited Bhutan in October 2025.
- Both countries agreed during the visit to deepen judicial ties.
- Cooperation was planned in technology integration and capacity building.

Significance

- Strengthens judicial diplomacy between India and Bhutan.
- Helps the Bhutanese judiciary gain exposure to India's legal system.
- Enhances regional cooperation under India's

Neighbourhood First policy.

Facts/General knowledge

- Two Bhutanese law clerks will work in the Supreme Court of India.
- The tenure for the clerks will be three months.
- They will receive the same honorarium as Indian law clerks.
- Travel expenses will be borne by the Supreme Court of India.

India–UAE Strategic Arc

Introduction

- A premier strategic partnership spanning trade, energy, defence, fintech, digital innovation and connectivity, underpinned by a large Indian diaspora in the UAE.
- Relations have diversified beyond oil into long-term LNG arrangements, civil nuclear cooperation, Small Modular Reactors, and a Green Hydrogen value chain.
- Defence ties now emphasise industrial collaboration and interoperability, while connectivity initiatives like IMEC and logistics integration elevate the UAE as India's gateway hub.
- Fintech and digital linkages, including payment interoperability and high-end computing collaboration, are turning economic interdependence into sustained geopolitical convergence.

Why in news?

- A major trade milestone under CEPA was reached in FY 2024–25, alongside a higher bilateral trade target set for 2032.
- In January 2026, the two nations signed a Letter of Intent for a Strategic Defence Partnership covering defence industrial collaboration and interoperability.

Background

- Phase I: The Mercantile & Cultural Era (Pre-1971)
- Geography-driven ties fostered a borderless Arabian Sea economy; the Indian Rupee served as de facto currency in the Trucial States until 1966.
- Dhow trade embedded Indian merchants within Gulf society, reflecting civilisational links predating the oil era.
- The 1966 Rupee devaluation initiated economic decoupling and the shift to independent Gulf currencies.
- Phase II: The "Transaction" Era (1971–2000)
- Ties narrowed to oil exports and Indian migrant labour following the UAE's formation.
- Cold War alignments created distance; Dubai's role in smuggling and anti-India activities deepened mistrust.
- Strategic myopia persisted, including support to Pakistan on Kashmir at the OIC; Indian workers were viewed primarily as economic inputs.
- Phase III: The Economic Awakening & "Benign Neglect" (2000–2014)
- "High trade, low politics" prevailed; energy relations stayed buyer–seller without strategic depth.
- The 2002 deportation of Aftab Ansari marked a quiet turn towards covert security cooperation.
- Phase IV: The Strategic Realignment & "Golden Era" (2015–Present)
- A decisive pivot to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in a post-American Middle East.
- The 2015 Prime Ministerial visit condemned state-sponsored terrorism and elevated the UAE as India's connectivity hub via IMEC and I2U2.
- The UAE de-hyphenated India from Pakistan, inviting India as OIC Guest of Honour in 2019; CEPA was concluded in 2022 in record time.

Significance

- Current development pillars
  Enhanced economic partnership: CEPA-driven institutional integration, MSME onboarding through 'Bharat Mart' (JAFZA) and 'Bharat–Africa Setu', and a vision to build a resilient Global South trade corridor.
- Strategic defence pivot: Movement towards a formal security architecture; the UAE positions India as a primary partner for maritime security and defence industrial innovation; exercises such as Desert Cyclone and Desert Flag now feature realistic, multi-domain war-fighting.
- Energy transition: From transactional crude to long-term security and clean energy under the SHANTI framework; civil nuclear cooperation and SMRs leveraging Barakah expertise; LNG anchors near-term needs while co-developing a Green Hydrogen value chain for a sustainable "Green Corridor".

- Fintech and digital alliance: Payment stack linkages (UPI–AANI, RuPay–JAYWAN), Digital Embassies, and a planned C-DAC–G42 supercomputing cluster aligned with the AI India Mission to drive research and commercial innovation.
- Infrastructure and greenfield assets: UAE sovereign funds as anchor investors; integration of Indian manufacturing zones with Jebel Ali to operationalise IMEC by owning logistics end-to-end; commitments at Dholera SIR and a major DP World ports upgrade.

Key frictions

- Structural trade imbalance and CEPA utilisation gaps: Limited export diversification, non-tariff barriers, rules-of-origin enforcement, and a surplus that complicates full local currency settlement.
- IMEC vulnerability: Israel–Gaza conflict stalling the UAE–Israel leg, creating a strategic bottleneck for India's Europe access.
- Hydrocarbon–renewable paradox: Long-term fossil commitments alongside green hydrogen ambitions and divergent Net Zero timelines.
- Financial interoperability constraints: LCSS rupee accumulation with few scalable reinvestment avenues, curbing a shift from Dollar pegs.
- Labour market nationalisation: Emiratisation targets and penalties pressuring hiring flexibility for the Indian workforce.
- Strengthening measures
  Sovereign fast-track arbitration within GIFT City for UAE sovereign wealth funds to cut investment latency.
- A Rupee–Dirham corporate bond market in ADGM to recycle surplus INR via Masala and green infrastructure bonds.
- A Strategic Food Security Treaty with quota-based exemptions from ad-hoc export bans, tied to full I2U2 Food Park capitalisation.
- Defence co-production with joint intellectual property in drones, AI-surveillance and desert-warfare electronics for shared strategic autonomy.
- Transnational Skill Harmonisation via a Skills Passport pre-validated by the UAE National Qualifications Authority to upskill Indian workers into grey-collar roles.
- A Green Maritime Bridge between JNPT/Mundra and Jebel Ali with e-Bills of Lading, harmonised customs and preferential docking for green-fuel vessels.
- DPI interlinkage beyond payments through mutual recognition of digital health records, portable SME credit histories and verified educational credentials.

Facts/General knowledge

- The UAE is India's third-largest trading partner.
- CEPA was signed in 2022 after 88 days of negotiation.
- The Indian diaspora in the UAE numbers around 3.5 million.
- Under CEPA, bilateral trade crossed $100 billion in FY 2024–25; a $200 billion annual trade target has been set for 2032.
- Energy cooperation includes HPCL's 10-year LNG pact with ADNOC (signed in 2026) for 0.5 million metric tonnes annually from 2028, alongside another 10-year LNG agreement (1.2 MMTPA) by Indian entities.
- Infrastructure initiatives feature 'Bharat Mart' in JAFZA and the 'Bharat–Africa Setu'; the UAE has committed to developing the Dholera Special Investment Region in Gujarat, including a new international airport and greenfield port; DP World has pledged an additional $5 billion to upgrade India's port logistics network.
- India's FY2025 trade deficit with the UAE was nearly $26 billion, driven primarily by oil imports; concerns include pass-through of third-party goods such as gold and silver.
- Emiratisation mandates require large firms to reach 8% by end-2025, with annual financial penalties for non-compliance.

Schemes and initiatives

PANKHUDI Portal

Introduction

- An integrated, single-window digital portal to facilitate Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and partnership initiatives for women and child development.

Why in news?

- The Ministry of Women and Child Development

has launched the PANKHUDI portal.

Background

- Inspired by the vision of technology-driven governance and Jan Bhagidari.
- Acts as a bridge between the government, citizens, and institutions to promote transparency, participation, and trust.
- Brings together individuals, NRIs, NGOs, CSR contributors, corporate entities, and government agencies on a common digital interface to streamline voluntary and institutional contributions.

Significance

- Strengthens collaboration and transparency in initiatives for women and child development.
- Enhances coordination, monitoring, and accountability through structured workflows.
- Strengthens the implementation of Mission Saksham Anganwadi & Poshan 2.0, Mission Vatsalya, and Mission Shakti.
- Represents a technology-enabled, outcome-oriented governance model, improving ease of doing CSR, strengthening partnerships, and enhancing ease of living for crores of beneficiaries across India.

Facts/General knowledge

- Coverage includes nutrition; health; Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE); child welfare, protection and rehabilitation; and women's safety and empowerment.
- Contributors can register, identify initiatives, submit proposals, and track approvals and project progress on the portal.
- To ensure financial transparency and traceability, all contributions are accepted only through non-cash modes.
- Expected to improve service delivery across 14+ lakh Anganwadi Centres, ~5,000 Child Care Institutions, ~800 One Stop Centres, 500+ Shakhi Niwas, and 400+ Shakti Sadan.
- Topic: Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana

Introduction

- A scheme providing a dedicated account for a girl child with defined rules on eligibility, deposits, interest, withdrawals, maturity, and tax treatment.

Background

- Launched on 22 January 2015 as part of the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao Campaign.

Facts/General knowledge

- Eligibility:
  The account can be opened by the natural or legal guardian for a girl child below 10 years of age.
- Only one account may be opened in the name of a girl child.
- A natural or legal guardian may open accounts for up to two girl children.
- Deposits and contributions:
  Minimum deposit: ₹250.
- Maximum deposit: ₹1,50,000 per financial year.
- Deposits can be made for up to 15 years from the date of account opening.
- Tax benefits:
  Contributions, interest, and maturity proceeds are exempt under Section 80C of the Income Tax Act, making it a triple tax-free (EEE) scheme.
- Interest:
  The interest rate is revised quarterly by the Ministry of Finance.
- Interest is calculated monthly on the lowest balance between the close of the fifth day and the end of the month.
- Interest is credited at the end of each financial year.
- Maturity:
  The account matures upon completion of 21 years from the date of opening.
- Early closure is permitted for marriage after the account holder turns 18, subject to required documents.
- Account management:
  Managed by the guardian until the girl child turns 18.
- Upon turning 18, the account holder can assume control by submitting necessary documents.
- Withdrawals for education:
  Up to 50% withdrawal allowed after the account holder turns 18 or completes the tenth standard, whichever comes first.
- Withdrawals may be taken as a lump sum or in instalments, with a maximum of one withdrawal per year for up to five years.
- Premature closure:
- Immediate closure in the event of the account

holder's death.
- Allowed on extreme compassionate grounds, such as life-threatening medical issues of the account holder or the death of the guardian.
- No premature closure within the first five years of opening.

