

# **Factly Weekly**

**Compilation**

**2026**

**For UPSC CSE Prelims  
Exam**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Week**  
**January 2026**

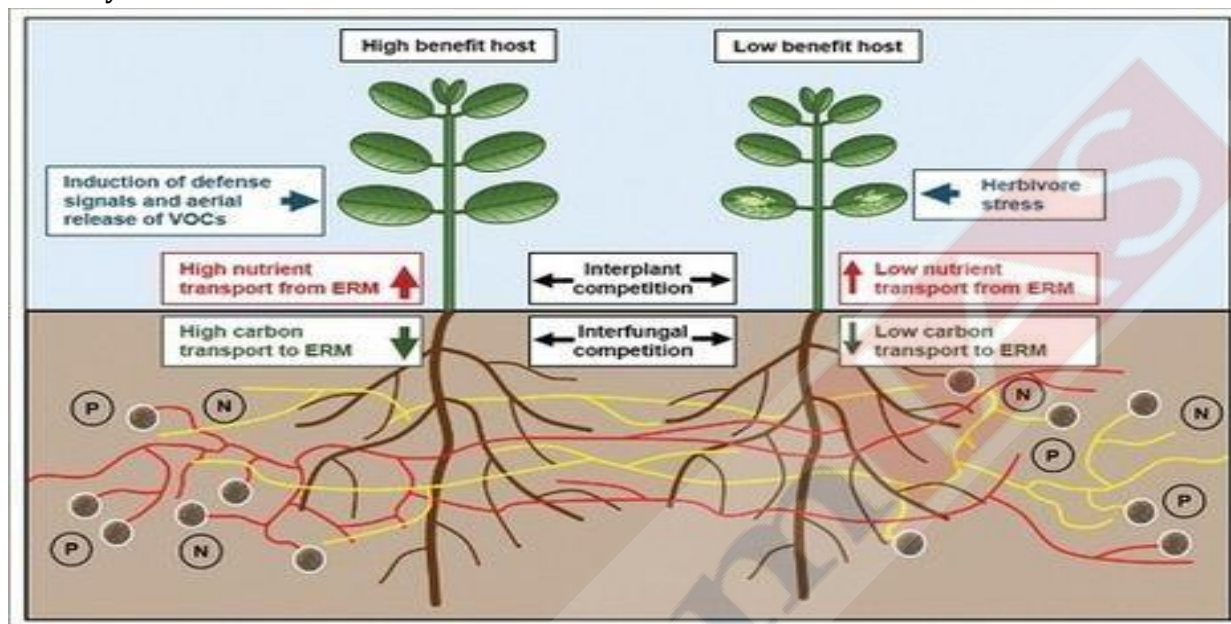
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## Mycorrhizal Networks

**News:** American evolutionary biologist Toby Kiers has been awarded the Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement for her work related to Mycorrhizal Networks.

### About Mycorrhizal Networks



Source: Research gate

- The word *mycorrhiza* comes from Greek and means “fungus-root,” describing the close association between fungi and plant roots.
- Mycorrhizal networks are underground systems formed by symbiotic fungi that connect the roots of plants and trees.
- These networks are often referred to as the “Wood Wide Web” because they function like a natural communication system.
- **Age and Evolution:** Mycorrhizal networks have existed for more than 400 million years. These fungal partnerships appeared before trees, flowering plants, and humans.
- **Structure of Mycorrhizal Networks:** Mycorrhizal networks are composed of microscopic fungal filaments called hyphae. Hyphae are extremely thin, often only one cell wide. A small amount of forest soil can contain miles of interconnected fungal threads. These threads greatly extend the functional root system of plants.
- **Functions performed by Mycorrhizal Networks**
  - **Symbiotic Relationship Between Plants and Fungi:** Plants provide mycorrhizal fungi with sugars and carbon produced during photosynthesis. Fungi supply plants with water and essential nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus. This exchange benefits both organisms and is classified as a mutualistic relationship.
  - **Communication and Signaling:** Mycorrhizal networks allow plants to communicate through chemical signaling. Warning signals can be transmitted when a plant is attacked by insects or pathogens. Neighboring plants receive these signals and activate defensive responses. This communication increases the overall survival of plant communities.
  - **Resource Sharing and Forest Cooperation:** Mycorrhizal fungi redistribute nutrients and water across the network. Resources are directed toward plants that are stressed or

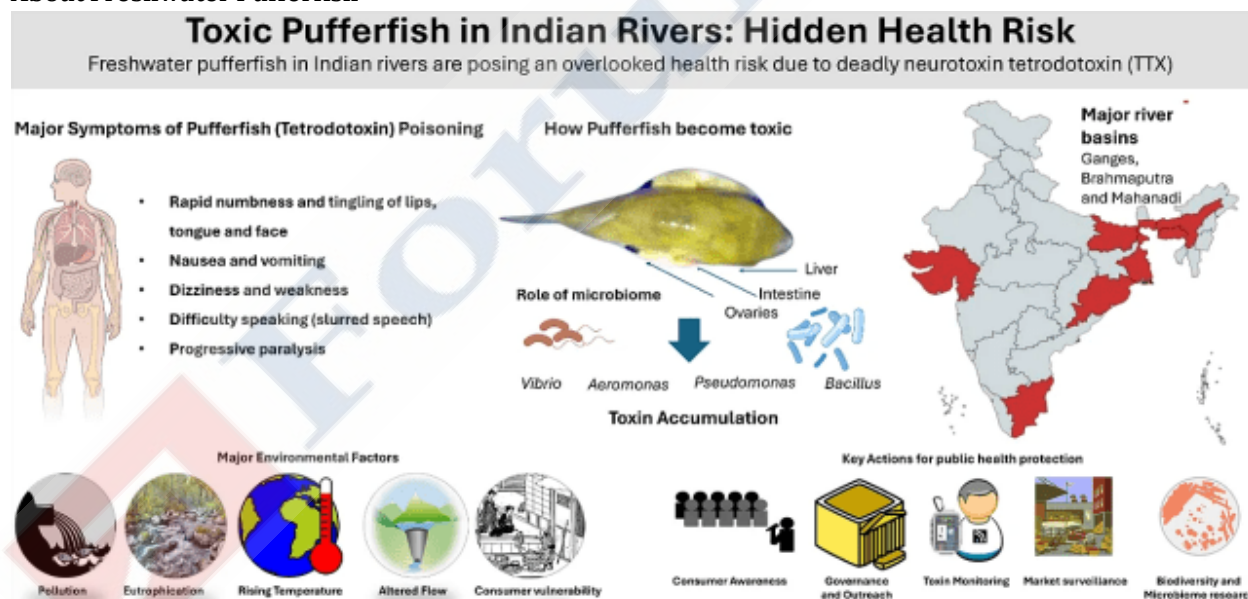
**growing in poor conditions.** Large, mature trees support younger seedlings through these networks. Some trees remain alive after being cut down because they continue to receive nutrients from nearby trees.

- **Types of Mycorrhizal Fungi:** There are two main types of mycorrhizal fungi: arbuscular and ectomycorrhizal fungi.
  - **Arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi** enter plant root cells and form structures where nutrients are exchanged. These fungi are associated with most crops, grasses, and flowering plants.
  - **Ectomycorrhizal fungi** form a protective sheath around roots and do not enter root cells. They are commonly found in forest trees such as pines, oaks, and birches. Many well-known forest mushrooms are the fruiting bodies of ectomycorrhizal fungi.
- **Ecological Importance:** More than 90 percent of plant species rely on mycorrhizal relationships.
  - **Forests with intact fungal networks are more resilient to drought and disease.** These networks improve soil health and ecosystem stability.
  - Mycorrhizal fungi play a **key role in maintaining biodiversity.**
  - Mycorrhizal fungi **naturally occur in healthy agricultural and garden soils.** Adding compost and organic matter supports fungal growth. Mycorrhizal inoculants can help plants establish strong root systems.

## Freshwater Pufferfish

**News:** India's first scientifically confirmed case of freshwater pufferfish poisoning highlights a hidden risk.

### About Freshwater Pufferfish



Source: DTE

- Freshwater pufferfish belong **primarily to the family Tetraodontidae.**
- **Distribution:** They are naturally distributed across tropical regions of **South and Southeast Asia** (India, Thailand, Indonesia) and **Africa**, where they inhabit rivers, streams, floodplains, and lakes.
  - Globally, about **190–193 valid species** of pufferfish are recognised.
  - India hosts **eight genera and 32 species**, occurring in both marine and freshwater systems.



