

# **Factly Weekly**

**Compilation**

**2026**

**For UPSC CSE Prelims  
Exam**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Week**  
**January 2026**

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## PANKHUDI Portal

News: The Ministry of Women and Child Development launched the PANKHUDI Portal on 8 January 2026 to strengthen CSR coordination for women and children.

### About PANKHUDI Portal



Figure 1. Source – DD News

- PANKHUDI is an integrated digital portal for Corporate Social Responsibility and partnership facilitation in women and child development.
- Launched by: The portal was launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development.
- Objective: The objective of PANKHUDI is to strengthen coordination, transparency, and structured stakeholder participation in initiatives for women and child welfare.
- Key features
  - Single-window digital platform: PANKHUDI functions as a single-window digital platform for individuals, NRIs, NGOs, CSR contributors, corporates, and government agencies.
  - Integration of thematic contributions: The portal integrates contributions in areas such as nutrition, health, ECCE, child protection, rehabilitation, and women's safety and empowerment.
  - Unified digital interface: It provides a common digital interface for proposal submission, approval, monitoring, and accountability.
  - Non-cash financial transactions: All financial contributions on the portal are accepted only through non-cash modes to ensure transparency.
- Strategic Support to Missions: The portal supports Mission Saksham Anganwadi & Poshan 2.0, Mission Vatsalya, and Mission Shakti through a structured digital mechanism.
- Significance: The portal improves infrastructure and services across Anganwadi Centres, Child Care Institutions, and support centres, leading to better service delivery for citizens.

## District-Led Textiles Transformation (DLTT) Initiative

News: The Ministry of Textiles unveiled the District-Led Textiles Transformation initiative at the National Textile Ministers Conference held in Guwahati.

### About District-Led Textiles Transformation (DLTT) Initiative



Source – ET

- The District-Led Textiles Transformation initiative is a strategic program to promote inclusive and sustainable growth in India's textile sector.
- Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Textiles
- Aim: The initiative aims to transform 100 high-potential districts into Global Export Champions and develop 100 Aspirational Districts as self-reliant textile hubs.
- Key features
  - Data-driven approach: The initiative adopts a district-level and sector-specific approach based on data-driven scoring using export performance, MSME ecosystem, and workforce presence.
  - Two-pronged classification: Districts are categorized into Champion Districts and Aspirational Districts under a two-pronged strategy.
    - Champion District focus: Champion Districts focus on removing advanced bottlenecks through Mega Common Facility Centres, Industry 4.0 integration, and direct export market linkages.
    - Aspirational District focus: Aspirational Districts focus on workforce foundation, basic skilling, certification, raw material banks, and promotion of micro-enterprises through SHGs and cooperatives.
  - Purvodaya convergence: The initiative emphasizes Purvodaya convergence in eastern and northeastern regions for tribal development, connectivity improvement, and GI tagging.
- Significance: The initiative strengthens textile clusters through coordinated government support and partnerships with industry and academia to scale successful district-level models.

## Vitamin B12

News: Vitamin B12 deficiency in India is widespread, underdiagnosed, and linked to diet, absorption problems, and long-term neurological and physical health effects.

### About Vitamin B12



Source – The Conversation

- Vitamin B12 is a water-soluble vitamin, also called cobalamin, that is essential for nerve function, red blood cell formation, and DNA synthesis.
- Forms of B12
  - Vitamin B12 exists as methylcobalamin and 5-deoxyadenosylcobalamin, which are the metabolically active forms.
  - Hydroxycobalamin and cyanocobalamin become active after conversion inside the body.
- Sources of B12
  - Its sources are primarily animal products like meat, fish (salmon, tuna, sardines), poultry, eggs, and dairy (milk, cheese, yogurt), plus fortified foods for vegetarians/vegans, such as breakfast cereals, plant milks, and nutritional yeast.
- Key functions
  - Vitamin B12 supports the development, myelination, and proper functioning of the central nervous system.
  - It is required for healthy red blood cell formation and prevention of anaemia.
  - It plays an essential role in DNA synthesis and normal cell division.
  - It acts as a cofactor for enzymes involved in amino acid and fatty acid metabolism.
- Cause of deficiency
  - Limited access to animal-source foods and prolonged cooking methods reduce available B12.
  - Poor absorption occurs due to gastric, intestinal, or age-related factors.
  - Long-term use of certain medications can gradually deplete B12 stores.
- Effects of deficiency
  - Deficiency causes persistent fatigue, weakness, numbness, tingling, poor concentration, and mood changes.
  - Prolonged deficiency can lead to nerve damage, cognitive decline, balance problems, and anaemia-related complications.

### Thwaites Glacier

News: The pattern of fractures in the ice of the Thwaites Glacier, which is the outflow of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet, shows how the rest the Antarctic Ice Shelf could collapse in the future.

#### About Thwaites Glacier





Source – Britannica

- The Thwaites Glacier is a massive Antarctic ice feature in West Antarctica critical to global sea level dynamics.
- Location: It is located east of Mount Murphy, on the Walgreen Coast of Marie Byrd Land in Antarctica.
- It is commonly known as the 'Doomsday Glacier' because of its potential to significantly add to worldwide sea levels.
- Naming: It is named after the late American glaciologist Fredrik T. Thwaites.
- The glacier is flowing into Pine Island Bay which is a part of the Amundsen Sea.
- Size and area:
  - Width: It is 120 km wide and is the single widest glacier in the world.
  - Thickness: It is also very tall, with ice thickness from bedrock to surface measuring between 800 m and 1,200 m.
  - Area: It has an area of 192,000 sq. km.
  - It is larger than the American state of Florida and a little smaller than the entire island of Great Britain.
- Significance: It is one of the fastest changing ice-ocean systems on the planet.
  - The complete melting of the glacier could add 65 cm to global sea levels.

### Mrs. Hume's Pheasant

News: Lurh Tlang Vavu Sanctuary in Farkawn village of Champhai district has become Mizoram's first community-led forest dedicated to the sole conservation of Mrs. Hume's pheasant, the state bird of Mizoram.

#### About Mrs. Hume's Pheasant



Source – Bongabay

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- It is also known as the bar-tailed pheasant.
- It is the state bird of Mizoram and Manipur.
- Naming: The name commemorates Mary Ann Grindall Hume, wife of the British naturalist A. O. Hume, one of the key founders of the Indian National Congress.
- Habitat and Distribution
  - Habitat: It inhabits open, dry, subtropical evergreen (mainly oak), coniferous (chiefly pine) or mixed conifer-broadleaf forests on steep, rocky hillsides interrupted by scrub and grassy clearings.
  - Distribution: It is endemic to China, Myanmar, Thailand, Burma and India.
    - In India, it is found in Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh.
- Characteristics
  - The pheasant is up to 90 cm long with a greyish brown head, bare red facial skin, chestnut brown plumage, yellowish bill.
  - It has metallic blue neck feathers.
  - The male has a long greyish white, barred black and brown tail.
  - The female is a chestnut brown bird with whitish throat, buff colour belly and white-tipped tail.
- Threats
  - Habitat loss and fragmentation due to shifting cultivation
  - Deforestation
  - Hunted for food
  - Trade of meat
- IUCN Status: Vulnerable

### United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)

News: The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs projected India's growth at 7.2% for 2025–26 in its World Economic Situation and Prospects 2026 report.