Sanskaar Shaala – Assam's Value-Based Education Initiative

Introduction

- Lakshman Prasad Acharya, Governor of Assam, inaugurated Sanskaar Shaala, a value-based education programme for children in Guwahati.
- The initiative complements formal education in a modern, technology-driven society.
- It promotes moral education, Indian cultural values, and social responsibility among children.

Why in news?

- The Governor of Assam launched the Sanskaar Shaala programme focused on value-based education.
- He also attended the Golden Jubilee celebrations of Guwahati Blind High School.

Background

- Designed for children aged 4 to 14 years.
- Focuses on ethics, compassion, and Indian cultural values.
- Aims to shape responsible and value-oriented citizens.
- Governor's key observations:
- Values are the foundation of personality and social harmony.
- Moral education must accompany formal learning.
- Ancient Indian texts offer timeless guidance on righteous living.

Significance

- Preserves India's moral and cultural heritage.
- Encourages social responsibility from an early age.
- Balances technological progress with ethics and discipline.

Facts/General knowledge

- Launch location: Guwahati, Assam.
- Programme name: Sanskaar Shaala.
- Core themes: Ethics, compassion, Indian cultural values, social responsibility, and moral education.

Namma Arasu App (Tamil Nadu)

Introduction

- Namma Arasu is a Tamil Nadu government app featuring a user-friendly chatbot available in Tamil and English.
- Residents interact via text for maximum inclusivity.

Background

- The platform consolidates services from around 16 government departments into a single channel.
- Users engage through one WhatsApp number, selecting options from a menu to complete tasks.
- This removes the need for multiple apps or visits to government offices.

Significance

- A Tamil and English chatbot with text interaction supports maximum inclusivity.
- A single-number, menu-driven WhatsApp interface simplifies access to government services.
- Integration across departments centralises routine citizen services.

Facts/General knowledge

- Services available include:
Booking bus tickets
- Receiving examination hall tickets
- Applying for or accessing social welfare schemes
- Paying taxes and utility bills
- Availing agriculture subsidies
- Renewing licences
- Filing grievances
- Departments integrated include rural development, social welfare, agriculture, and Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (HR&CE).

Ayush Export Promotion Council (AYUSHEXCIL)

Introduction

- Nodal Export Promotion Council for the AYUSH sector
- Launched by the Prime Minister during the

Global AYUSH Investment and Innovation Summit, Gandhinagar in 2022

- Functions in consultation with the Ministry of AYUSH, with support from the Ministry of Commerce & Industry

Why in news?

- Observed its 4th Establishment Anniversary on 4th January 2026

Background

- AYUSH systems have received formal recognition in bilateral trade agreements, including the India–Oman CEPA and the India–New Zealand FTA, with dedicated annexes on traditional medicine and health-related services

Significance

- Anchors the Ayush Quality Mark programme of the Ministry of AYUSH, strengthening global quality assurance and product credibility
- Strengthens global market access through exporter capacity building, regulatory compliance facilitation, B2B meetings, international exhibitions, seminars and overseas outreach programmes
- AYUSH and herbal product exports grew by 6.11%, from USD 649.2 million (2023–24) to USD 688.89 million (2024–25), reflecting rising global demand for India's traditional medicine systems

Facts/General knowledge

- Acronym: AYUSHEXCIL
- Coverage: Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa-Rigpa, Homeopathy, herbal products and Indian traditional healthcare services

Jal Sanchay Jan Bhagidari

Introduction

- An initiative to conserve water with strong community involvement and ownership.
- Plans the construction of about 24,800 rainwater harvesting structures through community participation to ensure long-term water sustainability across the state.

Why in news?

- Recently launched by the Indian prime minister from Surat, Gujarat, to enhance rainwater harvesting.

Background

- Draws on the success of Gujarat's Jal Sanchay initiative that mobilised citizens, local bodies, industries and other stakeholders.
- Adopts a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach to involve everyone from citizens to government bodies.
- Frames water conservation as a social commitment rooted in India's traditional consciousness, revering water as a form of God and rivers as Goddesses.
- Aligns with the ongoing Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain for collaborative water management.

Significance

- Conserves water by capturing rainwater, reducing demand on local supplies.
- Lowers rainwater runoff, mitigating soil erosion, flooding risk, and impacts on local waterways and ecosystems.
- Recharges groundwater by returning collected rainwater to the ground to help maintain water levels.
- Eases pressure on municipal water infrastructure, delaying costly upgrades and expansions.
- Facts/General knowledge
- Ministry: Ministry of Jal Shakti.

Sandalwood Leopard Sighting in Karnataka

Introduction

- Karnataka has recorded an ultra-rare strawberry-coloured leopard, popularly called the Sandalwood Leopard.
- This leopard shows a pale reddish-pink or strawberry-coloured coat with light-brown rosettes, unlike the usual tawny-yellow coat with black rosettes.

Why in news?

- It is Karnataka's first-ever sighting, drawing national and global attention.
- This is only the second recorded sighting in India; the earlier instance was reported from Ranakpur, Rajasthan, in 2021.
- The leopard was documented in Vijayanagara district using camera traps by conservation scientist Sanjay Gubbi and his team from the Holematthi Nature Foundation.
- The animal is believed to be a seven-year-old female, and one camera trap image captured

her with a cub of normal coat colour.

Background

- Internationally, such leopards are referred to as strawberry leopards.
- Scientists attribute the rare coloration to unusual genetic conditions such as hypomelanism (reduced dark pigmentation) or erythrism (excess red pigmentation).
- Globally, this colour morph has been documented only five times: twice in South Africa, once in Tanzania, and twice in India.
- The name Sandalwood Leopard reflects Karnataka's cultural and ecological association with sandalwood forests.
- Karnataka is known for having one of the highest densities of melanistic leopards, commonly called black panthers.

Significance

- The discovery underscores the genetic diversity and adaptability of leopards in the region.
- Such rare findings are important for understanding evolutionary biology, biodiversity conservation, and long-term wildlife management strategies.

Facts/General knowledge

- Karnataka: Capital – Bengaluru; Chief Minister – Siddaramaiah; Governor – Thaawarchand Gehlot.
- National Parks: Bandipur, Nagarhole, Kudremukh, Anshi (Kali), Bannerghatta.
- Wildlife Sanctuaries: Dandeli, Bhadra, Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary, Brahmagiri, Pushpagiri, Cauvery.
- Recent development: Chief Minister Siddaramaiah launched the upgraded e-Swathu 2.0, a digital platform to regularise rural properties, expected to bring 95 lakh gram panchayat properties under the tax net and generate up to Rs 2,000 crore in revenue.

Rank, report and Awards

Indira Gandhi Peace Prize

Introduction

- Honours individuals or organisations for outstanding contributions to international peace, disarmament and development.

Why in news?

- The Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development for 2025 has been awarded to Mozambican rights activist, Graca Machel.
- Recognised for outstanding contributions to peace, humanitarian action and social development.

Background

- Also known as the Indira Gandhi Peace Prize.
- Awarded annually since 1986 by the Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust in memory of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

Significance

- Regarded as one of India's prestigious international peace awards.

Facts/General knowledge

- Carries a cash prize of Rs 1 crore, a citation and a trophy.
- Awarded across the three core domains of peace, disarmament and development.
- Recognises sustained and exceptional efforts addressing global challenges related to peace, disarmament and development, with a positive humanitarian impact and contributions to the welfare of humanity.

Abu Dhabi ranked world's safest city for the 10th consecutive year

Introduction

- Global safety rankings place Abu Dhabi at the top for the tenth consecutive year.
- The recognition reflects sustained efforts in public safety, urban planning, and governance, creating a secure and stable living environment.

Why in news?

- Abu Dhabi has been named the world's safest city for the 10th year in a row in an international safety ranking released by Numbeo.
- This reaffirms the city's global reputation for security and quality of life.

Background

- The ranking is released by Numbeo, a global database that uses user-contributed data and surveys combined with crime statistics.
- It compares cities based on crime rates, public safety perception, law enforcement efficiency,

and overall quality of life.
- Abu Dhabi has topped this index continuously since 2017.
- A decade at the top reflects sustained governance, strong institutions, and effective public safety implementation.

Significance
- Safety drivers: low crime rate, strict enforcement of laws, and proactive policing; advanced surveillance systems, smart city technologies, and rapid emergency response; political stability, strong social cohesion, and high trust in public institutions.
- Outcomes: safe public spaces, efficient transport systems, and reliable public services that elevate quality of life.
- Economic effects: enhanced attractiveness for foreign investment, tourism, and global talent; strengthened position as a major global hub for commerce, diplomacy, and innovation.

Facts/General knowledge
- Abu Dhabi is the capital city of the United Arab Emirates.
- The city is considered a global benchmark in urban safety

Trump's Acceptance of Machado's Nobel Peace Prize Medal

Introduction
- A rare and controversial moment at the White House prompted debate over whether a Nobel Peace Prize can be transferred from one person to another.

Why in news?
- In January 2026, Donald Trump publicly accepted a Nobel Peace Prize medal from Venezuela's opposition leader Maria Corina Machado.
- This was the first instance of a Nobel laureate voluntarily handing the medal to another individual.

Background
- During a White House meeting, Machado presented her Nobel Peace Prize medal to Trump and left it there as recognition of his support for the freedom of the Venezuelan people.
- Trump posed for photographs with the medal and thanked her, calling it a gesture of mutual respect.
- The moment drew global attention, amplified by Trump's long-expressed desire to receive the Nobel Peace Prize.

Significance
- The gesture, while not altering Nobel status, carries symbolic and political weight.
- It reignited debates on the prestige of the Nobel Peace Prize, the politicisation of global awards, and how personal actions by laureates can create diplomatic controversy without changing legal realities.