- In India, they are primarily found in **Western Ghats and major river basins** such as the **Ganga, Brahmaputra, and Mahanadi**.
- **Habitat:** Freshwater pufferfish are **benthic** and inhabit rivers, floodplains, wetlands, and lakes.
- **Diet:** They are **omnivorous**, feeding on algae, aquatic plants, insects, molluscs, and small invertebrates.
- **Features:**
  - **Size:** Freshwater puffers exhibit an extraordinary range of sizes and forms. At the smallest end is the **pea puffer (*Carinotetraodon travancoricus*)**, reaching only about 2–2.5 cm.
  - At the opposite extreme is the **mbu puffer (*Tetraodon mbu*)**, which can exceed 60 cm and is among the largest freshwater fishes kept in captivity.
  - Freshwater pufferfish may contain **tetrodotoxin (TTX)**, one of the most potent natural neurotoxins. Evidence suggests pufferfish **do not synthesise TTX themselves**. The toxin is likely produced by **symbiotic or ingested bacteria**.
  - Pufferfish are widely regarded as some of the most **intelligent freshwater aquarium fish**. They demonstrate strong visual recognition, curiosity, and problem-solving abilities.
  - Their presence often indicates **good river health and ecological balance**.
- **Conservation status:** Some species, such as the **dwarf pufferfish**, are listed as **Vulnerable** on the IUCN Red List.
- **Threats:** Wastewater and industrial pollution, Habitat degradation and overharvesting for the aquarium trade.

## BRICS 2026

**News:** India formally launched the BRICS Presidency 2026 logo and official website in New Delhi. India will assume the BRICS chairship in 2026, coinciding with 20 years of BRICS since its inception.

### About BRICS 2026



Figure 1. Source: TOI

- **About the logo:** The logo of BRICS India 2026 is inspired by the **lotus**, India's national flower.
  - The **overall shape** reflects Indian cultural identity and continuity.
  - The **inner petals form two hands joined in a "Namaste"**, symbolising greeting, respect, and harmony.
  - The **five petals** are coloured to represent the **founding BRICS members**: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
  - The design highlights **unity in diversity** and collective cooperation among BRICS nations.
- **Theme:** The logo and theme emphasise the idea that **"BRICS brings countries together"**. The theme positions BRICS as a **platform for global welfare**, particularly for emerging markets and developing economies.

- **The underlying message focuses on:** Strengthening collective capacities, promoting innovation and advancing sustainable development
- **BRICS India 2026 Official Website:** The official website will act as a **central information and coordination platform** during India's chairship.
  - **It will provide:** Updates on meetings and initiatives, information on outcomes and decisions and timely dissemination of official communications
  - The website is intended to enhance **transparency, engagement, and coordination** among BRICS members and stakeholders.
- **India's Priorities for BRICS 2026:** India outlined **four broad priorities** for its BRICS chairship: **Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability**
  - These priorities aim to provide a balanced framework across BRICS' three core pillars: Political and security cooperation, Economic and financial collaboration and Cultural and people-to-people exchanges.
- **Note:** India will chair BRICS for the fourth time in 2026, having previously held the Chairship in 2012, 2016, and 2021.

#### About BRICS

- BRICS is an **intergovernmental organization** comprising eleven countries: Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, United Arab Emirates.
- **Partner countries:** In 2025, ten Partner countries joined BRICS: Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Uganda, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam
- The **term BRIC was originally coined by Jim O'Neil** in 2001 to designate the group of emerging markets.
- It serves as a useful platform for consultation and cooperation on contemporary issues having global as well as regional significance, and issues of global political and economic governance.
- The **first summit took place in 2009** featured the founding countries of **Brazil, Russia, India, and China**, where they adopted the acronym BRIC and formed an informal diplomatic club where their governments could meet annually at formal summits and coordinate multilateral policies. In 2010, South Africa was admitted & the organisation adopted the name BRICS.
- The acronym **BRICS+** has been **informally used to reflect new membership since 2024.**

#### Secretary General of Rajya Sabha

**News:** The Supreme Court raised concerns that the Secretary General of the Rajya Sabha exceeded his administrative role while preparing a draft decision on a removal motion.

#### About Secretary General of Rajya Sabha



Source – Live Law

- The Secretary General is the **administrative head of the Rajya Sabha Secretariat** and assists the **Chairman in the overall functioning of parliamentary business.**
- **Constitutional Provision:** Under Article 98 of the Indian Constitution, each House of Parliament is mandated to have its own separate secretarial staff.
- **Appointment by:** The Secretary General is **appointed by the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, who is the Vice President of India.**
- **Rank and Status:** The position holds a rank equivalent to the Cabinet Secretary of the Government of India, who is the senior-most bureaucrat in the country.
- **Roles and Responsibilities**
  - **Advisory Role:** The Secretary General assists the Presiding Officer in conducting the business of the House by interpreting rules and parliamentary precedents.
  - **Administrative Head:** The Secretary General manages the Rajya Sabha Secretariat, including budget proposals and the allocation of work among officers.
  - **Parliamentary Functions:**
    - The Secretary General prepares the daily *List of Business* for each session.
    - The Secretary General summons members to attend sessions on behalf of the President of India.
    - The Secretary General acts as the Returning Officer for the elections of the President and the Vice President, alternating with the Lok Sabha Secretary General.
  - **Custodial Duties:** The Secretary General serves as the custodian of the official records of the House.

#### Recent Developments

- In the Justice Yashwant Varma removal motion case, the Supreme Court stated that the Secretary General has only an administrative role and cannot perform quasi-adjudicatory functions.
- The Court clarified that the admission of a removal motion should be decided by the Rajya Sabha Chairman or the Lok Sabha Speaker, as applicable.

## Jamma Bane Land System

**News:** Recently, Karnataka government has **amended its land revenue law** to modernise an age-old Jamma Bane system of land records in the scenic Coorg region.

### About Jamma Bane Land System



Figure 2. Source – IE

- The **Jamma Bane** land system is a unique form of hereditary land tenure specific to the **Kodagu (Coorg)** district in Karnataka.
- **Naming:** The word “**Jamma**” means **hereditary**.
- **Origin:** These Jamma lands were **originally granted by erstwhile kings of Coorg and the British — between 1600 and 1800 — to local communities in return for military service.**
- **Components:** The system typically consists of **two land types**:
  - **Wetlands:** Used primarily for paddy cultivation.
  - **Bane (Highlands):** Forested lands attached to the wetlands, originally used for grazing and firewood, but now largely transformed into coffee plantations.
- **Ownership Structure:**
  - The Jamma Bane land ownership is registered in the name of the **original pattedar from a family.**
  - Over generations, the names of the **new owners are added alongside** the name of the pattedar.
  - The land **ownership name could not be changed** to reflect new owners.
- **Issue:** Prior to this amendment, **current “owners” struggled** to sell land, register inheritance, or secure bank loans because they **did not have clear titles in their names**—the records still reflected ancestors from generations ago.

## Balaram Ambaji Wildlife Sanctuary

**News:** The Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife (SCNBWL) issued guidelines on diverting sanctuary land for religious structures after a proposal involving Balaram Ambaji Wildlife Sanctuary, which houses two historic temples.

### About Balaram Ambaji Wildlife Sanctuary



Figure 3. Source – Gujarat Tourism

**Location:** It is located in the Aravalli Hills in the **Banaskantha district of Gujarat.**

- **Establishment:** It was declared a Wildlife Sanctuary in **1989.**
- **Name Origin:** It is **named after two historic temples, Balaram and Ambaji**, which are located at opposite ends of the sanctuary.
- **Rivers:** It falls in the catchments of **Banas and Sabarmati River.**
- **Vegetation:** The sanctuary is **characterized by dry deciduous forests** with undulating hills, valleys and rocky terrain.



- **Flora:** It is home to 483 plant species, including medicinal plants like Kadaya, Gugal, and Musali. Prominent trees include Khair, Dhavada, Timru, and Khakhara (Palash).
- **Fauna:** Leopard, sloth bear, striped hyena, bluebull, Indian pangolin, porcupine, wolf, jackal, and wild boar are found in the sanctuary. It also supports rare and common birds such as adjutant stork, spoonbill, osprey, vultures, peafowl, hornbill, and several raptors.
- **Ecological Importance:** It plays a crucial role in conserving the Aravalli ecosystem and checking the southward spread of the Thar Desert.