#### About United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)



**UNITED NATIONS**  
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Source – UN DESA

- UNDESA is a core department of the United Nations Secretariat that leads work on economic, social, and environmental development.
- Established in: UNDESA was established in 1948 and was restructured into its present form in 1997 through mergers of UN development and policy departments.
- Headquarters: New York City, USA

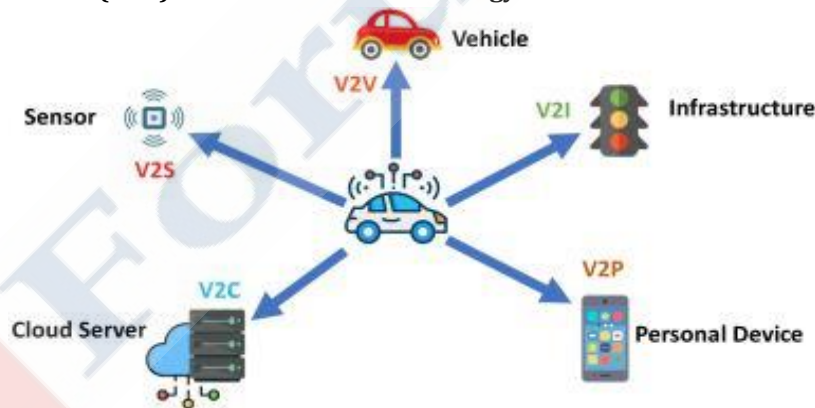
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- Aim: The aim of UNDESA is to support countries in achieving sustainable, inclusive, and equitable development by translating global UN commitments into national policies and actions.
- Functions
  - Economic and social analysis: UNDESA conducts global economic and social analysis by producing flagship reports such as the World Economic Situation and Prospects to guide policy decisions.
  - SDG Coordination: It monitors and coordinates progress on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and supports their implementation across countries.
  - Advice and technical assistance: It provides policy advice and technical assistance to governments on poverty reduction, inequality, employment, climate action, and social protection.
  - It offers intergovernmental support by providing secretariat services to the UN General Assembly, ECOSOC, UN Commissions, and the High-Level Political Forum.
- Reports published by UNDESA
  - World Economic Situation and Prospects Report (WESP)
  - World Social Report
  - Sustainable Development Goals Report
  - United Nations E-Government Survey

### Vehicle-to-Vehicle (V2V) Communication Technology

News: The Government of India is preparing to roll out Vehicle-to-Vehicle (V2V) communication technology by end of 2026.

#### About Vehicle-to-Vehicle (V2V) Communication Technology



Source – MDPI

- Vehicle-to-vehicle communication technology is a wireless system that allows vehicles to directly exchange safety data without using mobile or internet networks.
- Objective: The primary objective is to lower the risk of collisions and chain accidents by providing advance warnings about sudden traffic changes.
- Working mechanisms
  - Internal communication unit: Vehicles will be fitted with an internal communication unit that can transmit and receive signals from other vehicles on the road.
  - Continuously shares details: While moving, each vehicle continuously shares details such as position, speed, direction, and braking status with surrounding vehicles.



- Dedicated radio frequency: This exchange uses a dedicated radio frequency authorised by the Department of Telecommunications and does not depend on mobile or internet services.
- Immediate alerts: When the system identifies risks like sudden deceleration, close distance, or vehicles approaching from blind spots, it immediately alerts the driver.
- In vehicles equipped with Advanced Driver Assistance Systems, these alerts can support timely automatic responses.
- Key features
  - All-round communication: The technology enables vehicles to exchange information from the front, rear, and sides, ensuring complete situational awareness.
  - Hidden hazard alerts: It provides immediate warnings about dangers that are not directly visible to the driver.
  - Low-visibility safety: The system reduces accident risks during foggy or poor visibility conditions on highways.
  - Network-free integration: It works without mobile networks and strengthens the performance of existing driver assistance systems.
- Concern: The technology requires large-scale adoption to be effective, adds extra cost for vehicle buyers, operates within a limited range, and initially provides only warning-based assistance.

### Zehanpora Site and Buddhism in Kashmir

News: The Zehanpora site gained attention after Prime Minister Narendra Modi mentioned its archaeological discovery in his Mann ki Baat address.

#### About Zehanpora Site and Buddhism in Kashmir



Figure 2. Source – HT

- Zehanpora is a large Buddhist archaeological site that highlights the deep historical roots of Buddhism in Kashmir.
- Location: Zehanpora is located in Baramulla district of Jammu and Kashmir, in the northern part of the Kashmir region.
- Major findings at site
  - Structures: Archaeologists have identified stupas, monk living spaces, and carefully planned stone foundations spread across the plateau.
  - Architecture: The stupa layouts show Gandharan influence, which indicates cultural interaction with north-western Buddhist regions.
- Links to Kushan-Era (1st – 3rd century): Archaeologists believe the site may have links with Huvishkapura, an ancient Kushan capital mentioned in historical texts.
- Strategic Location: Zehanpora lay on an ancient trade and pilgrimage corridor connecting Gandhara and Kashmir, supporting the movement of monks, merchants, and ideas.
- Significance: The site confirms Kashmir's role as a major Buddhist centre and an important node in ancient trade and pilgrimage networks.

#### About Buddhism in Kashmir

- Buddhism was prevalent in Kashmir even before Ashoka's reign, as mentioned in Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*.
- The Fourth Buddhist Council, associated with the Sarvastivada tradition, is believed to have been held in Kashmir during Kanishka's reign.
- Kashmir hosted important Buddhist philosophical developments, including the rise of Mahayana Buddhism.
- The region played a role in spreading Buddhism to Central Asia and China through missionary monks.
- Other important sites: Harwan, Ambaran (Akhnoor), and Parihaspora are significant ancient Buddhist archaeological sites in Kashmir.

### Gray Slender Loris

News: Kerala and Tamil Nadu have begun efforts to restore habitats and strengthen monitoring of the grey slender loris.

#### About Gray Slender Loris



Figure 3. Source: *neprimateconservancy*

- The gray slender loris is a small nocturnal primate. They belong to the group of prosimians, which represents some of the oldest and most primitive primates.
- Scientific name: *Loris lydekkerianus*
- Sub-species: Malabar slender loris, Mysore slender loris, Northern Ceylonese slender loris, and Highland slender loris.
- Habitat: In India, gray slender lorises inhabit tropical dry forests in high-altitude areas and

subtropical regions near plantations.

- In Sri Lanka, they are mainly found in dry-zone forests with evergreen vegetation.
- Distribution
  - Endemic: Southern and Eastern India and Sri Lanka.
  - In India, they are found in the southern regions of the Eastern and Western Ghats.
  - The Malabar and Mysore subspecies occur in India, while the Northern Ceylonese and Highland subspecies are endemic to Sri Lanka.
- Physical Characteristics
  - The gray slender loris is the smallest species of loris.
  - Adults weigh about 255 grams and measure approximately 21.5 centimetres in length.
  - They lack a tail, contributing to its small appearance.
  - Coat colour varies by subspecies, ranging from greyish-brown in Indian populations to reddish tones in Sri Lankan populations.