Facts/General knowledge
- Before Machado's visit, the Norwegian Nobel Institute reiterated that a Nobel Peace Prize cannot be transferred, shared, or revoked.
- Under the statutes of the Nobel Foundation, once awarded, the decision is final and permanent, with no appeal or reassignment.
- The physical medal can be gifted as personal property, but laureate status is non-transferable; Trump does not become a Nobel Peace Prize winner and Machado remains the sole official laureate.
- The Nobel Committees do not comment on how laureates use or display their medals.
- Machado described her act as symbolic political gratitude for Trump's commitment to Venezuela's democratic freedom, particularly after the removal of President Nicolás Maduro, not a legal transfer of the award.

Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2024

Introduction
- Assesses the export readiness of States and Union Territories.
- Highlights their role in achieving India's USD 1 trillion merchandise export target by 2030 and the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047.

Why in news?
- NITI Aayog has released the Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2024.

Background
- First launched in 2020, the EPI uses an evidence-based framework to assess State and

district-level export readiness.
- Highlights the role of States and districts in driving exports, jobs, and global value chain integration.
- Emphasises infrastructure, competitiveness, and cluster-led strategies.
- Links federalism with economic performance and highlights district-led export growth.
- Supports Make in India, Atmanirbhar Bharat, MSMEs, and trade competitiveness.

Significance

- Promotes peer learning, cooperative federalism, and focused reforms through comparative assessment.
- Prioritises cost efficiency, MSMEs, access to finance, and innovation, reflecting the weightage of the Business Ecosystem pillar.
- Encourages targeted improvements across infrastructure, business ecosystem, policy and governance, and performance to strengthen export competitiveness.

Facts/General knowledge

- Framework and coverage: 4 pillars, 13 sub-pillars, and 70 indicators.
- Core pillars: Export Infrastructure; Business Ecosystem; Policy & Governance; Export Performance.
- Weightage: Business Ecosystem carries 40%; the other three pillars carry 20% each.
- Grouping for comparison: Large States, Small States, North-Eastern States, and Union Territories.
- Classification: Leaders (High export preparedness), Challengers (Moderate preparedness with scope for improvement), Aspirers (Early-stage export ecosystems).
- EPI 2024 top performers:
  Large States: Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, and Andhra Pradesh.
- Small States, North-Eastern States, and Union Territories: Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir, Nagaland, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu, and Goa.

WEF Global Risks Report 2026 — India and Global Outlook

Introduction

- The World Economic Forum's Global Risks Report 2026 flags cybersecurity as India's biggest risk in 2026 and identifies geoeconomic confrontation as the most severe global threat.
- Rising inequality, weak public services, and strategic instability are amplifying external shocks for India's governance and economy.
- The report underscores the need for stronger digital and economic resilience, treating inequality as a macro-risk, countering hybrid threats and disinformation, and embedding climate resilience into long-term development and security.

Why in news?

- The Global Risks Report 2026 places geoeconomic confrontation as the most likely near-term global crisis trigger and ranks cybersecurity as India's top risk for 2026.

Background

- World Economic Forum (WEF): An international public–private cooperation body headquartered in Geneva, founded in 1971 by Klaus Schwab, promoting stakeholder capitalism and convening its annual Davos meeting.
- WEF publications: Global Competitiveness Report, Global Gender Gap Report, Energy Transition Index, and Global Risk Report.
- Global risk definition: The possibility of an event or condition that would negatively impact a significant proportion of global GDP, population, or natural resources.
- Geoeconomic confrontation: Strategic use of trade restrictions, sanctions, investment controls, and technology bans to advance geopolitical interests, weakening multilateralism and increasing protectionism.

Significance

- Strengthen economic resilience:
  Scale up domestic manufacturing under Make in India and PLI schemes.
- Diversify trade through Free Trade Agreements and maintain buffers via foreign exchange reserves and counter-cyclical fiscal policy, in line with IMF recommendations.
- Treat inequality as a macro-risk:
  Enhance formalisation and income security using PM-JDY and Ayushman Bharat to reduce crisis vulnerability among informal workers.
- Build capacity against hybrid threats:

Adopt a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to address terrorism, cyber attacks, disinformation, and economic coercion.
- Enable real-time intelligence fusion through a statutory Multi-Agency Centre.
- Strengthen cyber and financial surveillance under the PMLA, 2002 and integrate security responses via a National Security Strategy, especially for urban areas.
- Protect information integrity:
Implement the FACT Principle strategy (Election Commission of India), IT Rules 2021, institutionalised fact-checking, and digital literacy initiatives such as PM-DISHA, aligned with OECD and EU approaches.
- Embed climate resilience in development:
Mainstream adaptation through the National Action Plan on Climate Change, Mission LiFE, National Disaster Management Plan, climate-resilient infrastructure under Gati Shakti, and urban reforms via Smart Cities.

Facts/General knowledge

- Global risk outlook (immediate term, 2026):
- Geoeconomic confrontation is the biggest global risk.
- State-based armed conflict ranks second.
- Climate-related risks such as extreme weather events and societal polarisation follow.
- Misinformation and disinformation rank 5th worldwide.
- Adverse outcomes of AI have entered the top 10 global risks.
- Cyber insecurity ranks 9th globally.
- Global risk outlook (long term, next ten years):
Climate-related risks dominate: extreme weather events, biodiversity loss, and critical changes to Earth systems.
- India risk outlook (2026):
Cybersecurity is the top risk.
- Income and wealth inequality is the second biggest risk.
- Other key risks: insufficient public services and social protections; economic downturn; state-based armed conflict.
- India's profile emphasises societal and governance-related risks more than the global geopolitical focus.
- Cybersecurity risk in India:
- 369.01 million malware detections in 2025 (Data Security Council of India).
- Attack composition: Trojans 43.38%; Infectors 34.23%.
- Mobile threats: malware 42%; adware 26%, reflecting commercialisation of cybercrime.
- Rapid digital adoption in governance (DBT, Aadhaar-linked services), finance (UPI, fintech), and critical infrastructure has outpaced resilience, creating systemic risks to elections, financial systems, power grids, and public trust.
- Data concentration and platform dominance create single-point vulnerabilities, elevating cyber insecurity to a strategic national risk.
- Inequality as a risk multiplier:
World Bank Gini Index for India ~25.5 (2022–23).
- Oxfam: top 1% captured 22.6% of national income in 2022, indicating disparities not fully reflected in consumption-based measures.
- Rising inequality heightens risks of social unrest, political polarisation, and institutional distrust, weakening crisis response.
- Public services and social protection:
Public health expenditure: 1.9% of GDP, below the 2.5% target for 2025 (National Health Policy, 2017).
- Social protection spending (excluding health): ~5% of GDP versus global average ~13% (World Social Protection Report 2024–26, ILO).
- Capacity gaps in health, education, urban infrastructure, and social security weaken shock absorption.
- Geoeconomic shocks:
- Deep global integration exposes India to external volatility.
- Record FPI outflow of USD 18.9 billion in 2025 due to trade tensions, currency volatility, fears of US tariffs, and stretched valuations, increasing equity and rupee volatility.
- Slowdowns in major economies spill over via weaker exports, investment uncertainty, job losses, and fiscal pressures.
- State-based armed conflict and strategic instability:
- Heightened risks reflected in the 2025 Pahalgam attack and a blast near Delhi's Red Fort, alongside continued cross-border terrorism by Pakistan-backed groups.
- Rising urban terrorism, lone-wolf and white-

collar terrorism, and persistent internal insurgencies strain border security, defence spending, and investor confidence.
- Prolonged instability increases exposure to hybrid threats including cyber warfare, misinformation, and economic coercion.

Golden Globes 2026 – Winners and Highlights

Introduction

- The 83rd edition of the Golden Globes was held on 12 January 2026.
- The night was dominated by powerful storytelling and standout performances.
- Politics were largely absent, keeping the spotlight on creative achievement.

Why in news?

- One Battle After Another and Adolescence dominated major film and television categories.
- Actors Wagner Moura, Jessie Buckley, and Timothée Chalamet won top acting honours.

Background

- The ceremony honoured the best in film and television from the past year.
- One Battle After Another emerged as the evening's most successful film.

Significance

- The focus on creative achievement defined the ceremony's tone.
- Strong recognition across film and television highlighted the impact of One Battle After Another and Adolescence.

Facts/General knowledge

- Best Film – Drama: Hamnet
- Best Film – Musical or Comedy: One Battle After Another
- Best Male Actor – Film Drama: Wagner Moura (The Secret Agent)
- Best Female Actor – Film Drama: Jessie Buckley (Hamnet)
- Best Television Series – Musical or Comedy: The Studio
- Best Television Limited Series Anthology/TV Film: Adolescence
- Best Television Series – Drama: The Pitt
- Best Female Actor – Television Series – Drama: Rhea Seehorn (Pluribus)
- Best Standup Comedy on Television: Ricky Gervais (Mortality)
- Best Supporting Female Actor – Television: Erin Doherty (Adolescence)
- Best Film – Non-English Language: The Secret Agent
- Best Film – Animated K Pop Demon Hunters
- Best Director – Film: Paul Thomas Anderson (One Battle After Another)
- Cinematic and Box Office Achievement: Sinners
- Best Female Actor – TV Limited Series/Anthology/TV Film: Michelle Williams (Dying for Sex)
- Best Male Actor – TV Limited Series/Anthology/TV Film: Stephen Graham (Adolescence)
- Best Male Actor – Film Musical or Comedy: Timothee Chalamet (Marty Supreme)
- Best Female Actor – Film Musical or Comedy: Rose Byrne (If I Had Legs I'd Kick You)
- Best Screenplay – Film: Paul Thomas Anderson (One Battle After Another)
- Best Original Score – Film: Ludwig Göransson (Sinners)
- Best Original Song – Film: Golden (K Pop Demon Hunters)
- Best Podcast: Good Hang with Amy Poehler
- Best Male Actor – TV Series Musical or Comedy: Seth Rogen (The Studio)
- Best Supporting Male Actor – Television: Owen Cooper (Adolescence)
- Best Female Actor – TV Series Musical or Comedy: Jean Smart (Hacks)
- Best Male Actor – TV Series – Drama: Noah Wyle (The Pitt)
- Best Male Actor – Supporting Role in a Film: Stellan Skarsgård (Sentimental Value)
- Best Female Actor – Supporting Role in a Film: Teyana Taylor (One Battle After Another)

Henley Passport Index 2026 – India's Improved Rank

Introduction

- The Henley Passport Index is a globally recognised ranking of passports based on visa-free travel access.
- India's passport has climbed in the 2026 edition,

reflecting enhanced global mobility for Indian citizens and strengthened diplomatic relations.