### Finke River

**News:** The Finke River is 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.

#### About Finke River

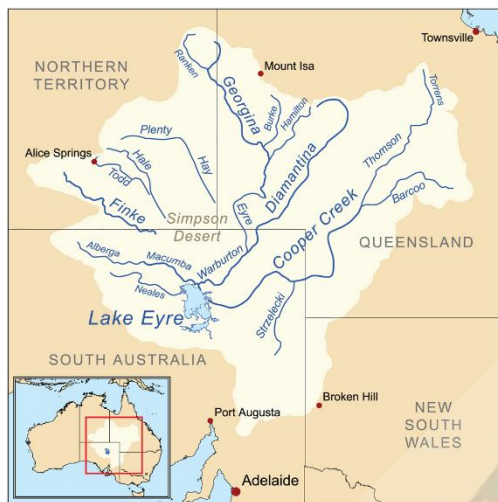


Figure 4. Source: academic

- The Finke River is also called **Larapinta** in the **Indigenous Arrernte language**.
- **Location:** It is located in central Australia and flows through the Northern Territory and the state of South Australia.
- **Origin:** It originates in MacDonnell Ranges in Australia.
- **Formation:** The river forms where two smaller creeks, Davenport and Ormiston meets.
- **Dating:** It is the oldest riverbed in the world and also one of the four crucial waterbodies of Lake Eyre Basin.
  - This river system is dated in either the Devonian (419 million to 359 million) period or Carboniferous (359 million to 299 million) era.
- **Length:** It runs for more than 640 km.
- **Drainage:** It forms an important part of the Lake Eyre

**Basin**, one of Australia's major drainage systems.

- **Drainage pattern:** The river has a cross-axial drainage system or antecedent system.
  - It is a river system that cuts across geological structures rather than following them.
- The river is intermittent in nature and flows mainly after heavy rainfall.
  - For most of the year, it appears as a series of isolated waterholes due to the arid climate.

### Sukhatme National Award in Statistics

**News:** The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation has called for nominations for the Sukhatme National Award in Statistics 2026.

#### About Sukhatme National Award in Statistics



Figure 5. Source – PIB

**Instituted by:** Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)

- It is a **prestigious national honour** instituted to recognise exceptional and outstanding contributions to the field of **official statistics** in India.

- It carries a **citation, a shawl and a memento**.

- **Instituted in:** The award was **instituted in the year 2000**.

- **Objective of the Award:** To acknowledge **eminent Indian statisticians** whose **high-quality research and professional work** have:

- Strengthened the **official statistical system** in India.

- Contributed significantly to the **development and improvement of official statistics**.

- **Eligibility:** It is conferred on **Indian statisticians aged 45 years** and above for their lifetime contributions and achievements in the field of statistics.

- The award is **conferred in alternate years**.

- **Nominations:** **Self-nomination** by eligible candidates is

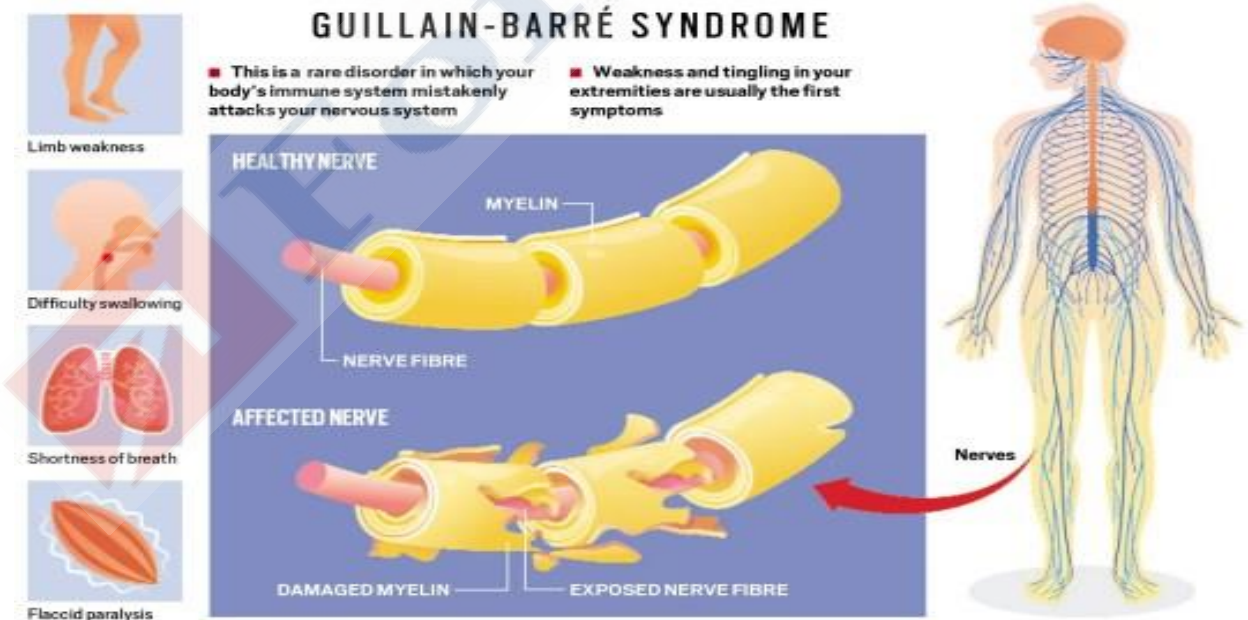
permitted and **Institutions** are also allowed to **propose nominations**

- **Award Presentation:** The award is presented on **Statistics Day (June 29)**.

### Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS)

**News:** Two deaths were reported in Manasa town in Madhya Pradesh due to a Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) outbreak.

**About Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS)**



Source: IE

- Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) is a **rare neurological disorder** in which a **person's immune system mistakenly attacks part of their peripheral nervous system**.
  - The **peripheral nervous system** is the network of nerves that **carries signals from the brain and spinal cord to the rest of the body**.
- **Causes:** The **exact cause** of GBS is **unknown**. It is **considered an autoimmune condition**.
  - GBS often develops **after a respiratory or gastrointestinal infection**.
  - **Common triggers include** infections such as *Campylobacter jejuni*, **influenza, COVID-19, Zika, cytomegalovirus, or Epstein-Barr virus**.
  - It can affect people of any age but is more common in **adults over 50**.
- **Types of GBS:**
  - **Acute Inflammatory Demyelinating Polyradiculoneuropathy (AIDP):** It is **most common type** of GBS. In this, immune system damages the **myelin sheath**.
  - **Acute Motor Axonal Neuropathy (AMAN) and Acute Motor-Sensory Axonal Neuropathy (AMSAN):** In this, immune system **may damage the axons themselves**.
  - **Miller Fisher Syndrome:** It affects **cranial nerves**, causing eye muscle weakness, balance problems, and loss of reflexes.
- **Symptoms**
  - **Early signs** include **weakness or tingling sensations**, typically starting in the **legs** and spreading to the **arms and face**.
  - In some cases, symptoms **progress to paralysis of the legs, arms, or facial muscles**.
  - **Severe cases** may involve **problems with speaking and swallowing**.
- **Treatment**
  - There is **no cure**, but **treatment can reduce severity and shorten recovery time**.
  - **Plasma exchange (plasmapheresis)** which removes harmful antibodies from the blood and **Intravenous immunoglobulin (IVIg)** which reduces immune attack on nerves.

### Bagurumba Dance

**News:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi will attend a traditional Bodo cultural programme in Guwahati, where around 10,000 artists will perform the Bagurumba dance.

#### About Bagurumba Dance



Figure 6. Source: *assamchronicle*

- Bagurumba is a **ancient traditional folk dance of the Bodo community of Assam**.
- **Origin:** It was **initially performed as a ritual dance connected with harvest, nature worship, and spiritual practices**.
  - Over time, Bagurumba evolved from **village ceremonies into a major cultural symbol**.
- It is prominently performed during the **Bwisagu, the Bodo New Year, and Domasi festival**.
- **Features of Bagurumba**



- Bagurumba is popularly **known as the “Butterfly Dance”** because of its gentle, flowing, and fluttering hand movements.
- The **dance is traditionally performed by women of Bodo Community in groups** with **synchronized movements**.
- Musical instruments are being played by male counterparts.
- **Circular and geometric formations are commonly used**, symbolizing harmony and balance in nature.
- The **choreography reflects elements of nature** such as birds, rivers, trees, and butterflies, showing the Bodo people's close relationship with the environment.
- **Costume of Bagurumba**
  - The dancers **wear traditional Bodo attire** known as **dokhona**, which is a handwoven, bright red, yellow, and green wraparound cloth, **jwmgra** and an **aronai** which is a beautifully designed traditional scarf, is draped over the shoulders.
  - **Floral ornaments and traditional jewelry are used** to enhance the elegance and beauty of the performance.
- **Musical Instruments Used in Bagurumba:** The dance is **accompanied by traditional musical instruments** such as:
  - **Serja** which is a violin-like string instrument, provides melody.
  - **Kham** which is a traditional drum which maintains the rhythm.
  - **Siphung** which is a bamboo flute, adds a soothing musical tone.
  - **Jotha**, a type of cymbal which enhances the rhythmic beats of the dance are used.