- All subspecies have large forward-facing eyes with dark patches, adapted for nocturnal vision.
- It has long limbs of equal length and strong, grasping hands with opposable thumbs.
- Its lower teeth form a comb-like structure used for grooming and feeding.
- Unlike many primates, it cannot jump or leap due to the absence of a tail.
- Diet: They are primarily insectivorous.
  - Their diet mainly includes ants and termites, along with beetles, spiders, mollusks, and small vertebrates.
- Behaviour and Lifestyle: Gray slender lorises are nocturnal and arboreal, spending most of their lives in trees.
  - They use all four limbs to move cautiously along branches in dry forest canopies.
  - Grey slender lorises is unique among lorises for its occasional ability to move quickly when threatened.
- Defence Mechanisms: When threatened, gray slender lorises often freeze to avoid detection.
  - If necessary, they growl and release a strong-smelling secretion from scent glands under their arms.
- Ecological Role: As insect predators, gray slender lorises help regulate insect populations.
  - They also form part of the food chain, serving as prey for larger predators such as snakes, birds of prey, and carnivorous mammals.
- Threats: Major threats include habitat loss due to deforestation, hunting, and illegal wildlife trade.
- Conservation Status
  - IUCN: Near Threatened
  - CITES: Appendix II
  - Wildlife Protection Act, 1972: Schedule I

### Oreshnik Missile

News: The Russia-Ukraine conflict escalated after Moscow confirmed the use of its Oreshnik hypersonic missile, marking the weapon's first deployment since November 2024.

#### About Oreshnik Missile



Source: usijournal



- The Oreshnik missile is a hypersonic, nuclear-capable intermediate-range ballistic missile developed by Russia.
- The term “Oreshnik” translates to “hazelnut tree” in the Russian language.
- First Operational Use: Russia first deployed the Oreshnik missile in combat in November 2024 during a strike on the Ukrainian city of Dnipro.
- Features:
  - Technological Lineage: The Oreshnik missile is based on the RS-26 Rubezh missile system, which was originally developed as an intercontinental ballistic missile.
  - Missile Classification: It is classified as an intermediate-range ballistic missile capable of hypersonic speeds.
  - Speed Capability: The missile travels at hypersonic speeds of approximately 8,000 miles per hour, making interception extremely difficult.
    - The missile can travel at speeds of up to ten times the speed of sound.
  - Range: The missile has a demonstrated range of 600 to 1,000 miles, with assessments suggesting a maximum range of over 3,000 miles.
  - Multiple Target Strike Ability: A key feature of the Oreshnik is its ability to strike multiple targets simultaneously, a capability usually associated with intercontinental ballistic missiles.
  - Warhead Capability: The Oreshnik missile is capable of carrying multiple warheads, including both nuclear and conventional payloads.
    - It can deploy up to six Multiple Independently Targetable Reentry Vehicles (MIRVs).
  - Independent Targeting: Each MIRV can be independently guided toward separate targets, allowing a single missile to strike multiple locations simultaneously.
  - Advanced Flight Trajectory: The missile follows a steep ascent beyond the atmosphere and re-enters sharply, enhancing its survivability against air defence systems.
  - Low Intercept Probability: Its extreme speed, high-altitude trajectory, and multiple warhead deployment make it nearly impossible to intercept.

### Phayre's Leaf Monkey

News: The Phayre's leaf monkey is in the news due to genetic reclassification which reduced its estimated population and increased conservation concern.

#### About Phayre's Leaf Monkey



Source – DTE



- Phayre's leaf monkey is a diurnal and arboreal Old World monkey found mainly in forested regions of Northeast India.
- Scientific name: Its scientific name is *Trachypithecus phayrei*.
- Naming: The species is named after Arthur Purves Phayre, a 19th century British officer and naturalist.
- Local name: It is known as chasma bandor in Bengali and chasma-chakuwa bandar in Assamese.
- Habitat and distribution
  - Phayre's langur inhabits tropical, deciduous, and evergreen forests of North-East India (mainly found in Tripura, Assam and Mizoram), eastern Bangladesh, and western Myanmar.
  - It also occupies secondary forests such as bamboo clusters and rubber plantations, and rests under large-canopy tree species found in Bangladesh.
- Reclassification
  - Recent genetic studies showed that Indian and Myanmar populations are separate species.
  - The Indian population is now called Phayre's langur, while the Myanmar population is named Popa langur (*Trachypithecus popa*).
- Physical Characteristics
  - The monkey has a dark face with white rings around the eyes and lips, giving a spectacled look.
  - It has a thick bluish-grey coat, a long slender tail, and adults weigh between 6 and 8 kg.
  - Both sexes have a small sagittal crest, while infants are born with a golden-yellow coat.
- Diet
  - Phayre's leaf monkey is a strict folivore that feeds mainly on young leaves, shoots, and flowers.
  - It occasionally eats fruits and seeds and has a multi-chambered stomach to digest fibrous leaves.
- Behavior
  - The species lives in cohesive and territorial groups led by a dominant male.
  - It uses vocal calls and displays to defend its range and spends most of its time in treetops.
- Threats
  - Habitat loss
  - Forest fragmentation
  - Hunting
  - Illegal poaching and trading locally
- Conservation Status
  - IUCN – Endangered
  - CITES – Appendix II

### Kathputlis

News: Kathputli Nagar in Jaipur is in focus for preserving Kathputli puppetry, where nearly 250 families continue this traditional craft across generations.

#### About Kathputlis



Source – TH

- Kathputli is a traditional string puppet theatre from Rajasthan and is one of the oldest folk art forms of the region.
- Naming: The word Kathputli comes from *kath*, meaning wood, and *putli*, meaning doll, which reflects the basic structure of the puppet.
- It is traditionally practiced by the Bhatt community.
- Key Features
  - Craftsmanship: The puppets are hand-carved from wood for the head and torso, while the rest of the body is made from colorful scrap fabrics, cotton, and sequins.
  - Distinctive Appearance: They are known for having large, expressive eyes, arched eyebrows, and no legs, hidden instead by long, ground-length skirts that twirl during movement.
  - Puppeteers: Puppeteers control the puppets by tying two to five strings to their fingers and moving them from above.
- Theme: Performances narrate stories of Rajput kings, brave warriors, folk heroes, moral tales, and characters from everyday life and folklore.
- Instrument used: The shows are accompanied by folk music played on the dholak and harmonium, along with rhythmic narration.

#### Other String Puppet Theatre of India

- Kundhei of Odisha: Light wooden string puppets are used to narrate stories from the Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Puranas, accompanied by Odissi-style music.
- Gombeyatta of Karnataka: String puppets modelled on Yakshagana characters perform mythological and folk narratives with elaborate costumes and headgear.
- Bommalattam of Tamil Nadu: Large and heavy puppets, using a mix of string and rod techniques, enact episodes from Hindu mythology.
- Putul Nach of West Bengal: Wooden string puppets present folk tales, social themes, and epics, supported by local music and narration.

### Aral Sea

News: The Aral Sea is discussed due to long-term human-induced environmental damage caused by river diversion for agriculture during the Soviet period.

#### About Aral Sea



Figure 4. Source – Save Aral

- Aral Sea is an endorheic salt lake, meaning it's a closed basin with no outflow to the ocean.
- Borders: It marks the border between Kazakhstan to the north and Uzbekistan to the south.
- It was once served as a vast saltwater lake in Central Asia and ranked as the world's fourth largest inland water body.
- Formation: The Aral Sea depression emerged towards the conclusion of the Neogene Period, spanning from approximately 23 to 2.6 million years ago.
- Climate: It is known for its harsh climate with hot summers, cold winters, and temperature changes throughout the day.
- Important river: The two rivers that feed the Sea are the Amu Darya from the south and the Syr Darya from the north.
- Drainage: It encompasses drainage from Uzbekistan and parts of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, and Kyrgyzstan.
- Salinity: Due to high evaporation and lack of outflow, its salt content became extremely high, killing off freshwater fish.
- Historical collapse
  - From the 1950s onward, the Soviet government promoted large-scale cotton farming by diverting the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers, which sharply reduced water reaching the Sea, causing a rapid fall in water level from the 1960s.
  - Environmental Degradation: Over half a century, the Aral Sea lost about 60,000 sq. km, nearly 90 % of its total area, a crisis termed by the United Nations as "the dry tears of the Aral."
- Restoration Efforts: Restoration efforts now focus on regional projects, including the Kok-Aral Dam in Kazakhstan and water-saving irrigation initiatives in the Amu Darya delta to reduce agricultural water use.