Why in news?

- India's passport now ranks 75th in the 2026 Henley Passport Index.
- This marks a rise of 10 places from 85th in 2025, indicating improved international travel access.

Background

- The index is published by Henley & Partners.
- It ranks 199 passports across 227 destinations.
- Rankings use International Air Transport Association (IATA) data.
- Scoring is based on ease of entry without prior visa approval.

Significance

- The improved ranking indicates strengthened diplomatic ties.
- It enhances business and tourism opportunities.
- It reflects better international recognition of Indian citizens' travel freedom.

Facts/General knowledge

- Indian passport holders can enter 56 countries without a prior visa, including visa-free entry, visa-on-arrival, or electronic travel authorisation.
- Top-ranked passports: Singapore is first with 192 visa-free destinations, followed by Japan and South Korea.
- Bottom-ranked passports: Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria remain at the bottom due to geopolitical and security challenges.
- Regional comparison: India ranks above Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Nepal, while Maldives ranks substantially higher in the region.

Topic: Padma Awards 2026 Winners

Introduction

- The Padma Awards 2026 recognise 131 individuals for exceptional contributions across fields including art, public affairs, medicine, literature, science, social work, sports, and trade.
- The three civilian honours conferred are Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan, and Padma Shri, with some awards given posthumously.
- Notable recipients include Dharmendra Singh Deol, Mammootty, Alka Yagnik, Rohit Sharma, and Uday Kotak.

Why in news?

- The 2026 Padma awardees have been announced, celebrating distinguished service to the nation across diverse fields.

Background

- The awards comprise three categories: Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan, and Padma Shri.
- They are announced every year on Republic Day to honour distinguished service to the nation.

Significance

- The 2026 list showcases a wide spectrum of excellence, including posthumous honours and recipients from multiple Indian states and several other countries.
- The recognition spans individual and duo contributors, reflecting the breadth of service across domains.

Facts/General knowledge

- Padma Vibhushan (5 awardees):
- Shri Dharmendra Singh Deol (Posthumous) – Art – Maharashtra
- Shri K T Thomas – Public Affairs – Kerala
- Ms. N. Rajam – Art – Uttar Pradesh
- Shri P. Narayanan – Literature & Education – Kerala
- Shri V. S. Achuthanandhan (Posthumous) – Public Affairs – Kerala
- Padma Bhushan (13 awardees):
- Ms. Alka Yagnik – Art – Maharashtra
- Shri Bhagat Singh Koshyari – Public Affairs – Uttarakhand
- Shri K. R. Palaniswamy – Medicine – Tamil Nadu
- Shri Mammootty – Art – Kerala
- Dr. Nori Dattatreyudu – Medicine – United States of America
- Shri Piyush Pandey (Posthumous) – Art – Maharashtra
- Shri S. K. M. Maeilanandhan – Social Work – Tamil Nadu
- Shri Shatavadhani R. Ganesh – Art – Karnataka
- Shri Shibu Soren (Posthumous) – Public Affairs – Jharkhand
- Shri Uday Kotak – Trade & Industry –

Maharashtra
- Shri V. K. Malhotra (Posthumous) – Public Affairs – Delhi
- Shri Vellappally Natesan – Public Affairs – Kerala
- Shri Vijay Amritraj – Sports – United States of America
- Padma Shri (113 awardees):
- Shri A E Muthunayagam – Science and Engineering – Kerala
- Shri Anil Kumar Rastogi – Art – Uttar Pradesh
- Shri Anke Gowda M. – Social Work – Karnataka
- Ms. Armida Fernandez – Medicine – Maharashtra
- Shri Arvind Vaidya – Art – Gujarat
- Shri Ashok Khade – Trade and Industry – Maharashtra
- Shri Ashok Kumar Singh – Science and Engineering – Uttar Pradesh
- Shri Asok Kumar Haldar – Literature and Education – West Bengal
- Shri Baldev Singh – Sports – Punjab
- Shri Bhagwandas Raikwar – Sports – Madhya Pradesh
- Shri Bharat Singh Bharti – Art – Bihar
- Shri Bhiklya Ladakya Dhinda – Art – Maharashtra
- Shri Bishwa Bandhu (Posthumous) – Art – Bihar
- Shri Brij Lal Bhat – Social Work – Jammu and Kashmir
- Shri Buddha Rashmi Mani – Others – Archaeology – Uttar Pradesh
- Dr. Budhri Tati – Social Work – Chhattisgarh
- Shri Chandramouli Gaddamanugu – Science and Engineering – Telangana
- Shri Charan Hembram – Literature and Education – Odisha
- Shri Chiranji Lal Yadav – Art – Uttar Pradesh
- Ms. Deepika Reddy – Art – Telangana
- Shri Dharmiklal Chunilal Pandya – Art – Gujarat
- Shri Gadde Babu Rajendra Prasad – Art – Andhra Pradesh
- Shri Gafruddin Mewati Jogi – Art – Rajasthan
- Shri Gambir Singh Yonzone – Literature and Education – West Bengal
- Shri Garimella Balakrishna Prasad (Posthumous) – Art – Andhra Pradesh
- Ms. Gayatri Balasubramanian & Ms. Ranjani Balasubramanian (Duo) – Art – Tamil Nadu
- Shri Gopal Ji Trivedi – Science and Engineering – Bihar
- Shri Guduru Venkat Rao – Medicine – Telangana
- Shri H V Hande – Medicine – Tamil Nadu
- Shri Hally War – Social Work – Meghalaya
- Shri Hari Madhab Mukhopadhyay (Posthumous) – Art – West Bengal
- Shri Haricharan Saikia – Art – Assam
- Ms. Harmanpreet Kaur Bhullar – Sports – Punjab
- Shri Inderjit Singh Sidhu – Social Work – Chandigarh
- Shri Janardan Bapurao Bothe – Social Work – Maharashtra
- Shri Jogesh Deuri – Others – Agriculture – Assam
- Shri Juzer Vasi – Science and Engineering – Maharashtra
- Shri Jyotish Debnath – Art – West Bengal
- Shri K Pajanivel – Sports – Puducherry
- Shri K Ramasamy – Science and Engineering – Tamil Nadu
- Shri K Vijay Kumar – Civil Service – Tamil Nadu
- Shri Kabindra Purkayastha (Posthumous) – Public Affairs – Assam
- Shri Kailash Chandra Pant – Literature and Education – Madhya Pradesh
- Ms. Kalamandalam Vimala Menon – Art – Kerala
- Shri Kewal Krishan Thakral – Medicine – Uttar Pradesh
- Shri Khem Raj Sundriyal – Art – Haryana
- Ms. Kollakal Devaki Amma G – Social Work – Kerala
- Shri Krishnamurty Balasubramanian – Science and Engineering – Telangana
- Shri Kumar Bose – Art – West Bengal
- Shri Kumarasamy Thangaraj – Science and Engineering – Telangana
- Prof. (Dr.) Lars-Christian Koch – Art – Germany
- Ms. Liudmila Viktorovna Khokhlova – Literature and Education – Russia
- Shri Madhavan Ranganathan – Art –

Maharashtra
- Shri Maganti Murali Mohan – Art – Andhra Pradesh
- Shri Mahendra Kumar Mishra – Literature and Education – Odisha
- Shri Mahendra Nath Roy – Literature and Education – West Bengal
- Shri Mamidala Jagadesh Kumar – Literature and Education – Delhi
- Ms. Mangala Kapoor – Literature and Education – Uttar Pradesh
- Shri Mir Hajibhai Kasambhai – Art – Gujarat
- Shri Mohan Nagar – Social Work – Madhya Pradesh
- Shri Narayan Vyas – Others – Archaeology – Madhya Pradesh
- Shri Naresh Chandra Dev Varma – Literature and Education – Tripura
- Shri Nilesh Vinodchandra Mandlewala – Social Work – Gujarat
- Shri Nuruddin Ahmed – Art – Assam
- Shri Othuvaar Thiruthani Swaminathan – Art – Tamil Nadu
- Dr. Padma Gurmet – Medicine – Ladakh
- Shri Palkonda Vijay Anand Reddy – Medicine – Telangana
- Ms. Pokhila Lekthepi – Art – Assam
- Dr. Prabhakar Basavprabhu Kore – Literature and Education – Karnataka
- Shri Prateek Sharma – Medicine – USA
- Shri Praveen Kumar – Sports – Uttar Pradesh
- Shri Prem Lal Gautam – Science and Engineering – Himachal Pradesh
- Shri Prosenjit Chatterjee – Art – West Bengal
- Dr. Punniamurthy Natesan – Medicine – Tamil Nadu
- Shri R Krishnan (Posthumous) – Art – Tamil Nadu
- Shri R V S Mani – Civil Service – Delhi
- Shri Rabilal Tudu – Literature and Education – West Bengal
- Shri Raghupat Singh (Posthumous) – Others – Agriculture – Uttar Pradesh
- Shri Raghuveer Tukaram Khedkar – Art – Maharashtra
- Shri Rajastapathi Kaliappa Goundar – Art – Tamil Nadu
- Shri Rajendra Prasad – Medicine – Uttar Pradesh
- Shri Rama Reddy Mamidi (Posthumous) – Others – Animal Husbandry – Telangana
- Shri Ramamurthy Sreedher – Others – Radio Broadcasting – Delhi
- Shri Ramchandra Godbole & Ms. Suneeta Godbole (Duo) – Medicine – Chhattisgarh
- Shri Ratilal Borisagar – Literature and Education – Gujarat
- Shri Rohit Sharma – Sports – Maharashtra
- Ms. S G Susheelamma – Social Work – Karnataka
- Shri Sangyusang S Pongener – Art – Nagaland
- Sant Niranjan Dass – Others – Spiritualism – Punjab
- Shri Sarat Kumar Patra – Art – Odisha
- Shri Saroj Mandal – Medicine – West Bengal
- Shri Satish Shah (Posthumous) – Art – Maharashtra
- Shri Satyanarayan Nuwal – Trade and Industry – Maharashtra
- Ms. Savita Punia – Sports – Haryana
- Prof. Shafi Shauq – Literature and Education – Jammu and Kashmir
- Shri Shashi Shekhar Vempati – Literature and Education – Karnataka
- Shri Shrirang Devaba Lad – Others – Agriculture – Maharashtra
- Ms. Shubha Venkatesha Iyengar – Science and Engineering – Karnataka
- Shri Shyam Sundar – Medicine – Uttar Pradesh
- Shri Simanchal Patro – Art – Odisha
- Ms. Sivasankari – Literature and Education – Tamil Nadu
- Dr. Suresh Hanagavadi – Medicine – Karnataka
- Swami Brahmdev Ji Maharaj – Social Work – Rajasthan
- Shri T T Jagannathan (Posthumous) – Trade and Industry – Karnataka
- Shri Taga Ram Bheel – Art – Rajasthan
- Shri Tarun Bhattacharya – Art – West Bengal
- Shri Techi Gubin – Social Work – Arunachal Pradesh
- Shri Thiruvaarur Bakthavathsalam – Art – Tamil Nadu
- Ms. Tripti Mukherjee – Art – West Bengal
- Shri Veezhinathan Kamakoti – Science and Engineering – Tamil Nadu