### Royle's pika (*Ochotona roylei*)

**News:** Royle's pika of the Himalayan highlands which goes about its life unaware that scientists now view it as a sentinel of climate change.

#### About Royle's pika (*Ochotona roylei*)



Source – DTE

- **Royle's pika** is also called the **Himalayan mouse hare** or **hui shutu** is a species of pika.
- **Scientific name:** *Ochotona roylei*



- **Habitat:** They commonly inhabit rocky mountain slopes, open rocky edges, and forests dominated by conifer trees.
- **Distribution:** Their distribution spans the **Himalayan region**, extending from **northwestern Pakistan through Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh in India, and into Nepal and Tibet.**
- **Characteristics**
  - They have a **slightly arched head**, a **rufous-grey body**, a **chestnut-colored head**, and **sparse hair in front of their ears.**
  - They **measure about 17–22 centimetres in length.**
  - They are a **crepuscular species**, meaning it is **most active during early morning and evening hours** and **remains inactive during midday** to avoid heat stress.
  - **They do not build its own burrows** but uses natural crevices, narrow cracks, and existing burrow systems.
  - Unlike many mountain mammals, **they do not hibernate.**
- **Diet:** They are **herbivore and folivore**, feeding **mainly on grasses, leaves, and other plant materials.**
- **Ecological Role:** They play a **vital role in high-altitude food webs** as they are important prey species for predators especially during harsh winters when other prey is scarce.
- **Conservation Status:** IUCN: **Least Concern**
- **Threat:** Habitat loss and human habitation in hilly areas.

### Chips to Start-up (C2S) Programme

**News:** Recognizing chip design as a strategic national priority, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has implemented proactive measures to transform India's semiconductor design landscape under the Chips to Start-up (C2S) Programme.

#### About Chips to Start-up (C2S) Programme



Source – PIB

- The C2S Programme is an **umbrella capacity-building initiative** to build **semiconductor design capacity**, covering academic institutions across India.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (**MeitY**)
- **Nodal Agency:** Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (**C-DAC**)
- **Outlay and timeline:** It launched in **2022**, with a total **outlay of ₹250 crore over five years.**
- **Objectives**

- The Programme **targets the development of 85,000 industry-ready professionals** across undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral levels.
- It aims to catalyse the **incubation of 25 start-ups** and enable **10 technology transfers**.
- It also seeks to provide **access to SMART lab facilities, train one lakh students**, generate **50 patents**, and support at **least 2,000 focused research publications**.
- **Functioning** : It caters to the **whole electronics value chain** through:
  - **Specialized Manpower Training**: The program provides **in-depth hands-on exposure to chip designing, fabricating, and testing** through periodic training provided jointly with industry partners.
  - **Design Infrastructure Support**: Providing access to **Electronic Design Automation (EDA) tools** (e.g., from Siemens, Cadence, Synopsys, Mentor Graphics, Silvaco, Ansys, Keysight), access to **foundries for fabrication in MPW (Multi-Project Wafer) mode**, support for **packaging** of chips, support for **testing and characterization**, and having an **IP Core Repository**.
  - **Centralized Design Facility**: The C2S Programme initiated the **ChipIN Centre at C-DAC**, which is **one of the biggest design facilities in the country**, and is a **centralized design facility** providing **high-end chip design infrastructure** directly to the semiconductor design community in India.
    - The **ChipIN Centre** has **state-of-the-art tools** which support the entire chip design cycle **up to a 5nm or advanced node technology**, and aggregate services for fabricating designs at foundries and packaging.
  - **Collaborative Projects**: There are initiatives to promote **Academia - Industry Collaborative Projects, Grand Challenges, Hackathons, and Requests for Proposals (RFPs)** for the development of System/SoC/IP Core.
  - **Participation of Startups and MSME**: Startups and MSMEs can also apply under various categories, using expertise from Academic institutions and R&D organisations.
  - The **MeitY Startup Hub (MSH)** provides **facilitation and monitors innovation and IPR activities**, bringing together incubator centres and startups.
- **Key Outcomes of the C2S programme**



Source – PIB

### CSIR Integrated Skill Initiative

**News-** The CSIR Integrated Skill Initiative has trained over 1.9 lakh individuals through 5,200+ skill-based programmes.



Figure 7. Source- PIB

#### About CSIR Integrated Skill Initiative

- It is a flagship **national skill development programme** implemented by the **Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)**.
- The initiative aims to **bridge the gap between scientific research, industry requirements, and employable skills**.
- It **integrates science and technology with skill development** by leveraging CSIR's extensive laboratory network, research infrastructure, and scientific expertise across India.

#### ● Objectives

- To align skill training with real-world industrial, societal, and entrepreneurial needs.

- To enhance employability, entrepreneurship, and career growth through practical and application-oriented learning.
- To support the creation of a self-reliant and future-ready workforce.

#### ● Beneficiaries

- Students, young researchers, technical staff, and working professionals.
- School dropouts and ITI/diploma holders.
- Farmers and rural communities, with a special focus on rural citizens and women.

#### Key Features

Offers **short-term and long-term skill development modules**, including:

- Training programmes
- Internships
- Certification courses
- Hands-on laboratory exposure

**Covers 18 out of 36 key sectoral skills** identified under the **National Skill Development Mission (NSDM)**.

Skill areas include **aerospace, agriculture, automotive, electronics, food processing, green jobs, healthcare, life sciences, textiles, and IT & ITeS**, among others.

### BRICS Plus Naval Exercise 2026

**News:** The issue is in the news after India clarified its non-participation in the BRICS Plus Naval Exercise held off South Africa's coast.

#### About BRICS Plus Naval Exercise 2026





Figure 8. Source – The Mint

- It was a **joint naval drill** conducted under the BRICS Plus framework from January 9 to January 16, 2026.
- **Focused:** The exercise focused on **maritime security, counter-terrorism, anti-sea strike operations, and search and rescue activities.**
- **Theme:** The theme was “**Joint Actions to Ensure the Safety of Key Shipping Lanes and Maritime Economic Activities**”.
- **Host nation:** It was hosted by

#### South Africa.

- The exercise took place off the coast of **Simon’s Town, South Africa.**
- **Participating countries:** **China, Russia, Iran, and the UAE** participated in the naval exercise.
- **Observer countries:** **Brazil, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Indonesia** attended the exercise as observers.
- **Non-participants:** **India opted out** of the drills and **declined even observer status.**
- **Key features**
  - It was **not a regular or institutionalised BRICS activity** and was conducted as a **South African initiative**, with participation from only some BRICS members..
  - The exercise was **projected as cooperation among Global South nations.**

### India's Coconut Economy and Rugose Spiralling Whitefly (RSW)

**News:** The rugose spiralling whitefly continues to spread across coconut-growing regions in India, causing severe yield losses and rising financial stress for farmers.

#### About India's Coconut Economy



Source – Mongabay

- **India is the third largest coconut-producing country** in the world and accounted for about **31.45% of the world's total production** during **FY22**, with a production of **19,310 million nuts.**
- During **FY24**, India produced **21,373.62 million nuts.**



- The crop contributed around **US\$ 3.72 billion** to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) during **FY23**.
- The coconut palm provides food **security and livelihood opportunities** to more than **12 million people** in India.
- It is also a **fibre-yielding crop** for more than **15,000 coir-based industries**, employing nearly **6 lakh people**.
- The **productivity** of coconuts at a national level for FY24 was at **9,871 nuts per hectare**, **one of the highest** in the world.
- Copra processing, coconut oil extraction and coir manufacturing are the traditional coconut-based activities in the country.
- **Producing states:** India's coconut production is majorly situated in **Kerala, Karnataka, Tami Nadu and Andhra Pradesh**, accounting for **89.13%** of the **coconut area** and **90.77%** of the **coconut production in the country** during FY24.
  - **Other coconut-producing states** in the country are West Bengal, Orissa, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Assam and Bihar.