### Gee's Golden Langur

News: The Gee's golden langur remains one of the rarest and most threatened primates globally, found only in Assam in India.

#### About Gee's Golden Langur



Source – DTE

- Scientific name: *Trachypithecus geei*
- They are also known as simply the golden langur.
- They were first brought to the attention of the world by the naturalist Edward Pritchard Gee in the 1950s.
- Habitat
  - They inhabit subtropical broadleaf forests of the Himalayan foothills, typically at elevations of 100-1,500 m.
- Distribution: They are endemic only to Assam and Bhutan.
  - They are concentrated between the Manas and Sankosh rivers in India and the foothills of Bhutan's Black Mountains.
  - Range: Their range is largely confined to the Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary, Raimona National Park, Kakoijana Reserved Forest, parts of Manas National Park, and a few fragmented patches in Kokrajhar and Dhubri districts.
  - In Assam, the population of golden langur is estimated to be around 7,400 individuals.
- Characteristics
  - The langur's long, silky coat gives it a luminous appearance that changes with the seasons.
  - Males tend to have a deeper golden tone, while females and juveniles are lighter and silvery-white.
  - The black face, pale beard, and long crown whorl of hair add to its distinctive look, and its tail often exceeds 1 metre.
  - The species is strictly arboreal, using contiguous, tall canopy across moist evergreen, semi-evergreen and riverine forests.
  - Socially, the langurs live in small groups averaging eight individuals, typically one male with several females and young ones.
  - Unlike many primates, golden langurs are shy and avoid humans.
  - Diet: They have a herbivorous diet of fruits, leaves, seeds, buds, and flowers.
- Threats
  - Fragmentation of habitats due to construction of roads, powerlines and cleared corridors.
  - Electrocution by power lines, road traffic and dog attacks
  - Fragmentation also restricts gene flow, leading to inbreeding and long-term population decline.



- Conservation status
  - IUCN: Endangered
  - CITES: Appendix I
  - Wildlife Protection Act, 1972: Schedule 1

### Arbitration Council of India (ACI)

News: As many as six years after the law was amended, the Union Government is yet to constitute the Arbitration Council of India to regulate and promote institutional arbitration in the country.

#### About Arbitration Council of India (ACI)



Figure 5. Source – TH

- The Arbitration Council of India (ACI) is a statutory body established to promote and regulate arbitration mechanisms in the country.
  - It is governed by Part IA (Sections 43A to 43M) of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996, as amended in 2019.
  - It reflects India's aim to become a global arbitration hub, especially for commercial disputes.
  - Headquarter: Its head office shall be in Delhi.
- Composition of ACI
    - Chairman: ACI will be chaired by a former Supreme Court or High Court judge or an eminent arbitration expert, appointed by the Central Government in consultation with the Chief Justice of India.
    - Full-time Members: It will also have two Full-time Members from amongst eminent arbitration practitioners and academicians.
    - Part-time Member: In addition, one representative of a recognized body of commerce and industry shall be nominated on rotational basis as a Part-time Member.
    - Ex-officio Members
      - The Secretary, Department of Legal Affairs, Ministry of Law & Justice
      - Secretary, Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance
      - Chief Executive Officer, ACI will be ex-officio Members.
    - Functions: As per Section 43D of the Act, the Council would discharge the following functions:
      - Frame policy governing the grading of arbitral institutions.
      - Recognize professional institutes providing accreditation of arbitrators.
      - Review of grading of arbitral institutions and arbitrators.
      - Hold training, workshops and courses on arbitration in collaboration of law firms, universities and arbitral institutes.
      - Frame, review and update norms to ensure satisfactory level of arbitration and conciliation.

- Act as a forum for exchange of views and techniques to make India a robust centre for domestic and international arbitration.
- Make recommendations to the Central Government to make provisions for easy resolution of commercial disputes.
- Promote institutional arbitration by strengthening arbitral institutions.
- Conduct examination and training on various subjects relating to arbitration and conciliation and award certificates.
- Establish and maintain depository of arbitral awards.
- Make recommendations regarding personnel, training and infrastructure of arbitral institutions.

### Jeeraphool Rice and Nagri Dubraj Rice

News: A Regional Office of the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) was inaugurated at Raipur, Chhattisgarh increasing export potential GI-tagged products such as Jeeraphool Rice and Nagri Dubraj Rice.

#### About Jeeraphool Rice and Nagri Dubraj Rice



Figure 6. Source – Kisan Tak

#### About Jeeraphool Rice

- Jeeraphool rice is an ancient, indigenous, aromatic, and short-grained rice variety mainly grown in the Indian states of Chhattisgarh.
- Cultivated in: It is a common and widely cultivated crop in Surguja district of Chhattisgarh.
- The rice grain resembles Cumin (Jeera) in appearance, which is why it's known as Jeeraphool.
- Uses: The flour of Jeeraphool rice is

smooth and used to make various local dishes, including “Chausela” (Poori), anarsa, and chawal.

- GI Tag: It was awarded the Geographical Indication (GI) status tag on 14 March 2019.

#### About Nagri Dubraj Rice

- Nagri Johar Dubraj Rice is a premium aromatic rice variety traditionally grown by the tribal farming communities of Dantewada, Chhattisgarh.
- Its soft texture and medium-length grains turn tender and naturally fragrant when cooked.
- Being unpolished, it retains more nutrients and offers a richer flavour than regular polished rice.
- Popularly known as the “Basmati of Chhattisgarh,” this rice is cultivated through community-based and sustainable practices, making it a wholesome and authentic choice for everyday meals.
- GI Tag: It was awarded the Geographical Indication (GI) status tag in March, 2023.

### NIRANTAR platform

News: Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change chaired a meeting of the National Institute for Research & Application of Natural Resources to Transform, Adapt and Build Resilience (NIRANTAR) platform.

#### About NIRANTAR Platform

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NIRANTAR AIM	
➤ Consolidation of knowledge and sharing it with different stakeholders	
➤ Development of an interdisciplinary approach in research with each institute remaining independent	
➤ Creation of institutional mechanism to contribute to policy-making	
➤ Creation of repository of documents related to international treaties and conventions	
➤ Review ongoing research and scientific projects	

Figure 7. Source – Times of India

- NIRANTAR stands for National Institute for Research & Application of Natural Resources to Transform, Adapt and Build Resilience.
- It is a platform of institutions to improve coordination and collaboration among institutions.
- Initiative by: Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)
- Aim: It aimed at
  - Consolidation of knowledge and sharing it with different stakeholders
  - Development of an interdisciplinary approach in research with each institute remaining independent
  - Creation of institutional mechanism to contribute to policy-making
  - Creation of repository of documents related to international treaties and conventions
  - Review ongoing research and scientific projects
- It is to assist in formulating balanced policies that harmonize environmental protection with industrial and economic development.
- It seeks to ensure that natural resources are utilised wisely, preventing over-exploitation while promoting sustainable growth.
- Led by: A high-powered steering committee headed by environment minister with all secretaries of science and technology, tribal, and agriculture ministries, department of industry, and internal trade.
- Features:
  - Four Vertical Approach: The platform operates through four verticals, each focusing on different aspects of research, assessment of outcomes, and practical utilisation of natural resources. This structure allows for specialised and coordinated efforts across multiple domains of environmental and developmental science.
  - NIRANTAR focuses on three aspects: Research, its role in policymaking and the way ahead. It also emphasised the importance of institution building through committed and capable human resources.