- Shri Vempaty Kutumba Sastry – Literature and Education – Andhra Pradesh
- Shri Vladimer Mestvirishvili (Posthumous) – Sports – Georgia
- Shri Yumnam Jatra Singh (Posthumous) – Art – Manipur

Vidarbha's Maiden Vijay Hazare Trophy Triumph (2025–26)

Introduction

- Vidarbha were crowned champions of the Vijay Hazare Trophy 2025–26 in cricket.

Why in news?

- The title was secured with a 38-run victory in the final held in Bengaluru.

Background

- This victory delivered Vidarbha's first-ever Vijay Hazare Trophy.

Significance

- The win is a historic achievement and an important milestone for Vidarbha in Indian domestic cricket.

Facts/General knowledge

- Final contested between Vidarbha and Saurashtra.
- Runner-up: Saurashtra.
- Player of the Match: Atharva Taide, who scored 128 runs to anchor Vidarbha's innings.
- Player of the Tournament: Aman Mokhade, from the Vidarbha cricket team.

State Current

Kaziranga Elevated Corridor and Amrit Bharat Express Trains

Introduction

- The Prime Minister laid the foundation for a conservation-oriented transport project in Assam and expanded rail connectivity for the region.
- The Kaziranga Elevated Corridor is intended to enhance ecological conservation alongside transportation infrastructure.
- The Amrit Bharat Express services provide modern passenger amenities for long-distance travel.

Why in news?

- On 18 January 2026, the Prime Minister laid the foundation stone for the Kaziranga Elevated Corridor in Assam.
- On the same occasion, he virtually flagged off two Amrit Bharat Express trains.

Background

- The corridor is part of the four-laning of the Kaliabor–Numaligarh section of National Highway-715.
- It includes approximately 34.45 km of wildlife-friendly elevated sections.
- Bypasses are planned at Jakhalabandha and Bokakhat.

Significance

- Ensures safe wildlife movement across the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve.
- Reduces road accidents on National Highway-715.
- Boosts ecotourism and generates local employment opportunities.
- Improves long-distance rail connectivity between Assam and West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, and Haryana.
- Reduces travel time and offers modern passenger amenities.

Facts/General knowledge

- Project value: ₹6,957 crore.
- Kaziranga National Park hosts the world's largest population of one-horned rhinoceroses, with substantial populations of tigers, elephants, wild water buffalo, and swamp deer.
- Amrit Bharat Express routes launched: Dibrugarh–Gomti Nagar (Lucknow) and Kamakhya–Rohtak.

Namo Laxmi Scheme, Gujarat

Introduction

- Girls' education in Gujarat has received a major boost through expanded direct financial assistance for adolescent girls.
- The initiative aims to ensure economic hardship does not interrupt schooling after primary education.
- It reflects Gujarat's continued focus on educational access, gender equity, and the

empowerment of girl students.

Why in news?

- The Gujarat government has announced ₹1,250 crore financial aid under the Namo Laxmi Scheme for the 2025–26 academic year.
- The announcement will benefit over 12 lakh girls studying in Classes 9 to 12.

Background

- The Namo Laxmi Scheme is a state-sponsored initiative supporting secondary and higher secondary education of girls.
- Launched under the guidance of Bhupendra Patel, it provides structured assistance over four years, linking education with health, nutrition, and empowerment.
- It builds on earlier education-focused programmes such as Shala Praveshotsav, which boosted school enrolment and retention.
- Many such initiatives, started during the tenure of Narendra Modi as Chief Minister of Gujarat, later inspired similar schemes at the national level.
- The scheme targets adolescent girls, a group vulnerable to school dropouts.

Significance

- Ensures financial constraints do not force girls to drop out after primary schooling.
- Encourages continuity and successful completion of schooling through a phased assistance design.
- Strengthens the link between education and holistic development by addressing nutrition and health.
- Regular support helps families provide proper food and healthcare, improving learning outcomes, attendance, and overall well-being.

Facts/General knowledge

- Total assistance per eligible girl (Classes 9–12): ₹50,000 over four years.
- Classes 9–10: ₹20,000, including monthly support and a lump sum after clearing the Class 10 board examination.
- Classes 11–12: ₹30,000, combining monthly instalments with a completion-based payout after Class 12.
- Eligibility: girls enrolled in schools recognised by the Gujarat Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Board or the Central Board of Secondary Education.
- Prior schooling requirement: completion of Classes 1–8 in government or aided schools, under RTE, or Class 8 in a private school.
- Family income cap: not exceeding ₹6 lakh annually.
- Compatibility with other scholarships: girls already receiving other scholarships are also eligible, as this scheme offers additional support.

Kalpetta Paperless District Court

Introduction

- Kalpetta judicial district in Wayanad, Kerala, has become India's first fully paperless district court.
- The paperless court system was virtually inaugurated by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant.

Why in news?

- Marks a historic achievement as the first district court in India to function completely without paper, transitioning to a fully digital judicial system.

Background

- The District Court Case Management System (DCMS) underpins the paperless operations.
- DCMS was developed in-house by the Kerala High Court's IT department to ensure secure and efficient digital operations.

Significance

- Expected to reduce litigation costs.
- Eliminates delays in transferring files.
- Enhances access to justice.
- Advances "green jurisprudence" by lowering the environmental impact of judicial processes.
- Serves as a model for other judicial districts across India, with potential to transform traditional court operations into efficient digital systems nationwide.

Facts/General knowledge

- All stages of court proceedings — including pre-trial processes, recording of evidence, interlocutory orders, and final adjudications — are conducted electronically without physical files.
- The system integrates AI-based judicial

assistance tools that generate structured case summaries, assist with annotation, query case details, and support judges with faster access to digital records.

Justice Revati Mohite Dere appointed as Chief Justice of Meghalaya High Court

Introduction

- Justice Revati Mohite Dere has been appointed as the Chief Justice of the Meghalaya High Court.
- She is the second woman to hold this position in the state's history.

Why in news?

- She was recently sworn in as the newest Chief Justice of the Meghalaya High Court.

Background

- The Meghalaya High Court was established on 23rd March 2013 after an amendment to the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971.
- Justice T. Meena Kumari was the first female Chief Justice of the Meghalaya High Court, sworn on 23rd March 2013, following the court's establishment.

Significance

- Meghalaya is known for its matrilineal social structure, making the appointment of a female Chief Justice particularly symbolic for the state's judicial leadership.
- In 2026, India continues to push for higher representation of women in the higher judiciary, where women currently constitute less than 15% of the total judge strength.

Facts/General knowledge

- The appointment was made by the President of India under Article 217 of the Constitution, following the recommendation of the Supreme Court Collegium.
- The Chief Justice of a High Court is appointed by the President after consultation with the Chief Justice of India and the Governor of the state.

Appointment

Appointment of Justice Mahesh Sharadchandra Sonak as Chief Justice of the Jharkhand High Court

Introduction

- Justice Mahesh Sharadchandra Sonak has been sworn in as Chief Justice of the Jharkhand High Court.

Why in news?

- The oath of office was administered by Governor Santosh Kumar Gangwar.
- The ceremony was held at the Birsa Munda Mandap, Lok Bhavan, Ranchi.

Background

- The appointment was made by the President of India under Article 217 of the Constitution.
- It followed the recommendation of the Supreme Court Collegium and the advice of the Union Law Ministry.
- Before this elevation, he served as a judge of the Bombay High Court.

Significance

- He will serve until his retirement on 28 November 2026.
- He is the 18th Chief Justice of the Jharkhand High Court.

Facts/General knowledge

- He succeeded Justice Tarlok Singh Chauhan.

Appointment of Justice A Muhamed Mustaque as Chief Justice of Sikkim High Court

Introduction

- The Sikkim High Court has a new Chief Justice, marking a leadership transition in the state's judiciary.
- The appointment brings experience from other High Courts and aims to strengthen the delivery of justice.
- It is expected to contribute to efficient judicial administration.