#### About Rugose Spiralling Whitefly (RSW)

- Rugose spiralling whitefly is an **invasive sap-sucking insect** that attacks **coconut, banana, palm and other crops**.
- **Scientific name:** RSW is scientifically known as **Aleurodicus rugioperculatus**.
- **Native to:** It is native to the **Caribbean and Central America**.
- **Officially recorded in India:** RSW was **officially recorded in 2016 at Pollachi in Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu**.
- **Key Characteristics**
  - **Appearance:** The pest forms **white spiralling patterns on leaves** and produces **sticky honeydew**.
  - **Life Cycle:** It multiplies rapidly under **warm conditions and survives throughout the year**.
  - **Feeding:** It sucks plant **sap**, weakening the tree and reducing growth.
  - **Honeydew:** The **sticky secretion** leads to **black sooty mould**, which **blocks photosynthesis**.
  - **Concern:** RSW causes **heavy yield loss**, decline in fruit quality, rising farmer debt and increased pesticide use, while field-level control remains ineffective.
- **Solution:** ICAR-NBAIR identified the **parasitoid *Encarsia guadeloupae***, which caused natural parasitism ranging from 56% to 82%, without the use of chemical pesticides.
  - **ICAR-NBAIR also developed a biocontrol fungus, *Isaria fumosorosea***, which was effective against all life stages of the pest and recorded pest mortality of up to 91%, significantly reducing crop protection costs.

#### INS Sagardhwani and Sagar Maitri-5 Initiative

**News:** INS Sagardhwani was flagged off from Kochi on 17 January 2026 for the fifth edition of the Sagar Maitri initiative.

#### About INS Sagardhwani



Figure 9. Sources – UNI

- **INS Sagardhwani** is **India's oceanographic research vessel**.

- **Designed by:** The vessel was designed by the **Naval Physical and Oceanographic Laboratory (NPOL)**.

- **Built by:** The vessel was built by **Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE)**.

- **Commissioned in:** **INS Sagardhwani** was commissioned in **July 1994**.

- **Role:** The vessel serves as a **specialized platform for ocean observations, marine research, and collection of oceanographic and acoustic data**.

- **Key features**

- It is a specialized **marine acoustic research vessel**.

- It supports **scientific objectives relevant to Underwater Domain Awareness for the Indian Navy**.

- **INS Sagardhwani** will retrace the **historic routes of INS Kistna**, which participated in the **International Indian Ocean Expedition** during

1962–65.

#### About Sagar Maitri-5 Initiative

- **MAITRI** stands for **Marine & Allied Interdisciplinary Training and Research Initiative**.
- **SM-5** is the **fifth edition** of the **ongoing oceanographic cooperation programme**.
- **Initiative of:** It is a **flagship collaborative** initiative of the **Indian Navy and DRDO**.
- **Aligned with:** It is aligned with India's vision of **Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions (MAHASAGAR)**.
- **Key objectives:**
  - **Socio-economic cooperation:** To promote closer cooperation in socio-economic aspects among Indian Ocean Rim countries.
  - **Scientific interaction:** To enhance scientific interaction, especially in ocean research.
  - **IOR collaboration:** To build sustained scientific collaboration with eight IOR countries, namely Oman, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and Myanmar.
  - **Maldives partnership:** To initiate collaborative oceanographic studies with Maldives, enabling joint research and professional exchange among scientists of IOR nations.

#### Brandt's Hedgehog (*Paraechinus hypomelas*)

**News:** A previously unrecorded hedgehog species in India, Brandt's Hedgehog (*Paraechinus hypomelas*), has been discovered in Jammu and Kashmir.

#### About Brandt's Hedgehog (*Paraechinus hypomelas*)



Source: HT

- Brandt's hedgehog is a **species of desert hedgehog**.
- **Scientific name:** *Paraechinus hypomelas*
- **Native to:** Parts of the Middle East and Central Asia.
- **Habitat:** It inhabits arid desert regions, mountains, grasslands, savannas, and shrublands.
  - It prefers natural shelters but **can dig its own dens when necessary**.
- **Distribution:** It is found across Asia, including Yemen, Afghanistan, Iran, Oman, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.
- **Diet:** It is **omnivorous** and feeds on snakes, insects, grass roots, mushrooms and melons, etc.
- **Physical Characteristics:**
  - **Size:** It measures about 25 cm in length and weighs between 500 and 1,000 gm.
  - It has **distinctively large ears**, similar to those of the long-eared hedgehog.
  - It is a **faster runner than many hedgehogs** because of its lighter needle protection.
  - It is **predominantly nocturnal**.
  - It **hibernates during colder weather conditions**.
- **Conservation status:** IUCN: Least Concern

### Key Facts about Guatemala

**News:** Guatemalan President Bernardo Arévalo declared a 30-day nationwide state of siege after gang violence killed seven police officers.

### Key Facts about Guatemala



Source: Britannica

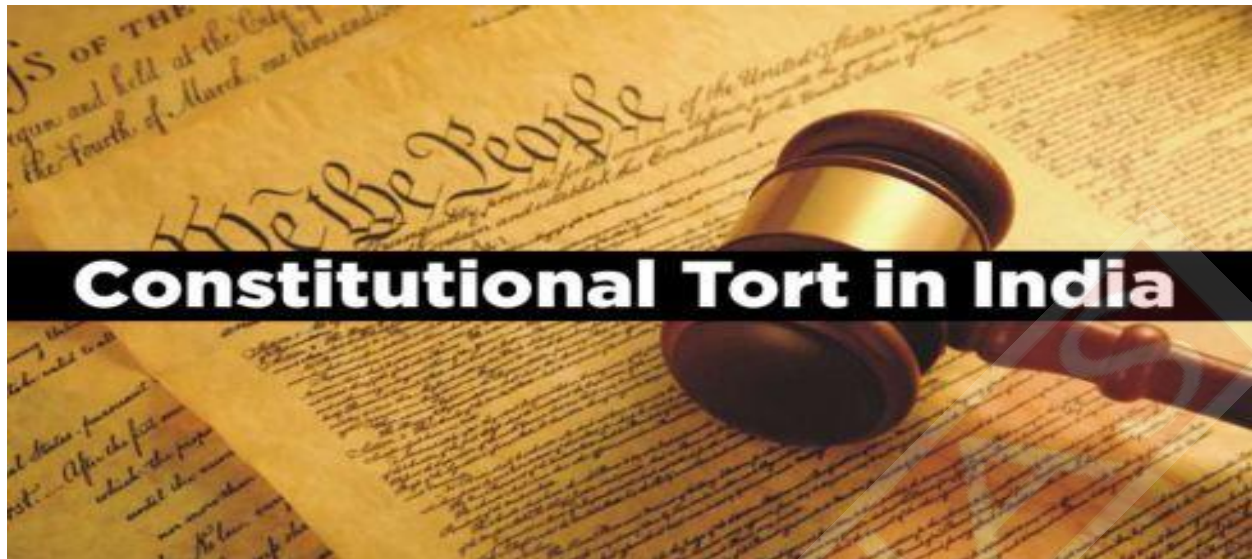
- **Location:** Guatemala is **located in Central America**.
- **Bordered by:** It is **bounded by the Pacific Ocean to the south** and the **Gulf of Honduras to the northeast**.
- **Border countries:** Belize, El Salvador, Honduras, and Mexico.
- **Area:** 109,000 km<sup>2</sup> (42,085 sq. mi.)
- **Geography:**
  - Guatemala has **four main geographic regions**: the **volcanic highlands** (which contain about **27 volcanoes**), the **Pacific coastal plain**, the **mountain ranges (sierras)**, and the **Petén lowlands**.
  - **Volcán Tajumulco** is the **highest peak** at 4,220 metres.
  - **Fuego, Pacaya, and Santiaguito** are active volcanoes.
  - **Major rivers:** Motagua and Usumacinta
  - **Terrain:** Fertile coastal plains, mountainous.
  - **Climate:** Tropical on coasts, temperate in highlands.
- **Ethnic Groups:** Ladinos (mestizo) and Maya Indigenous peoples
- **Language spoken:** Spanish (official) and about twenty Mayan languages

### Constitutional Tort

**News:** Prominent activists and religious leaders urged the Supreme Court to recognize hate speech as a constitutional tort due to its discriminatory impact on constitutional guarantees.

#### About Constitutional Tort





Source – DeFactoLaw

- A **constitutional tort** is a **legal remedy** through which the **State can be held vicariously liable** for violation of constitutional rights by its officials.
- **Constitutional basis**
  - **Article 294(b)** makes the **Union or State government** liable for **contractual obligations** inherited from **previous governments**.
  - **Article 300(1)** provides that the **Union and State governments** may **sue or be sued** in their respective names, forming the **constitutional foundation of State tortious liability**.
- **Public Law Jurisdiction:** Redress is usually sought through writ petitions under **Article 32 before the Supreme Court or Article 226 before the High Courts** for enforcement of fundamental rights.
- **Key Features**
  - It holds the **State responsible** for wrongful acts committed by its officials during **official duties**.
  - It applies when violations occur **under the colour of State law**, meaning misuse of official authority.
  - It provides **compensation** for infringement of fundamental rights, especially under **Articles 19, 20, and 21**.
  - It strengthens **accountability of State** power through continuous judicial oversight.