### Swami Vivekananda

News: The Vice President of India paid floral tributes to Swami Vivekananda on National Youth Day.

#### About Swami Vivekananda



Source: Cultural India

- Swami Vivekananda was a Hindu monk, spiritual leader, and reformer who played a major role in spreading Vedanta philosophy.
- He was originally named Narendranath Datta and was born on January 12, 1863, in Kolkata.
- From a young age, Narendranath had mystical experiences and became deeply curious about the existence of God.
- In 1881, he met Ramakrishna Paramhansa, who later became his spiritual guru.
- Life as monk: Around 1890, Vivekananda travelled across India as a wandering monk under the names Vividishananda and Sachchidananda. During his travels, he met people from different social classes and studied the social and religious conditions of India.
- World's Parliament of Religions, Chicago (1893): Vivekananda represented Hinduism at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893.
  - His speeches were deeply inspiring and emphasized harmony, peace, and acceptance of all religions.
  - He became famous as a captivating orator, and newspapers described him as "an orator by divine right."
  - In his final address, he stated that the message of all religions should be "Help and not fight, assimilation and not destruction, harmony and peace and not dissension."
- Founding of Organizations: After returning to India in 1897, he founded the Ramakrishna Mission to organize humanitarian and spiritual activities. He also established Ramakrishna Math at Belur, West Bengal, to train young monks and serve as a spiritual center.
  - He established Vedanta Societies in New York (1894) and San Francisco (1900), which spread Vedanta philosophy in the West.
- Philosophy and Teaching:
  - His philosophy is based on Vedanta, which highlights the divinity of the soul, the oneness of all existence, and the importance of self-realization
  - He believed in a universal religion, teaching that all faiths are different paths leading to the same ultimate truth, promoting tolerance and religious harmony.
  - He emphasized service to humanity with the principle "Jiva is Shiva," meaning helping others is equivalent to serving God
  - He popularized Karma Yoga, the path of selfless action, teaching that duties should be performed without attachment to results and dedicated to the divine.
- Contribution:



- He was India's first cultural ambassador to the West, promoting Hinduism, Indian spirituality, and culture globally while countering negative stereotypes.
- He emphasized the harmony of science and religion, advocated selfless action, and stressed the wisdom of the Bhagavad Gita in guiding life and social service.
- Vivekananda championed social reforms, opposing untouchability, caste discrimination, and superstition, while promoting women's education, equality, and the upliftment of the poor.
- He inspired nationalism, universal brotherhood, and spiritual renaissance, awakening Indian pride and integrating material progress with spiritual growth.
- His birthday is celebrated as National Youth Day in India since 1985.
- He died on July 4, 1902, near Calcutta at the age of 39.
- The Vivekananda Rock Memorial in Kanyakumari commemorates his meditation before leaving for Chicago in 1893.

### Himalayan Brown Bear

News: A survey of the Trans-Himalayan region of Ladakh for mapping brown bear habitat found that the most high-quality habitat lies outside protected areas and overlaps with zones of rapid infrastructure expansion, underscoring the need for wildlife corridor protection.

#### About Himalayan Brown Bear



Figure 8. Source: Animalia

- The Himalayan brown bear (*Ursus arctos*) is a subspecies of the brown bear and represents one of the oldest bear lineages adapted to high-altitude environments.
- It is locally known as Lal Bhalu in many Himalayan regions.
- Habitat: They primarily inhabit alpine meadows, alpine scrublands, and glacial valleys.
  - They are generally found at elevations ranging from 3,000 to 5,000 m above sea level.
- Distribution: They are found in northwestern and central Himalayas, including Pakistan, India, Nepal, the Tibetan Autonomous Region of China, and Bhutan.
  - In India, they are found across the western Himalayan states of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand.
- Physical Characteristics
  - The Himalayan brown bear has light brown to sandy or reddish-brown fur that varies seasonally.
  - Their coat becomes shorter during summer and significantly thicker and longer in winter to provide insulation.
  - The species has a prominent shoulder hump, which is a defining characteristic of brown bears.
  - They possess strong limbs and long, sharp claws that are used for digging roots, insects, and for defense.
  - Adult males can weigh up to 550 kilograms, making it the largest terrestrial carnivore in the Himalayan region.
  - Size: 150 to 280 cm.

- **Diet:** They are omnivorous and feeds on a wide variety of plant and animal matter.
  - Their diet includes grasses, roots, berries, insects, small mammals, and occasionally wild ungulates.
- **Behavior**
  - They are solitary species and generally avoids contact with humans.
  - They are the least arboreal of all bear species and spends most of its time on the ground.
  - They hibernate during the winter months in self-dug dens located on sheltered slopes.
- **Ecological importance**
  - They play a crucial role as an apex predator and scavenger in alpine ecosystems, contributing to nutrient cycling through scavenging and foraging activities.
  - They help to regulate herbivore populations and maintains ecological balance.
- **Threats:**
  - Habitat degradation
  - Increasing human-wildlife conflict
  - Poaching and retaliatory killings
  - Fragmentation
  - Climate change is altering alpine ecosystems and affecting feeding and hibernation patterns.
- **Conservation Status:**
  - IUCN Red List: Critically Endangered
  - Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972: Schedule I
  - CITES: Appendix I

### **‘Make in India in Sports’ and ‘International Relations’ Committees**

News: The Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports has advised all recognised National Sports Federations (NSFs) to constitute dedicated Committees on International Relations and Make in India in Sports within their respective organisations.

#### **About ‘Make in India in Sports’ and ‘International Relations’ Committees**



Figure 9. Source – AIR

#### **About ‘Make in India in Sports’ Committee**

- The Make in India in Sports Committee will be responsible for engaging with Indian manufacturers, start-ups, research institutions, and testing and standardisation bodies to facilitate product development, trials, and certification in the concerned sport, thereby promoting the domestic sports manufacturing ecosystem envisaged under Make in India.
- **Composition:** The Committee shall include senior Federation members, technical experts, former international athletes, and at least one member with experience in sports equipment or technology, manufacturing, or standards.
- The Committee will also prepare periodic reports on the adoption of indigenous solutions, highlighting progress made, constraints faced, and recommendations for

consideration within the NSF, with specific reference to contributions towards Make in India and Atmanirbhar Bharat.

#### About 'International Relations' Committee

- The International Relations Committee will monitor developments in relevant International Federations (IFs) and Continental Federations (CFs), including changes in competition rules and structures, governance frameworks, elections, and athlete-centric programmes.
- Aim: It is aimed at strengthening India's international engagement in sports.
- Composition: The Committee shall comprise senior Federation members, former international athletes, coaches, and subject experts with proven experience in global sports administration and diplomacy.
- Functions
  - The Committee will formulate a medium-term international cooperation plan covering bilateral and multilateral MoUs, joint training camps, exchange programmes, knowledge-sharing initiatives, and opportunities for hosting international sporting events in India.
  - It will ensure that all international engagements are aligned with Government of India policies, the Olympic Charter, and IF statutes, and adhere to principles of good governance, anti-doping compliance, and athlete safeguarding.
  - The Committee will strengthen collaboration with counterpart national federations and leading international sports research and academic institutions to secure best-in-class training opportunities and sports science support for Indian athletes.
  - It will also coordinate with international federations and relevant bodies to ensure timely participation in bidding processes and share all proposals for hosting international events in India with the Ministry in advance, for information and, where required, prior consultation or clearance under extant guidelines.