Why in news?

- A Muhamed Mustaque took oath as the Chief Justice of the Sikkim High Court on 4 January 2026.
- The swearing-in ceremony was held at Lok

Bhawan in Sikkim.
- The oath of office was administered by Om Prakash Mathur.
- The ceremony was attended by Prem Singh Tamang, members of the Council of Ministers, senior government officials, and representatives of the legal fraternity.

Background
- The Chief Justice of a High Court is responsible for judicial administration, case allocation, and the overall functioning of the court.
- Appointments are made by the President of India in consultation with constitutional authorities.
- Before this appointment, Justice A Muhamed Mustaque served as the Acting Chief Justice of the Kerala High Court.
- He is known for judicial experience and administrative capabilities, handling constitutional, civil, and criminal matters effectively.
- He succeeds Biswanath Somadder, who retired recently.

Significance
- The transition ensures continuity in the judicial process and upholds institutional stability.
- Strong leadership at the High Court level supports access to justice and the rule of law at the state level.
- Experience from other High Courts is expected to strengthen court administration in Sikkim.

Facts/General knowledge
- Justice A Muhamed Mustaque is the 24th Chief Justice of the Sikkim High Court.
- Fixed procedures for appointments help maintain the independence and credibility of the higher judiciary in India.

Appointment of Shri A. K. Balasubrahmanian as AERB Chairman

Introduction
- Shri A. K. Balasubrahmanian is a Distinguished Scientist and mechanical engineer with training in nuclear engineering.
- He is a Fellow of the Indian National Academy of Engineering (FNAE).
- He now serves as Chairman of the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB).

Why in news?
- He took over charge as Chairman, AERB on 1 January 2026 from the outgoing Chairman, Dr. D. K. Shukla.

Background
- Previously served as Chairman, Project Design Safety Committee for Pressurised Heavy Water Reactor (PHWR)–based Nuclear Power Plants (NPPs).
- Member, Safety Review Committee for Operating Plants of AERB.
- Nearly 40 years' experience spanning design, development, safety assessment, construction and commissioning of Nuclear Power Plants.
- Extensive work on developing ageing management strategies related to PHWRs.
- Contributed to first-of-a-kind (FOAK) systems featuring innovative design and safety features, alongside indigenisation efforts for PHWR technology.
- Considered an all-round expert in reactor technology and well-versed in different reactor technologies beyond PHWRs.

Significance
- Places at the helm a professional with nearly four decades of comprehensive Nuclear Power Plant experience.
- Brings deep expertise in PHWR technology, including ageing management and FOAK systems with innovative safety features.
- Ensures continuity through prior roles within AERB's safety review and PHWR design safety committees.

Facts/General knowledge
- AERB stands for Atomic Energy Regulatory Board.
- PHWR stands for Pressurised Heavy Water Reactor.
- NPPs stands for Nuclear Power Plants.
- FNAE stands for Fellow of the Indian National Academy of Engineering.

Leadership changes in ITBP and BSF

Introduction
- The Union government announced leadership changes in India's border security forces,

appointing Shatrujeet Singh Kapoor as Director General of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and Praveen Kumar as Director General of the Border Security Force (BSF).
- These appointments are part of routine administrative restructuring to ensure continuity and effectiveness in internal security.

Why in news?
- On 14 January 2026, the Centre appointed Shatrujeet Singh Kapoor as DG of ITBP and named Praveen Kumar as DG of BSF.
- The appointments were issued through orders by the Ministry of Personnel.

Background
- Shatrujeet Singh Kapoor, a 1990-batch IPS officer currently serving in his cadre state Haryana, will succeed Praveen Kumar as ITBP chief and serve until 31 October 2026, the date of his superannuation.
- Praveen Kumar, a 1993-batch IPS officer of the West Bengal cadre and the incumbent ITBP chief, has been appointed as BSF Director General with a tenure until 30 September 2030.

Significance
- Leadership continuity in ITBP and BSF is crucial amid evolving challenges such as cross-border infiltration, transnational crime, and regional instability.
- The appointments underline the Centre's focus on professional and experienced leadership in border management.

Facts/General knowledge
- Both appointments were approved by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC).
- High-level postings in Central Armed Police Forces are made after careful consideration of seniority, experience, and operational exposure.
- Fixed tenures help ensure stability in leadership for forces responsible for border management and internal security.
- The ITBP guards India's borders with China across high-altitude and inhospitable terrain, while the BSF secures borders with Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Praveen Kumar takes additional charge as BSF Director General

Introduction
- Praveen Kumar, the Director General of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), has assumed additional charge as the Director General of the Border Security Force (BSF).
- He took over following the retirement of former BSF chief Daljit Singh Chawdhary.

Why in news?
- He stepped into the BSF role on Sunday after Daljit Singh Chawdhary's retirement.
- The Ministry of Home Affairs issued an order on Friday granting him additional charge "until a permanent appointment is made or until further notice."

Background
- A 1993-batch IPS officer from the West Bengal cadre.
- Appointed as the 35th ITBP chief in October 2024.
- Served in the Intelligence Bureau from 2009.
- Worked as Deputy Inspector General in the Naxal-affected Midnapore Range.
- Led multiple security operations in challenging areas.

Significance
- As ITBP Director General, he announced the creation of 10 all-women forward posts along the India–China border during the 64th Raising Day Parade in Udhampur, covering the 3,488-km stretch from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh.

Facts/General knowledge
- The handover ceremony took place at a BSF camp in Raipur, Chhattisgarh.
- Such ceremonies are usually held at the BSF headquarters in New Delhi.
- The Raipur venue was chosen as both officers were attending the DGs–IGs national police conference held from Friday to Sunday.

Miscellaneous

Maharashtra Tableau Wins First at Republic Day Parade 2026

Introduction
- Maharashtra's state tableau won first place among states and union territories at the Republic Day Parade 2026.

- The tableau carried the theme 'Ganeshotsav: A Symbol of Aatmanirbharta'.

Why in news?

- The top honour at the Republic Day Parade 2026 recognised Maharashtra as the leading state/UT tableau.

Background

- The theme emphasised cultural heritage, community participation, social unity and self-reliance.
- The tableau showcased Ganeshotsav festivities, celebrating traditions and community strength.
- A Nagpur dhol-tasha group participated, enhancing the cultural appeal.

Significance

- The awards reflect excellence in cultural representation and thematic creativity.
- They promote national pride by showcasing India's diversity, heritage and developmental narratives.

Facts/General knowledge

- State/UT Tableau Awards:
- First: Maharashtra
- Second: Jammu & Kashmir for handicrafts and folk dances
- Third: Kerala for Water Metro and 100% Digital Literacy
- Marching Contingents:
  Best among the three armed services: Indian Navy
- Best among Central Armed Police Forces: Delhi Police
- Ministry Category:
  Best tableau: Ministry of Culture for 'Vande Mataram – The Soul Cry of a Nation'

Rail Tech Policy and e-RCT Digitisation

Introduction

- The Ministry of Railways unveiled two major reforms under its "52 Reforms in 52 Weeks" initiative: the Rail Tech Policy and the end-to-end digitisation of the Railway Claims Tribunal (e-RCT).
- Rail Tech Policy: a dedicated, high-tech, 24x7 digital single-window platform enabling end-to-end digital submission and processing of proposals through a simplified single-stage process.
- e-RCT Digitisation: comprehensive computerisation of the Railway Claims Tribunal to make claim filing, processing, and adjudication faster and transparent.
- The reforms aim to enhance transparency, promote innovation, and improve access to justice and citizen-centric services.

Why in news?

- The Ministry of Railways announced the Rail Tech Policy and e-RCT digitisation as part of the "52 Reforms in 52 Weeks" initiative, a time-bound programme launched in early 2026 committing to one major structural reform per week throughout 2026.

Background

- Rail Tech Policy replaces outdated multi-stage vendor selection mechanisms with a simplified single-stage process for innovators, start-ups, industry, and institutions via a dedicated Rail Tech Portal.
- The Railway Claims Tribunal (RCT) is a quasi-judicial body constituted under the Railway Claims Tribunal Act, 1987 to adjudicate claims relating to death/injury in accidents and untoward incidents, loss of goods, and refund of fares; it has 23 benches across India (Principal Bench at Delhi).

Significance

- Improves transparency and access to justice through complete digitisation of claims and nationwide electronic filing.
- Speeds up decision-making by simplifying processes, enabling real-time tracking, and supporting quicker innovation adoption.
- Mobilises the innovation ecosystem with increased funding and assured pathways for scaling solutions to critical operational challenges.
- Establishes clear timelines and a replicable model for tribunal modernisation, with potential extension to other bodies.
- Reinforces year-long reform momentum aligned with the railways' broader transformation vision.

Facts/General knowledge

- Rail Tech Portal:
- Dedicated platform for innovators, start-ups, industry, and institutions to promote innovation

in Railways.
- Funding boost under Rail Tech Policy:
- Scale-up grant increased more than three times.
- Maximum grant for prototype development and trials doubled.
- Indian Railways to support up to 50% of development funding for viable solutions.
- Key innovation areas targeted:
- AI-based Elephant Intrusion Detection System (EIDS).
- AI-based fire detection in coaches.
- Drone-based broken rail detection.
- Obstruction detection in foggy environments.
- AI-based coach cleaning monitoring.
- Sensor-based load calculation on parcel vans.
- Scalability:
- Successful innovations to receive substantial long-term orders for network-wide scaling.
- e-RCT core modules:
- E-Filing: 24x7 online filing with instant acknowledgement via SMS and email.
- Case Information System (CIS): centralised database for real-time case tracking from filing to final disposal.
- Document Management System (DMS): digital storage of pleadings, orders, and judgements with digitally signed records.
- Legal basis and coverage:
- RCT functions under the Railway Claims Tribunal Act, 1987 with 23 benches nationwide (Principal Bench at Delhi).
- Timeline and expansion:
- Full digitisation of all 23 RCT benches targeted within the next 12 months.
- If successful, the model could be extended to other tribunals like the Central Administrative Tribunal.
- Citizen-centric benefits:
- Electronic filing from anywhere in India, eliminating confusion over jurisdictional benches in cross-state incidents.
- Faster case processing, reduced adjournments, real-time status updates, and online access to orders.
- Significant cost savings for litigants by reducing travel, printing, and courier expenses.
- "52 Reforms in 52 Weeks" initiative:
- Launched in early 2026 as an ambitious, time-bound programme to implement one major structural reform per week during 2026.
- Aligned with the broader "Reforms Express" vision and builds upon previous decade's railway reforms.