### INS Sudarshini and Global Expedition 'Lokayan 26

**News:** INS Sudarshini embarked on a ten-month global expedition Lokayan 26 to showcase maritime heritage and strengthen international maritime cooperation.

#### About INS Sudarshini



Source – PIB

- INS Sudarshini is the **Indian Navy's sail training ship** undertaking the global **expedition Lokayan 26**.
- **Built by:** It was built indigenously by **Goa Shipyard Limited**.
- **Key features**
  - **Size:** It is a **54-m sail training ship designed for ocean sailing**.
  - **Equipped with:** The ship is **equipped with 20 sails with a total sail area of over 1,000 sq. m.**
  - The ship has **covered over 1,40,000 nautical miles** till date.

#### About Global Expedition 'Lokayan 26'

- Lokayan 26 is a **ten-month transoceanic voyage** highlighting India's maritime heritage and naval outreach.
- **Initiative by:** The expedition is undertaken **by the Indian Navy**.
- **Duration:** The expedition will **last for ten months**.
- **Flagged off from:** The voyage was flagged off from **Naval Base Kochi**.
- **Aim:** The expedition **aims to showcase India's seafaring legacy** and strengthen **maritime cooperation and cultural diplomacy**.
- **Aligned with:** The expedition is aligned with the principles of **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam** and the **vision of MAHASAGAR**.
- **Key features**
  - **Voyage:** The ship will **sail nearly 22,000 nautical miles and visit 18 ports across 13 countries**.
  - **Key Destinations:** It will participate in **prestigious international tall-ship events – Escale à Sète, in France, and SAIL 250, in New York, USA**.

### Demographic Winter

**News:** China is facing a demographic winter as its population declined for the fourth year in 2025 due to record-low births and rising deaths.

#### About Demographic Winter



Source – Maine Policy Instt.

- The concept of **Demographic Winter** refers to a **situation where a country or region experiences a significant and prolonged decline in population growth** due to **low fertility rates, aging populations, and increased mortality rates**.
- This trend results in a **shrinking workforce, a growing dependent population (primarily elderly), and long-term economic and social challenges**.
- This phenomenon has been observed in **various countries**, especially in **Europe and East Asia**.
- **Solution suggested**
  - It can be addressed through **pro-natalist policies** such as **financial incentives for families, affordable childcare, flexible work arrangements, greater female workforce participation, and managed immigration**.
- **Countries Facing Demographic Winter**
  - **Europe**
    - **Europe's Population** is ageing rapidly with around **25% population above 60** and this is expected to reach **35% by 2050**.
    - Many European countries like **Italy, Germany, and Spain** have fertility rates below **1.5 children per woman**.
  - **East Asia:**
    - China is facing **Demographic Winter** as its population fell by **3.39 million to 1.405 billion in 2025**, births dropped to **7.92 million (a 17 % decline)**, and deaths rose to **11.31 million**, with rapid ageing and a shrinking workforce.
    - **Japan's** population has been declining since 2011, with a fertility rate of **1.34** and more than **28% of its population aged 65 or older**.
    - In **South Korea**, the fertility rate dropped to **0.78** in 2022, one of the lowest in the world, leading to **fears of a demographic collapse**.

### **G4 Geomagnetic Storm**

**News:** Sky-watchers worldwide witnessed breathtaking auroras as a severe G4 geomagnetic storm pushed the dazzling lights far beyond their typical polar regions.

#### **About G4 Geomagnetic Storm**

Source: Space

- **Geomagnetic Storm:** A **geomagnetic storm** is a **severe disturbance of Earth's magnetosphere**.



- **How it is caused:** Energy produced by nuclear fusion in the Sun is released as sunlight, radiation, and charged particles.
  - These charged particles constantly flow away from the Sun as the solar wind.
  - Sometimes, **the Sun releases large clouds of plasma called coronal mass ejections.**
  - When these charged particles or plasma **reach Earth, they collide with Earth's magnetic field.**
  - This **disturbs the magnetic field** and **causes a geomagnetic storm.**
- **Favourable conditions:**
  - Geomagnetic storms occur when the solar wind blows toward Earth **at a very high speed for several hours.**
  - A **southward directed solar wind magnetic field** (opposite the direction of Earth's field) at the dayside of the magnetosphere.
- **Classification:** Geomagnetic storms are classified on the **G-scale**, ranging from **G1 (minor)** to **G5 (extreme)**.
  - A **G4 storm** falls under the **severe category**, indicating intense geomagnetic activity.
- **Impacts**
  - G4 geomagnetic storms can cause **serious disturbances in satellite operations.**
  - **Power systems may experience voltage instability** and increased risk of damage.
  - **Radio communications**, especially on the sunlit side of Earth, can be disrupted.
  - **GPS and navigation systems** may show reduced accuracy during the storm.
  - **Auroral Effects:** During strong geomagnetic storms, **the auroral oval expands, allowing auroras to be visible at much lower latitudes than usual.**

### Environmental Protection Fund

**News:** Centre notifies rules governing utilization of Environmental Protection Fund collected through environmental penalties.

#### About Environmental Protection Fund



Source – BS

- **Created under:** The Environmental Protection Fund has been **created under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.**

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- The **framework for its operation** is provided under the **Environmental (Protection) Fund Rules, 2026**.
- **Enabled by:** The creation of the Environmental Protection Fund was **enabled by the Jan Vishwas Act, 2023**.
- **Purpose of the Fund:** The fund is **meant to utilize penalties collected from environmental violations** for environmental protection and improvement.
- **Audited by:** Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG)
- **Permitted Uses of the Fund:** The Rules specify **11 categories of activities** for which the fund can be used.
  - The fund can be used for the **installation, operation, and maintenance of environmental monitoring equipment**.
  - It supports **capacity building**, including the **establishment and upgradation of environmental laboratories**.
  - The fund can be utilised for **remediation and restoration of environmental damage**.
  - It may be used for **conducting studies as directed by courts and environmental tribunals**.
  - Any other **activity considered necessary for environmental protection** may also be **approved**.
  - **Administrative Expenses:** The fund can be used to meet **administrative expenses**. Administrative expenditure is capped at **5% of the total funds available** in a financial year at the Centre or state level.
- **Management of penalties**
  - The funds **collected through the penalties shall be credited to the consolidated fund of India (CFI) and thereafter transferred to the Public Account of India**.
  - **75% of the penalty amount** collected will be transferred to the **Consolidated Fund of the concerned State or Union Territory**. The remaining **25% of the penalty** will be retained by the **Central Government for national-level environmental initiatives**.

### Article 15(5) of Indian Constitution

**News:** The Congress demanded that the proposed higher education regulator must ensure implementation of Article 15(5) on its twentieth anniversary.

#### About Article 15(5) of Indian Constitution

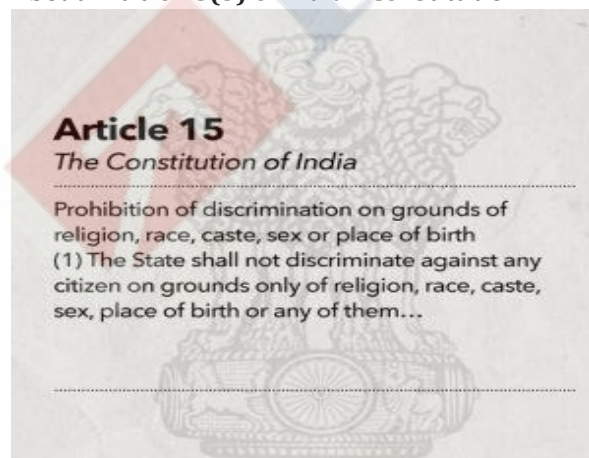


Figure 10. Source – Constitution of India

**Article 15** is part of the **Fundamental Rights** and aims to prevent **discrimination while promoting equality and social justice**.

- **Sub-clauses of Article 15**

- **Article 15(1):** It prohibits discrimination on religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth.
- **Article 15(2):** It ensures equal access to public places maintained or funded by the State.
- **Article 15(3):** It allows the State to make special provisions for women and children.
- **Article 15(4):** It permits special provisions for socially and educationally backward classes, including SCs and STs.