### Responsible Nations Index (RNI)

News: The Responsible Nations Index will be formally launched on 19 January 2026.

#### About Responsible Nations Index (RNI)



Figure 10. Source – PIB

- It is India's first globally anchored index designed to measure national responsibility beyond economic and military power.
- Launched by: World Intellectual Foundation in collaboration with Jawaharlal Nehru University, Indian Institute of Management Mumbai, and the Dr. Ambedkar International Centre.
- Aim: To assess how responsibly nations govern their people, protect the environment, and contribute to global stability.
- Purpose of the Index: The Index seeks to move beyond traditional indicators such as GDP, military strength, and economic growth.
- Focus: It focuses on ethical governance, social well-being, environmental sustainability, and global responsibility.
- Coverage and Data: The RNI evaluates a total of 154 countries across the world.

- It is based on transparent, globally sourced, and verifiable data to ensure credibility and comparability.
- The methodology is designed to allow objective cross-country assessment.
- Core Dimensions of the Index: The Index is structured around three major dimensions of responsibility.
  - Internal Responsibility: Internal responsibility measures a nation's commitment to dignity, justice, and the well-being of its citizens.
    - It examines governance quality, social equity, and human development indicators.
  - Environmental Responsibility: Environmental responsibility assesses how nations manage natural resources and address climate change.
    - It includes indicators related to sustainability, conservation, and environmental protection.
  - External Responsibility: External responsibility evaluates a country's contribution to global peace and international cooperation.
    - It measures participation in multilateral efforts, global stability, and responsible international conduct.

### Mithi River

News: The Mithi river flowing through Mumbai has become a national symbol of urban vulnerability after the devastating floods that claimed over 1,000 lives in 2005.

#### About Mithi River

Source: mediaradiosai

- Location: The Mithi River is one of the four rivers flowing through the city of Mumbai.
- Origin: The river originates from the overflow of the Vihar Lake and also receives the overflows from the Powai Lake, about 2 km downstream.
- Length and end: It flows for approximately 18 km before meeting the Arabian Sea at Mahim Creek.
  - The river passes through densely populated residential areas and major industrial zones of Mumbai.
- Importance of River: The Mithi River plays a crucial role as a natural stormwater drainage system for Mumbai.
  - It helps control flooding in a low-lying coastal city that receives heavy monsoon rainfall.
  - The river and its mangroves support a fragile estuarine ecosystem and protect the city from tidal flooding.
- Current condition of river: The Mithi River currently functions more like a sewage drain than a natural river.
  - Powai Lake has pollution levels far above safe limits and has been declared unfit for drinking.

### Shaksgam Valley

News: In response to a statement by the India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson, a Chinese government spokesperson reaffirmed the country's claims to the Shaksgam Valley.

#### About Shaksgam Valley





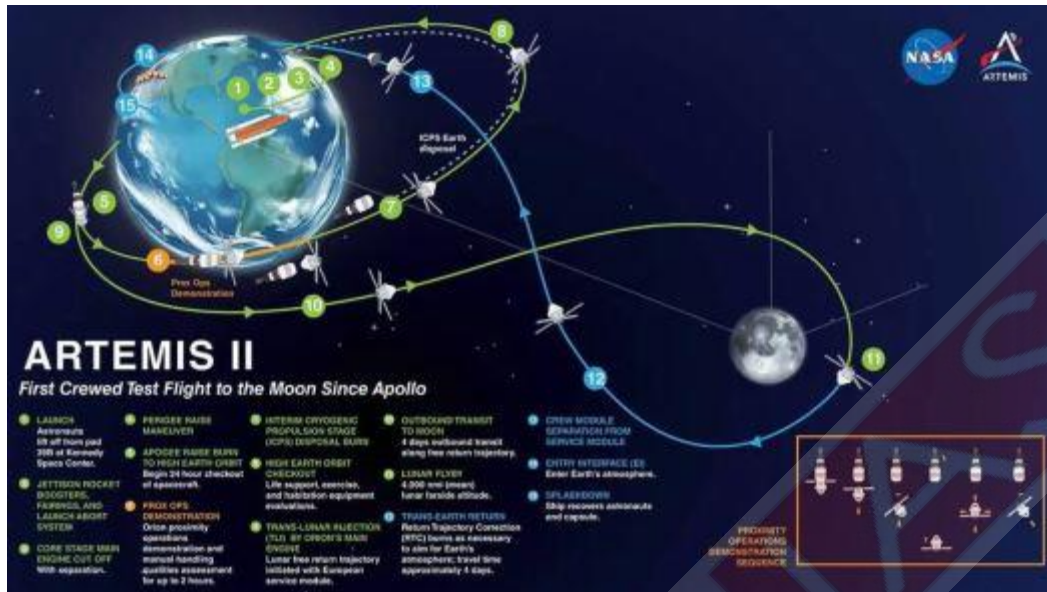
Source: Tibetanreview

- Location: The Shaksgam Valley, also known as the Trans-Karakoram Tract, is a remote, high-altitude valley located north of the Karakoram mountain range.
  - It lies in the Hunza–Gilgit region of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and is a disputed territory.
- Bordering Region: The valley borders China's Xinjiang province to the north, Pakistan-occupied Kashmir to the south and west and the Siachen Glacier region to the east.
- Rivers: The valley is drained by the Shaksgam River which is a tributary of the Yarkand River (a river of Xinjiang region of China).
- Administered by: At present, the valley is administered by China as part of Xinjiang, although India claims it as its territory.
- Historical Background: Shaksgam Valley was part of the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir.
  - Pakistan gained control over the region during the 1947–48 conflict.
  - In 1963, Pakistan ceded the Shaksgam Valley to China through the Sino-Pakistan Boundary Agreement.
  - Subsequently, the Karakoram highway was constructed by China in this Valley.
  - India has never accepted this agreement, stating that the 1963 China-Pakistan Boundary Agreement is illegal and invalid.
- Importance
  - The valley is strategically important due to its proximity to the Siachen Glacier, which is the world's highest militarised zone and also Karakoram passes.
  - Control over the region affects India's security posture in Ladakh and along the northern borders.

### Artemis II Mission

News: The mission is in the news because NASA announced Artemis II is in final preparation stages with launch windows beginning February 2026.

#### About Artemis II Mission



Source – NASA

- Artemis II is the first crewed mission of NASA's Artemis programme to send humans to the vicinity of the Moon since 1972.
- Aim: The mission aims to test the Space Launch System rocket and the Orion spacecraft for safety of life-support and navigation systems.
- Launch Date: The earliest targeted launch date is February 6, 2026, with identified launch windows across February, March, and April 2026.
- Mission Type: Artemis II is a crewed lunar flyby mission and will not include a lunar landing.
- Significance: Artemis II is a critical test flight, and its success will allow NASA to proceed with Artemis III.