History That India Ignored – Second Edition Launch in Goa

Introduction

- 'History That India Ignored' is an acclaimed historical work focusing on lesser-known aspects of India's freedom struggle.
- It is aimed at students and history enthusiasts to make overlooked narratives accessible.

Why in news?

- In January 2026, Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant launched the second edition in Panaji, Goa, bringing renewed attention to the book.

Background

- Authored by Prem Prakash, a veteran journalist and Chairman of Asian News International (ANI).
- Originally published in April 2025 by Vitasta Publishing Private Limited.

Significance

- Highlights neglected chapters of the freedom struggle, enriching understanding beyond mainstream accounts.
- Seeks to ensure these historical truths reach younger generations of learners and enthusiasts.
- The launch by the Goa Chief Minister reinforces its contemporary relevance and outreach.

Facts/General knowledge

- Event: Second edition book launch (January 2026)
- Book title: History That India Ignored
- Launched by: Pramod Sawant, Chief Minister of Goa
- Author: Prem Prakash (veteran journalist; Chairman of ANI)
- Location: Panaji, Goa
- First published: April 2025
- Publisher: Vitasta Publishing Private Limited
- Primary focus: Lesser-known aspects of India's freedom struggle
- Target audience: Students and history

enthusiasts

Important days

DRDO's 67th Foundation Day and Key Milestones

Introduction

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) marked its 67th Foundation Day on 1 January.
- Tributes were paid to former President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, the Missile Man of India.
- The event underscored DRDO's significant strides in strengthening India's defence capabilities.

Why in news?

- Observance of DRDO's 67th Foundation Day on 1 January.
- 2024 achievements highlighted, including system handovers:
- Air Defence: Air Defence Tactical Control Radar (ADTCR), Air Defence Fire Control Radar (ADFCR).
- Missile Systems: Long Range Land Attack Cruise Missile (LR-LACM), Quick Reaction Surface to Air Missile (QRSAM), Medium Range Anti-ship Missile (MRAshM).
- Advanced Platforms: Multi-Mission Maritime Aircraft (MMMA), SCA (Signal Intelligence and COMJAM Aircraft), Anti-Tank Influence Mine PRACHAND.
- Development of 'Divya Drishti', an AI tool integrating face recognition with immutable physiological traits such as gait and skeleton.
- Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) sanction for:
- Full Scale Engineering Development (FSED) of Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA).
- New Missile Test Range in Andhra Pradesh.

Background

- Established in 1958 by merging the Technical Development Establishments (TDEs) of the Indian Army, the Directorate of Technical Development and Production (DTDP), and the Defence Science Organisation (DSO).
- Serves as the R&D wing of the Ministry of Defence, Government of India.
- Expanded from 10 laboratories to 41 laboratories and 5 DRDO Young Scientist Laboratories (DYSLs).
- Guiding principle: "Balasya Mulam Vigyanam" (Strength lies in science), for both peace and war.
- Mission: Achieve self-reliance in critical defence technologies and systems, and equip the three Services with state-of-the-art weapon systems and equipment.
- 2007 review by a committee chaired by Dr P. Rama Rao led to seven technology domain-based clusters, each headed by a Director General:
- Aeronautics Systems (Aero): UAVs, aerostats, related technologies.
- Missiles and Strategic Systems (MSS): Long and short-range missiles and related technologies.
- Naval Systems and Materials (NSM): Naval platforms, underwater systems, sonar and submarine technologies.
- Micro Electronic Devices (MED) and Computational Systems (CoS): Electronics, radars, cyber security, artificial intelligence for defence.
- Armament and Combat Engineering Systems (ACE): Armaments, ammunition, explosives, combat vehicles.
- Electronics and Communication Systems (ECS): Military electronics, sensors, communications, electronic warfare.
- Soldier Support System (SSS): Psychological, physiological, and nutritional optimisation of personnel.
- Contributions of Dr APJ Abdul Kalam:
- Led the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP) launched in 1983.
- Drove breakthroughs in propulsion, navigation, control systems, and aerodynamics, enabling indigenous missile development and reduced foreign dependency.

Significance

- Strengthens national self-reliance in critical defence technologies and equips the armed forces with advanced, service-specific systems.
- IGMDP outcomes enhanced strategic deterrence, delivered technological spin-offs, and bolstered the defence-industrial base, aligning with 'Make in India'.

- 2024 milestones demonstrate delivery-ready capability across air defence, missile systems, maritime surveillance, electronic warfare, and AI-enabled security.

Facts/General knowledge

- Missile systems:
- Air-to-Air: MICA, Astra.
- Surface-to-Air: Trishul, Akash, Barak 8.
- Surface-to-Surface: Agni, Prithvi, Dhanush, Shaurya.
- Cruise: BrahMos, Nirbhay.
- Combat aircraft: Indigenous Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas.
- Rocket systems: Pinaka multi-barrel rocket launcher.
- Naval systems: Humsa, Nagan (sonar), Ushus (Submarine Sonar Suite), Mihir (helicopter sonar).
- Main Battle Tank: Arjun.
- Unmanned Aerial Systems:
- Lakshya: Reusable aerial target for training; land/ship launch; tow targets.
- Nishant: Multi-mission UAV for surveillance and artillery correction; autonomous flight; parachute recovery.
- IGMDP essentials:
- Initiated by the Ministry of Defence in 1982–1983 under Dr APJ Abdul Kalam.
- Aimed to reduce imports and build indigenous expertise in propulsion, navigation, and control systems.
- Delivered key missile systems and concluded in 2008.

Earth's Rotation Day 2026

Introduction

- Observed annually on 8 January to commemorate the scientific discovery of Earth's rotation on its axis.
- Marks the anniversary of Léon Foucault's 1851 experiment, which offered clear experimental proof of this motion.
- Highlights how Earth's rotation shapes daily life, climate patterns, and natural phenomena.

Why in news?

- Earth's Rotations Day 2026 is celebrated on 8 January to raise awareness about the planet's continuous axial spin.
- The day specifically marks the historic Foucault Pendulum experiment of 1851.
- Emphasises the role of rotation in the day–night cycle and its influence on climate and wind patterns.
- Promotes understanding of basic Earth science and astronomy.

Background

- The idea that Earth rotates on its axis was first proposed by Greek philosophers around 470 BC, without experimental proof.
- Debate over Earth's motion continued for centuries.
- In 1851, French physicist Léon Foucault conclusively demonstrated Earth's rotation using a pendulum that showed the planet turning beneath its swing.

Significance

- Highlights the importance of Earth's axial movement in shaping natural processes.
- Honours Léon Foucault's experiment, foundational to understanding Earth's rotation.
- Explains the day–night cycle, essential for life on Earth.
- Helps interpret weather systems and wind circulation via the Coriolis Effect.
- Underpins time measurement, forming the basis of hours and days.
- Influences climate patterns and seasons when combined with Earth's revolution.
- Encourages scientific curiosity and Earth science education among students.

Facts/General knowledge

- Earth's rotation is the continuous spin around an imaginary axis joining the North and South Poles.
- A sidereal day is approximately 23 hours, 56 minutes, and 4 seconds; the solar day is 24 hours.
- The planet rotates from west to east, making the Sun appear to rise in the east and set in the west.
- Rotational speed is highest at the equator (about 1,670 km per hour) and decreases towards the poles.
- Earth's axis is tilted at about 23.5 degrees; this tilt, along with rotation and revolution, influences seasons and climatic variations.
- Rotation drives the day–night cycle, regulating

biological clocks and daily activities of living organisms.
- The Coriolis Effect deflects winds and ocean currents to the right in the Northern Hemisphere and to the left in the Southern Hemisphere.
- Gravitational interaction with the Moon is slowly decreasing Earth's rotational speed, gradually increasing the length of a day over millions of years.

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)

Introduction

- Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is the flagship outreach programme of the Ministry of External Affairs, organised to engage the Indian diaspora and showcase India's regional diversity and development.

Why in news?

- On 9 January 2025, the Prime Minister extended warm greetings to the global Indian diaspora, highlighting its role as a vital bridge connecting India with the world.
- The 18th PBD Convention (2025) was held in Bhubaneswar, Odisha.
- Key highlights included the launch of the Pravasi Bharatiya Express under the Pravasi Teertha Darshan Yojana, an exhibition on Mandvi–Muscat migration, and renewed emphasis on the legacy of Girmitiyas, including a proposal for a comprehensive Girmitiya database.

Background

- The PBD convention was instituted in 2003 under Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to institutionalise structured and sustained engagement with the Indian diaspora.
- Since 2015, it has been conducted as a biennial, theme-based convention, enabling focused diaspora engagement, dialogue, and networking.

Significance

- It commemorates Mahatma Gandhi's return to India in 1915 from South Africa, symbolising the historic role of the Indian diaspora in India's freedom struggle and nation-building.
- The convention seeks to recognise diaspora contributions to India's development, enhance India's image abroad, support national causes and overseas Indian welfare, and provide a platform for dialogue between the diaspora and the Government of India.

Facts/General knowledge

- Date: 9 January.
- The Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award (PBSA) is the highest honour conferred on NRIs, OCIs, and diaspora organisations, recognising their outstanding contributions to India's global image, national causes, and community welfare.