- **Article 15(5):** It enables **reservations for SCs, STs, and OBCs in educational institutions, including private institutions.**
- **Article 15(6):** It provides **10% reservation for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS).**
- **Article 15(5) Enactment:** Article 15(5) was **inserted** through the **93rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 2005.**
- **Scope:** The provision authorises the government to mandate **reservations** for SC, ST, and OBC students in **centrally funded and private higher educational institutions.**
- **Exclusion:** **Minority educational institutions** are **excluded** from the application of **Article 15(5).**
- **Landmark Case Law:**
  - **Ashok Kumar Thakur v. Union of India (2008):** The Supreme Court upheld the constitutional validity of the 93rd Amendment.
  - **Pramati Educational and Cultural Trust v. Union of India (2014):** The Court upheld the validity of Article 15(5) and confirmed that reservations are permissible in private higher educational institutions.
- **Significance:** Article 15(5) reinforces the **constitutional commitment to social justice** by expanding access to higher education for disadvantaged communities.

### SAMPANN Pension Portal

**News:** The SAMPANN pension management system has been integrated with the UMANG platform.

#### About SAMPANN Pension Portal



Figure 11. Source: PIB

- **About:** SAMPANN stands for **System for Accounting and Management of Pension.**
- **Initiative by:** It is a **flagship digital platform of the Department of Telecommunications.**
- **Developed by:** Office of the **Controller General of Communication Accounts**
- **Launched on:** It was launched on **29th December, 2018.**
- **Aim:** To enhance **ease of access for pensioners, promote transparency, and ensure the seamless delivery of pension-related information** via a unified digital platform.
- **Features:**
  - It enabled **single window system**

for complete pension lifecycle.

- It includes **digitalisation of processes** such as **initiation and processing of cases, issuance of e-Pension Payment Orders (e-PPOs), disbursement, accounting, reconciliation, financial reporting, audit facilitation and grievance redressal.**

- Pensioners can also check payment status, submit life certificates, generate e-PPOs, request changes like mobile numbers or addresses online.
- A toll-free helpline has also been operated for assisting senior citizens.
- Pensions are credited directly into pensioners' bank accounts, removing the need to visit banks or government offices.
- Recently, the portal has been integrated with the UMANG (Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance) platform.

### Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary

**News:** The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change issued a notification declaring Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary as an Eco-Sensitive Zone to conserve biodiversity.

#### About Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary



Figure 12. Source – Royal Rajasthan

vegetation across its landscape.

- Plant species such as **Churel, Dhok, Khair, and Salar** grow abundantly and form an important part of the local forest cover.
- **Fauna:** The sanctuary supports a wide range of wildlife, including **leopard, striped hyena, jungle cat, Indian pangolin, blue bull, and chinkara**, along with several bird species.
  - It also provides habitat to **wolf, sloth bear, jackal, sambhar, nilgai, chausingha, and hare**.

- Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary is a **protected area** located in the **Aravalli mountain range**.
- **Location:** It is situated in the **Rajsamand district of Rajasthan** in western India and **extends across parts of the Udaipur and Pali districts**.
- **Naming:** The sanctuary is named after the historic **Kumbhalgarh Fort**, which lies within its boundary.
- **Area:** It covers a **total area of 610.5 square km**.
- **Mountain ranges:** It covers **four hills** in the mountain ranges of the **Aravallis – the Kumbhalgarh Range, the Sadri Range, the Desuri Range, and the Bokhada Range**.
- **Major river:** The eastern section is the origin of the **Banas River**, while the western slopes give rise to tributaries of the **Luni River**.
- **Flora:** The sanctuary supports mainly **herb-based**

### Parbati Giri

**News:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid homage to freedom fighter Parbati Giri on the occasion of her birth centenary.

#### About Parbati Giri





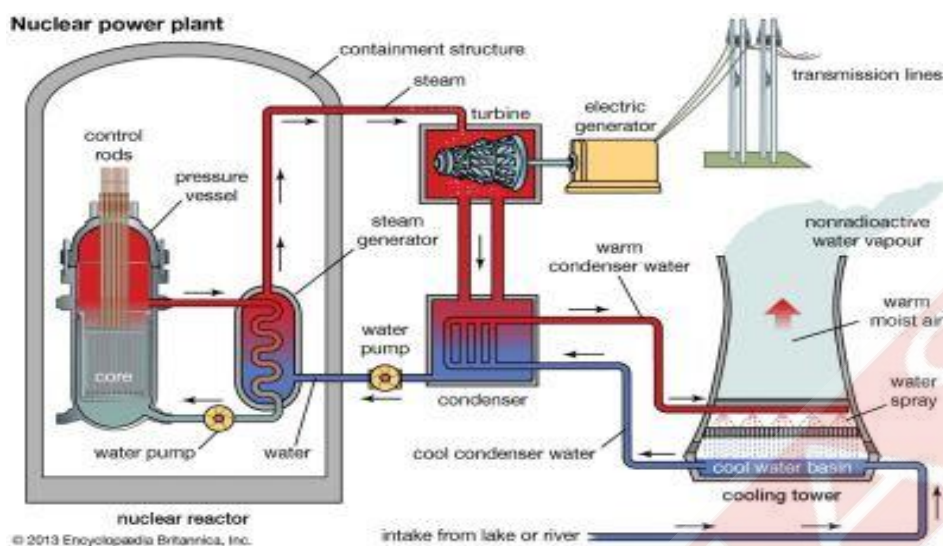
Figure 13. Source – INC

- Parbati Giri was a **prominent freedom fighter** from **Odisha**.
- She was **born on 19 January 1926** in the **Bargarh district of Odisha**.
- She is also known as the **Mother Teresa of Western Odisha**, and epithet as **'Banhi-kanya' (daughter of fire)**.
- She was inspired by **Gandhism** and adopted it as her way of life.
- **Role in India's Freedom struggle:**
  - She joined the freedom movement at the young age of **11**.
  - She travelled across villages **spreading awareness and campaigning for Congress**.
  - She participated in **direct Satyagraha** and **Gandhiji's Khadi Andolan** movement.
- She became a prominent young volunteer in **Quit India Movement** and led many rallies **against Britishers**.
- She had also staged an **agitation** at **Bargarh Court** to persuade the lawyers to **boycott the erstwhile court** in defiance of the British.
- She had taken **tutelage** at the famous Ashrams in **Bari, Wardha, and Delhi Gandhi Sebashram**.
- **After India gained independence**, she chose a **path of selfless social service**, believing that **true freedom must reach the poorest**.
  - Her **major contributions include** establishing ashram for women, orphans and destitutes namely **Kasturba Gandhi Matruniketan** and **Dr Santra Bal Niketan**.
  - She also dedicated her life in **improving healthcare for tribal communities and supporting leprosy patients**.
- **Recognition:** For her dedicated social work, she was **awarded a prize in 1984** by the **Dept. of Social Welfare of the Govt. of India**.
  - She also received an **Honorary doctorate from the University of Sambalpur in 1988**.
- **Passing:** Parbati Giri passed away on **17 August 1995** after a prolonged illness.

### Light Water Reactors

**News:** India is accelerating indigenous Light Water Reactor development while opening the nuclear sector to private participation, focusing on exports, and implementing the SHANTI Act, 2025.

#### About Light Water Reactors



Source – Britannica

- A Light Water Reactor is a **thermal-neutron nuclear reactor** that uses **ordinary water** as both **coolant and neutron moderator**.
- It uses **solid fissile fuel** and is the **most common nuclear reactor** type worldwide.
- **Primary Types of Light Water Reactors**
  - **Pressurized Water Reactor (PWR)** uses **water under high pressure** to **prevent boiling**.
  - **Boiling Water Reactor (BWR)** allows **water to boil directly** inside the **reactor vessel**.
  - **Supercritical Water Reactor (SCWR)** operates **water above its critical temperature and pressure**.
- **Key Characteristics**
  - **Water Type:** Light water means **ordinary H<sub>2</sub>O** and is **different** from **heavy water** that contains **deuterium**.
  - **Functional Role:** Water **carries heat produced during atomic fission** and **slows neutrons** to sustain the nuclear reaction.
  - **Fuel Requirement:** Light Water Reactors use **enriched uranium** as fuel to support the chain reaction.
- **Design:** These reactors have **simpler design** and **engineering** compared to heavy water reactors.
- **Economics:** They **benefit from economies of scale** and generally **involve lower construction cost**.
- **Global presence:** Light Water Reactors account for **over 85 %** of global civil nuclear reactor capacity.
- **Safety Feature:** If **overheating** occurs, the **boiling away of water naturally stops the nuclear reaction**.