#### About NASA's Artemis Program

- The Artemis program is a Moon exploration program led by NASA, established in 2017, to re-establish human presence on the Moon and support future Mars missions.
- Artemis I to Artemis IV
  - Artemis I: It was an uncrewed test mission in 2022 that successfully tested SLS and Orion in lunar orbit.
  - Artemis II: It will conduct the first crewed test flight of SLS and Orion around the Moon.
  - Artemis III: It will send humans to explore the region near the lunar South Pole.
  - Artemis IV: It will introduce the first lunar space station and a more powerful SLS rocket.

#### Bhadrakali Temple Inscription

News: The Bhadrakali Temple inscription has drawn attention for highlighting the historical legacy, religious importance, and preservation of Somnath-related epigraphic records.

#### About Bhadrakali Temple Inscription



Figure 11. Source – PIB

- The Bhadrakali Temple inscription is an important 12th-century epigraph that records the history and patronage of the Somnath Temple.
- It is a eulogistic inscription of Param Pashupata Acharya Shriman Bhavabrihaspati, the spiritual preceptor of Maharajadhiraj Kumarapala of Anhilwad Patan.
- Location: The inscription is located at Prabhas Patan in Gujarat and is embedded in the wall of the ancient Bhadrakali Temple.
- Carved in: The inscription was carved in 1169 CE, corresponding to Valabhi Samvat 850 and Vikram Samvat 1255.
- Royal Patronage: It confirms the fifth temple's construction by Kumarapala in 1169 CE and reflects Solanki patronage of religion, art, and literature.
- Language used: The inscription is engraved in Sanskrit.
- Historical significance: The inscription uniquely chronicles the construction of the Somnath Temple across the four mythological Yugas, listing the materials used in each:
  - Satya Yuga: Built of gold by the Moon God (Soma).
  - Treta Yuga: Built of silver by Ravana.
  - Dvapara Yuga: Built of wood by Shri Krishna.
  - Kali Yuga: Built of stone by King Bhimdev Solanki.
- Protection: It is a protected monument under the State Department of Archaeology.

### Global Risks Perception Survey (GRPS) 2026

News: The World Economic Forum released the Global Risks Perception Survey 2026, highlighting shifting global risks and rising geoeconomic confrontation.

#### About Global Risks Perception Survey (GRPS) 2026



Source – WEF



- The GRPS 2026 assesses major global risks across immediate, short-to-medium, and long-term time horizons.
- Released by: The survey is released by the World Economic Forum and draws responses from over 1,300 global leaders and experts.

### **Key Findings**

- Overall global outlook
  - Immediate and short-term outlook (2026 to 2028):
    - Geo-economic confrontation is ranked as the top global risk and the most likely trigger of a material global crisis in 2026.
    - State-based armed conflict ranks second and is increasingly linked with economic instability.
    - Extreme weather events remain a major concern but have slipped in ranking in the short-to-medium term.
    - Societal polarisation and misinformation and disinformation are identified as serious risks affecting democratic systems and social cohesion.
    - Economic downturn shows one of the sharpest rises in perceived severity over the two-year period.
  - Long-term outlook (10-year period up to 2036):
    - Environmental risks such as extreme weather events, biodiversity loss, and changes to earth systems rank among the top long-term concerns.
    - Adverse outcomes of artificial intelligence rise sharply as a long-term risk due to insufficient governance and potential harm to jobs and society.

### **India-Specific Findings**

- For India, the top risks identified include cyber insecurity, income and wealth inequality, insufficient public services, economic downturn, and state-based armed conflict.
- The report notes that the strategic use of natural resources could create future tensions in the India – Pakistan context.
- India's 2024 general elections are highlighted as an example of how misinformation and disinformation are undermining democratic processes worldwide.

### **Landmark Aquatic Biodiversity Conservation Initiatives under the Namami Gange Mission**

News: The Union Minister for Jal Shakti has inaugurated several significant and far-reaching initiatives under the [Namami Gange Mission](#) to strengthen scientific research, monitoring and policy support for aquatic biodiversity conservation.

### **Landmark Aquatic Biodiversity Conservation Initiatives under the Namami Gange Mission**





Source – DD News

#### **Aqua Life Conservation Monitoring Centre**

- The Aqua Life Conservation Monitoring Centre for Ganga and Other Rivers was inaugurated at Wildlife Institute of India (WII) as a dedicated institutional framework for aquatic biodiversity conservation.
- The Centre will support systematic monitoring, research, hotspot identification and policy formulation for aquatic species.
- The Centre is equipped with specialised laboratories for ecotoxicology, aquatic ecology and spatial ecology.
- A dedicated microplastics laboratory has been established to assess microplastic pollution in river ecosystems.

#### **Dolphin Conservation and Rescue Ambulance**

- A Dolphin Rescue Ambulance was launched to provide rapid, scientific and sensitive emergency response for Ganga dolphins in distress.

#### **Conservation of Riverine Bird Species**

- The Indian Skimmer Conservation Project, launched by the Bombay Natural History Society, focuses on protecting rare and endangered bird species along the Ganga's riverine stretches.
- The project highlights the importance of conserving the entire river ecosystem, including avian biodiversity.

#### **Turtle Conservation and Species Recovery**

- The first phase of the Turtle Conservation Project demonstrated successful revival of endangered turtle species through scientific reintroduction and monitoring.
- Endangered species such as the Narrow-headed Softshell Turtle and the Red-crowned Roofed Turtle were reintroduced into the Yamuna and Ganga rivers using modern tracking technologies.

#### **Capacity Building and Education**

- A two-year Master's programme in Freshwater Ecology and Conservation has been launched under the Namami Gange Mission to develop skilled professionals for river restoration, biodiversity conservation and sustainable water management.

#### **Knowledge Creation and Publications**

- A conservation action plan for the critically endangered Gharial was released, providing insights into its distribution in the Ganga basin.
- A publication linking biodiversity conservation with food and nutrition security through millets was also launched.

## SVASTIK Portal

News: The SVASTIK web portal was launched during CSIR-NIScPR's 5th Foundation Day celebration held in New Delhi on 14 January 2026.

### About SVASTIK Portal



Source – CSIR

- SVASTIK stands for “Scientifically Validated Societal Traditional Knowledge” and functions as a national web portal for public communication.
- Implemented by: It is implemented by the CSIR–National Institute of Science Communication and Policy Research (NIScPR).
- Objective: It's objective is to conserve the practice of the right tradition, inculcate scientific temper of verifying tradition in a scientific manner and instill confidence in citizens regarding the scientific value of our traditional knowledge/practices.
- Key Features
  - Digital hub: The portal is the primary digital hub for the SVASTIK (Scientifically Validated Societal Traditional Knowledge) initiative
  - Multilingual Access: Content is available in English, 19 Indian languages, and 5 foreign languages to ensure broad accessibility.
  - Centralized Repository: It serves as a single point of access for all SVASTIK content, including stories, infographics, and research summaries related to traditional knowledge.

Note: The SVASTIK initiative was originally launched on August 25, 2021, following a call from Prime Minister to communicate verified traditional information to the public.

### About CSIR-National Institute of Science Communication and Policy Research (NIScPR)

- It serves as the coordinating body for implementing the national initiative to communicate India's scientifically validated traditional knowledge to society.
- It is a newly formed institute under the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), created by merging CSIR–NISCAIR and CSIR–NISTADS.
- It is actively engaged in the conservation and promotion of traditional knowledge through research, documentation, and outreach activities.

## Famous Tunnels of India

News: India's tunnel infrastructure is in focus due to recent completions, operational launches, and progress in major strategic and transport tunnel projects.