World Hindi Day and Abhyuday-3

Introduction

- World Hindi Day is observed annually on 10 January.
- It marks the date in 1975 when the first World Hindi Conference was held in Nagpur under the auspices of Rashtra Bhasha Prachar Samiti, Wardha (organisation founded by Mahatma Gandhi).

Why in news?

- The Third Technical Hindi Symposium "Abhyuday-3" was organised with the collaboration of CSIR-National Institute of Science Communication and Policy Research, Indian Institute of Technology Indore, and Indian Institute of Technology Jodhpur.
- The symposium promoted Technical Hindi and inclusive science outreach.
- Abhyuday-3 reflected India's push to expand science and technology outreach through Indian languages, especially Hindi, aligning with World Hindi Day's goal of strengthening Hindi's global and functional use.

Background

- The official observance of World Hindi Day began in 2006, following its announcement by then Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh.
- World Hindi Day is distinct from National Hindi Diwas, which is celebrated on 14 September.
- National Hindi Diwas commemorates the adoption of Hindi in the Devanagari script as an official language of India by the Constituent Assembly in 1949.

Significance

- Abhyuday-3 underscored the role of Hindi in expanding access to science and technology communication.

- The initiative aligns with efforts to strengthen the global and functional use of Hindi, reinforcing its position in education, research, and outreach.

Facts/General knowledge

- The term "Hindi" derives from the Persian word "Hind", meaning the land of the Indus River; it was used by Turk invaders in the early 11th century to describe the language of the region.
- Hindi is one of India's official languages, with English as the other, and is also spoken in Mauritius, Fiji, Suriname, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, and Nepal.
- Hindi evolved from Sanskrit to Prakrit and Apabhramsa, with Khari Boli forming its direct foundation; it later incorporated Persian and Arabic influences.
- The modern Devanagari script took shape in the 11th century, giving Hindi its present written structure.
- Hindi is the third most spoken language in the world, after English and Chinese, with around 600 million speakers.
- UNESCO recognised Hindi as an official language in 1948, and it was first used in the United Nations General Assembly in 1949.

National Youth Day 2026

Introduction

- National Youth Day honours Swami Vivekananda's ideals of character, courage, service, and nation-building that guide India's youth-centric policies.
- With over 65% of India's population below 35 years, youth empowerment is central to the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047.

Why in news?

- Observed on 12 January 2026 as the annual National Youth Day.

Background

- The observance marks the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda (12 January 1863).

Significance

- Mera Yuva Bharat (MY Bharat): National digital youth platform linking volunteering, leadership, and skilling with AI-enabled career services, mentorship, and Fit India integration.
- National Service Scheme (NSS) & Viksit Bharat Young Leaders' Dialogue (VBYLD): NSS promotes civic engagement and social responsibility through community service; VBYLD provides a national ideation platform engaging nearly 3,000 young leaders, with a digital outreach of over 50.42 lakh youth via MY Bharat and MyGov.
- Agnipath Scheme: Four-year military service pathway for youth aged 17.5–21 years, fostering discipline, technical skills, and post-service employability through structured resettlement support.
- Pradhan Mantri Skilling and Employability Transformation through Upgraded (PM-SETU): Flagship initiative to upgrade 1,000 ITIs via a government-owned, industry-managed hub-and-spoke model, aligning vocational training with current and future labour-market demand.
- Skill India Mission: Umbrella skilling ecosystem integrating PMKVY 4.0, PM-NAPS, and Jan Shikshan Sansthans (JSS) to deliver future-ready vocational training, apprenticeships, and lifelong learning opportunities.
- PM Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana: Large-scale employment generation scheme aiming to support 3.5 crore jobs in two years, offering financial incentives to both newly employed youth and employers.
- Startup India & PM MUDRA Yojana: Strengthening youth entrepreneurship through recognition of 1.97 lakh+ startups and provision of collateral-free loans up to ₹20 lakh, benefiting first-generation entrepreneurs, women, and MSMEs.
- Fit India Movement: Nationwide behavioural change campaign promoting daily fitness through Sundays on Cycle, Fit India School Certification, fitness pledges, and digital fitness tracking.
- Youth Spiritual Summit & Kashi Declaration: Youth-led national roadmap emphasising mental well-being, substance-free living, and value-based leadership, aligned with the vision of a Nasha Mukt Yuva for Viksit Bharat.
- Rashtriya Kishore Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK): Holistic adolescent health programme addressing nutrition, mental health, sexual and reproductive health, substance misuse, non-communicable diseases, and injury prevention through a preventive and community-based

approach.

Facts/General knowledge

- About: Swami Vivekananda, born as Narendra Nath Datta on 12 January 1863, was a monk and the chief disciple of Ramakrishna Paramhansa.
- Name: In 1893, upon the request of Maharaja Ajit Singh of the Khetri State, he took the name 'Vivekananda', changing from 'Sachidananda' used earlier.
- Enlightenment: In 1892, he swam to a rock (later the Vivekananda Rock Memorial) at Kanyakumari for meditation and spent three days and nights there, resulting in his enlightenment.
- Philosophical contributions: Introduced the world to the Indian philosophies of Vedanta and Yoga; preached 'neo-Vedanta', combining spirituality with material progress.
- Spiritual message: Drew on the Upanishads, the Gita, and the examples of Buddha and Jesus, emphasising self-realisation, compassion, and selfless service; advocated the doctrine of service—serving jiva is worship of Shiva; articulated four pathways to moksha in Raja-yoga, Karma-yoga, Jnana-yoga, and Bhakti-yoga.
- Revivalism: Emphasised education for national regeneration, advocating man-making, character-building education.
- Associated organisations: Founded the Ramakrishna Mission in 1897; established Belur Math in 1899 as his permanent abode.
- International address: Represented Hinduism at the Parliament of Religions, Chicago, in 1893; addressed a conference of the London Hindu Association in July 1896.

Indian Army Day 2026

Introduction

- Indian Army Day (Bhartiya Sena Diwas) is celebrated annually across India on 15 January to honour the courage, discipline and sacrifice of Indian Army (IA) personnel.

Why in news?

- 15 January 2026 marks the 78th Indian Army Day.
- The IA has declared 2026 as the "Year of Networking & Data Centricity".
- A grand parade was held at Mahal Road in Jaipur, Rajasthan, making it the fourth time the event was held outside New Delhi (Delhi) and the first time outside a military cantonment.

Background

- The day marks the appointment of General (later Field Marshal) K.M. Cariappa as the first Indian Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army in 1949, succeeding General Sir Francis Robert Roy Bucher; the IA was established in 1895, with its first Indian Chief appointed only in 1949.

Significance

- Honours the courage, discipline and sacrifice of IA personnel.
- "Year of Networking & Data Centricity" aims to improve connectivity, facilitate real-time decision-making and enhance overall combat effectiveness.

Facts/General knowledge

- The Army Day Parade was hosted for the first time by the South Western Command, also known as the Sapta Shakti Command.
- Reviewing Officer: General Upendra Dwivedi, Chief of the Army Staff (COAS).
- Attendees included General Anil Chauhan, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS); Air Vice Marshal (AVM) M. Bandhopadhyay of the Indian Air Force (IAF); Commodore P. Verma of the Indian Navy (IN); Union Minister Rajnath Singh, Ministry of Defence (MoD); and Bhajan Lal Sharma, Chief Minister (CM) of Rajasthan.

National Voters' Day 2026

Introduction

- Observed on 25 January across India.
- Celebrates democracy by honouring voters, encouraging youth participation, strengthening democratic values, and promoting universal adult suffrage.
- Empowers every citizen to take part in the electoral process.

Why in news?

- National Voters' Day 2026 is being observed.
- Theme: "My India, My Vote".
- Tagline: "Citizen at the Heart of Indian Democracy".

Background

- Marks the foundation of the Election Commission of India (ECI).

- ECI was established on 25 January 1950 under Article 324 of the Indian Constitution.
- India observes National Voters' Day on 25 January each year.

Significance

- Reinforces voter-centric democracy and civic participation, particularly among youth.
- Underscores universal adult suffrage and the role of every citizen in elections.

Facts/General knowledge

- SVEEP has boosted voter education.
- ECINET has supported global technology sharing.
- cVIGIL has enabled quick reporting of violations.
- 100% webcasting at polling stations has enhanced transparency.
- EPIC delivery has been fast-tracked to 15 days.
- Date Important Events
- February 1, 2026 Union Budget
- Indian Coast Guard Day
- Guru Ravidas Jayanti
- February 1 – 7 2026 International Development Week
- February 2, 2026 World Wetlands Day
- RA Awareness Day
- February 3, 2026 National Golden Retriever Day
- February 4, 2026 World Cancer Day
- February 4, 2026 National Day of Sri Lanka
- February 6, 2026 International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation
- February 7 – 14, 2026 Valentine's Week
- February 8, 2026 National Opera Day
- February 9, 2026 Baba Amte's Death Anniversary
- February 10, 2026National Deworming Day
- World Pulses Day
- International Epilepsy Day
- February 11, 2026World Day of the Sick
- International Day of Women and Girls in Science
- Safer Internet Day
- February 12, 2026Darwin Day
- Abraham Lincoln's Birthday
- National Productivity Day
- February 13, 2026World Radio Day
- Sarojini Naidu Birth Anniversary
- February 14, 2026Valentine's Day
- World Congenital Heart Defect Awareness Day
- February 15, 2026Mahashivratri
- February 17-27, 2026 Taj Mahotsav
- February 17, 2026Ramadan Begins
- February 19, 2026World Anthropology Day
- February 20, 2026Arunachal Pradesh Foundation Day
- Mizoram Foundation Day
- World Day of Social Justice
- February 21, 2026International Mother Language Day
- February 22, 2026World Thinking Day
- February 23, 2026World Peace and Understanding Day
- February 24, 2026Central Excise Day
- February 26, 2026Veer Savarkar's Death Anniversary
- February 27, 2026World NGO Day
- February 28, 2026National Science Day
- February 28, 2026Rare Disease Day