**Note:** For detailed information on **SHANTI Bill, 2025** [read this article here](#).

### **Galathea Bay, Pemmaya Bay, and Nanjappa Bay**

**News:** The Great Nicobar Island mega infrastructure project has raised concerns after Tribal Council members alleged pressure to surrender ancestral lands in three bays.

#### **About Galathea Bay, Pemmaya Bay, and Nanjappa Bay**



Source – TH

- **Location:** Galathea Bay lies on the **south-eastern coast** of Great Nicobar Island, while Pemmaya Bay and Nanjappa Bay are located along the **western coast** of the island.
- **Major tribes:** These bays are traditional habitats of the **Nicobarese** and **Shompen** tribal communities.
- The **Nicobarese** are a largely **settled** community, while the **Shompen** are a **semi-nomadic hunter-gatherer** group living deep inside forests.
- **Biodiversity and ecology**
  - **Great Nicobar Island** is covered largely by rainforests and forms part of the **Sundaland biodiversity hotspot** extending to Southeast Asia.
  - Galathea Bay is a **major global nesting site of the endangered giant leatherback turtle**.
- **International Port:** Galathea Bay is the proposed site of the **International Container Transshipment Port (ICTP)** under the **Great Nicobar Island Development Project**.
  - The port has a natural depth of more than **20 m** and was notified as **India's 13th major port in September 2024** and named as **Kamarajar Port**.
- **Issues:** Parts of Galathea Bay, Pemmaya Bay, and Nanjappa Bay require **diversion of forest land** where tribal villages existed before the 2004 tsunami.
  - A **wildlife sanctuary** in Galathea Bay was **denotified** earlier to facilitate the port project, even though the area was classified as **CRZ-1A**.
  - Environmental clearances are under **challenge** before the **National Green Tribunal**, while forest clearances are being heard in the **Calcutta High Court**.

### Ras Behari Bose

**News:** Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah paid tribute to Ras Behari Bose on his death anniversary, recalling his role in INA and Ghadar movement.

### About Ras Behari Bose





Source – India Today

- Ras Behari Bose was an **Indian revolutionary** leader and **freedom fighter** who actively fought against British rule in India and **abroad**.
- **Birth:** He was born on **25 May 1886** in **Subaldaha village of Purba Bardhaman district**, now in West Bengal.
- **Background:** He worked as a **clerk at the Forest Research Institute in Dehradun** and was secretly involved in **revolutionary activities**.
- **Influences:** Deeply inspired by the **French Revolution (1789)** while studying at **Dupleix College in Chandernagore** (then a French colony).
- **Key contributions:**
  - **Activities in India:**
    - **Alipore Bomb Case (1908):** He left Bengal to avoid trial related to the case.
    - **Delhi-Lahore Conspiracy Case (1912):** He helped **plan the bomb attack on Viceroy Lord Hardinge**, who was severely injured.
    - **Ghadar Mutiny (1915):** During World War I, he became a leading **organiser of the Ghadar uprising** to trigger mutiny within the Indian army.
  - **Activities in Japan (Exile):**
    - **Escape:** He escaped British intelligence and reached Japan in 1915 under the alias **Priyanath Thakur**.
    - **Indian Independence League (IIL):** He convened conferences in Tokyo and Bangkok to establish and expand the League.
    - **Azad Hind Fauj (INA):** He helped **organise the Indian National Army (INA) in 1942** as the military wing of the League.
    - **Handover to Netaji:** In 1943, he handed over the leadership of the IIL and the INA to **Subhas Chandra Bose**, acknowledging Netaji's ability to lead the final assault against British rule.
- **Honors and Legacy**
  - He received the **Order of the Rising Sun (2nd class)** from the Japanese government.
  - The **Posts and Telegraphs Department of India** issued a **special postage stamp in 1967** in his honour.
- **Passing:** Ras Behari Bose died on **21 January 1945** due to **tuberculosis**.

## Kaladi

**News:** Kaladi is in the news as the Union Minister directed scientific upscaling to improve shelf life and expand markets under the ODOP initiative.

### About Kaladi



Figure 14. Source – Jammu Heritage

- Kaladi is a **traditional dairy product of Jammu and Kashmir**, known for its **milky flavour** and **stretchable texture**.
- It has received the **Geographical Indication tag (GI)**.
- **Location:** Kaladi belongs to the **Udhampur district of Jammu and Kashmir**.
- **Preparation process**
  - Kaladi is prepared from **raw full-fat milk** using  **whey water** as a natural **coagulant**.
  - The milk is **churned in an iron pot** with a **wooden tool**, after which **sour milk or curd called mathar** is **added** to separate the milk solids.
  - The **stretched cheese** is then **cooled**, allowed to **solidify**, and finally **sun dried to remove excess moisture**.
- **Key features**
  - It has a distinct **milky flavour**, **soft mouthfeel**, and **stretchable texture**.
  - It is often referred to as the “**mozzarella of Jammu**”.
  - It has a **very short shelf life** of only a few days without refrigeration.
- **Scientific support:** **CSIR-CFTRI, Mysuru and CSIR-IIIM, Jammu** will jointly **work on nutrient profiling, characterisation, value addition, and shelf-life enhancement**.
  - **Significance :** The initiative aims to **strengthen local livelihoods**, expand national and international markets, and **promote Dogra cuisine globally**.

## Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)

**News:** The Union Cabinet has approved the equity support of Rs.5,000 crore to Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI).

### About Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)



Source – SIDBI

- **Set up:** It was **set up on 2nd April 1990 under an Act of Indian Parliament**, as a wholly owned subsidiary of IDBI Bank. It was **delinked from IDBI on March 27, 2000**.
- **Ministry:** It comes under the **Ministry of Finance**.
- **Headed by:** Board of Directors along with Chairman & Managing Director.
- **Mission:** To facilitate and strengthen the **flow of credit to MSMEs** (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) while addressing financial and developmental gaps within the MSME ecosystem.
- **Mandate:** To **serve as the principal financial institution** for executing the triple agenda of promotion, financing, and development of the MSME sector.
- **Functions:**
  - **Indirect Lending:** The Bank **provides financing to MSMEs** through banks, SFBs, NBFCs, MFIs, and new-age fin-techs, leveraging the multiplier effect to achieve larger outreach.
  - **Direct Lending:** It **fills existing credit gaps in the MSME sector** through innovative and demonstrative lending products that can be scaled up by the credit delivery ecosystem.
  - **Fund of Funds:** The Bank **supports emerging startups and promotes an entrepreneurship culture** by providing capital through the Fund of Funds channel.
  - **Promotion and Development:** It **promotes entrepreneurship and handholds budding entrepreneurs for holistic development of the MSME sector** through credit-plus initiatives.
  - **Facilitator:** The Bank **acts as a facilitator by serving as the nodal agency** for government schemes aimed at MSMEs.
- **Shareholders:** Government of India (GOI), State Bank of India (SBI), LIC, and NABARD are among the major shareholders.
- **Headquarters:** Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

### Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar 2026 and Parakram Diwas-2026

**News:** The Sikkim State Disaster Management Authority (SSDMA) in the Institutional Category and Lieutenant Colonel Seeta Ashok Shelke in the Individual Category have been selected for the Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar 2026.

#### About Subhas Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar



Figure 15. Source: PIB

- It is an award to recognize the excellent work done by individuals and Institutions in India in the field of Disaster Management.

- **Eligibility**

- Only Indian nationals and Indian institutions are eligible to apply for the award.
- Institutions such as voluntary organisations, corporate bodies, academic/research institutions, uniformed forces, and individuals are eligible to apply.



## Factly Compilation [Third Week] January 2026

- Applicants **must have worked in disaster management in India**, including prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, relief, rehabilitation, research, innovation, or early warning.
- **Nomination:** The application for the award can be filed between 1st July to 31st August each year.
- **Selection Process:** A three-tier screening process shall be followed. It involves the **Secretary NDMA, consultation with SDMAs/DDMAs and experts and screening by MHA.**
- The award is **announced on 23rd January each year**, on the **birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose.**
- **Award Prize:**
  - **For Organisation:** Cash prize of ₹5.1 million and a certificate
  - **For Individual:** Cash prize of ₹5 million (5.5 million rupees) and a certificate

### About Parakram Diwas 2026

- Parakram Diwas 2026 is **annually observed on January 23, 2026.**
- Parakram translates '**Day of Valour**'. The day honours **his unconquerable spirit, bravery, courage and his selfless service to the country.**
- **Observed by:** Ministry of Culture
- It marks the **129th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.**
- The celebrations will take place at **13 other locations across the country** associated with the life and legacy of freedom fighter Bose.