### About Famous Tunnels of India



Source – PIB

### Atal Tunnel

- Situated in: It is situated in Himachal Pradesh.  
Location: It is located Beneath the Pir Panjal ranges.  
Connects: It connects the Manali with Lahaul-Spiti.
- Key Features:
  - The 9.02 km long tunnel bypasses Rohtang Pass and enables year-round high-altitude travel under extreme Himalayan conditions.
  - It is officially recognized as the World's Longest Highway Tunnel above 10,000 feet in 2022.

### Sonamarg Tunnel

- Situated in: It is situated in Jammu & Kashmir.  
Location: It is located in the mountainous region near Sonamarg at an altitude of over 8,650 feet above sea level.  
Connects: It connects Srinagar with Sonamarg and further towards Ladakh.
- Key Features: The 12 km tunnel project includes a 6.4 km main tunnel, an egress tunnel, and approach roads built using the New Austrian Tunnelling Method.

### Sela Tunnel

- Situated in: It is situated in Arunachal Pradesh.
- Location: It is located on the Tezpur-Tawang route at an altitude of about 13,000 feet.
- Connects: It connects Tezpur with Tawang.
- Key Features: The tunnel is constructed by the Border Roads Organisation using the New Austrian Tunnelling Method at a cost of ₹825 crore.
  - It ensures all-weather connectivity, holds strategic importance for the Armed Forces, and supports socio-economic growth in border areas.

### Banihal-Qazigund Road Tunnel

- Situated in: It is situated in Jammu & Kashmir.
- Location: It is located between Banihal and Qazigund.
- Connects: It connects the Jammu region with the Kashmir Valley.

- Key Features: The 8.45 km long twin-tube tunnel has reduced the road distance by 16 km and cut travel time by about one and a half hours.

#### **Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee Tunnel**

- Situated in: It is situated in Jammu & Kashmir.
- Location: It is located in the Himalayan terrain between Udhampur and Ramban.
- Connects: It connects Udhampur with Ramban on the Jammu–Srinagar route.
- Key Features: The 9 km long twin-tube tunnel has reduced travel time between Jammu and Srinagar by nearly two hours.

#### **Tunnel T50 under USBRL Project**

- Situated in: It is situated in Jammu & Kashmir.
- Location: It is located between Khari and Sumber.  
Connects: It connects the Kashmir Valley with the rest of India through rail connectivity.
- Key Features: It is a 12.77 km long tunnel, stands as one of India's longest transportation tunnel constructed under the Udhampur–Srinagar–Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) project.

#### **Zojila Tunnel**

- Situated in: It is situated in the Himalayan region between Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.
- Location: It is located at an altitude of about 11,578 feet on the Srinagar–Kargil–Leh National Highway.
- Connects: It connects Ladakh with the rest of the country through an all-weather road link.
- Key Features: Once completed in 2028, it will become India's longest road tunnel and Asia's longest bi-directional tunnel, while saving over ₹5,000 crore through the use of modern technology.

#### **Mumbai–Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail Tunnel**

- Situated in: It is situated in Maharashtra.
- Location: It is located between Ghansoli and Shilphata, including an undersea section.
- Connects: It connects sections of the Mumbai–Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail corridor.
- Key Features: The 4.8 km undersea tunnel is excavated simultaneously from both ends using the New Austrian Tunnelling Method under difficult underwater conditions.
  - Designed as a single-tube tunnel capable of carrying two high-speed trains, it is a key feature of India's first bullet train project.

#### **Rishikesh–Karnaprayag New Rail Line Project Tunnels**

- Situated in: It is situated in Uttarakhand.
- Location: It is located in the geologically complex and environmentally sensitive Himalayan terrain.
- Connects: It connects Rishikesh with Karnaprayag through a tunnel-dominated railway alignment.
- Key Features: The project comprises 16 main line tunnels with a cumulative length of approximately 105 km and 12 parallel escape tunnels totaling about 98 km. Overall, 199 km of tunnelling has been completed against a total scope of 213 km.

#### **Kolkata Underwater Metro Tunnel**

- Situated in: It is situated in West Bengal.
- Location: It is located beneath the Hooghly River.
- Connects: It connects Esplanade with Howrah Maidan.
- Key Features: Launched in 2024, it is India's first underwater metro tunnel and a major engineering achievement.

### **Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2024**

**News:** NITI Aayog released the fourth edition of the Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2024.

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## About Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2024

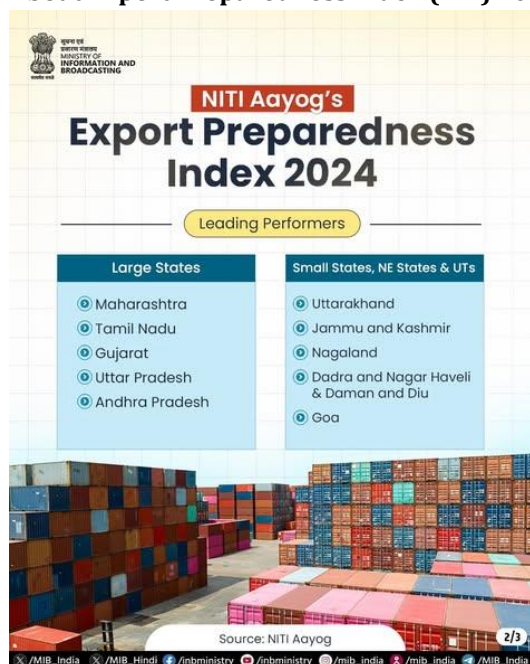


Figure 12. Source: NITI Aayog

- It is a comprehensive assessment of export readiness across States and Union Territories (UTs).
  - It provides an evidence-based framework to strengthen export competitiveness at the State, UT and district levels.
- Released by: NITI Aayog
- First edition: The first edition was published in August 2020.
- Strategic Alignment: It is aligned with India's target of USD 1 trillion in merchandise exports by 2030 and supports the long-term national vision of Viksit Bharat @2047.
- Objectives
  - It evaluates the strength, resilience and inclusiveness of subnational export ecosystems.
  - It identifies structural challenges, growth drivers and policy opportunities.
  - It promotes sustainable growth, employment generation, regional balance and integration into global value chains.
- Structure of the Index: It is built around four pillars-
  - Export Infrastructure
  - Business Ecosystem
  - Policy and Governance
  - Export Performance.
- It is further divided into 13 sub-pillars and 70 indicators for granular analysis.
- Methodology
  - It uses data-driven and indicator-based approach and official data from Central Ministries, State Governments and public institutions.
  - Indicators are normalised and aggregated with balanced weightages across pillars and sub-pillars.
- Key Enhancements in 2024 Edition
  - Inclusion of new dimensions such as macroeconomic stability, cost competitiveness, financial access, human capital and MSMEs.
  - State and UT Classification:
    - States and UTs grouped into Large States, Small States, North Eastern States and Union Territories.
    - They are categorized within each group as Leaders, Challengers or Aspirers to enable benchmarking and peer learning.
  - District-Level Focus: Greater emphasis is on districts as the fundamental units of export competitiveness.
    - It encourages place-based export strategies rooted in local strengths, clusters and value-chain linkages.

## Key Findings of the Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2024

## Factly Compilation [Second Week] January 2026

- Top Performing States: Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh ranked highest among large states due to strong industrial ecosystems and export infrastructure.
- Uttarakhand led the smaller states category, followed by Jammu & Kashmir, Nagaland, Dadra & Nagar Haveli & Daman & Diu, Goa, and Tripura.
- Expanding Regional Export Base: The rankings show rising export preparedness in non-traditional and smaller states, indicating broader regional participation in exports.