



WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

Coverage of

23th Jan. - 29th Jan., 2026

— ★ ★ Useful for ★ ★ —

**UPSC ESE, PSUs,
RRB, SSC, Banking &
State Services Exams**



Padma Awards, 2026

President **Droupadi Murmu** conferred the awards to distinguished personalities.

23th JANUARY 2026

India-EU Security and Defence Partnership

- Context:** As per a EU's senior diplomat, India and the European Union have agreed to sign a new Security and Defence Partnership covering maritime security, cybersecurity and counterterrorism.



Key Facts

- The partnership will be signed during the visit of European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Antonio Costa to India as chief guests at Republic Day celebrations.
- The leaders will co-chair the 16th India-EU Summit with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- The two sides also plan to conclude a MoU on a comprehensive mobility framework, to facilitate the movement of students, seasonal workers, researchers and highly skilled professionals, and promote research and innovation.
- The visit is centred around the signing of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA), which is still being finalised.

India-EU Relations

- Political cooperation:** India-EU relations date to the early 1960s, and a cooperation agreement signed in 1994 took the bilateral relationship beyond trade and economic cooperation.

- The first India-EU Summit, in 2000, marked a landmark in the evolution of the relationship.

- At the 5th India-EU Summit at The Hague in 2004, the relationship was upgraded to a 'Strategic Partnership'.

- Economic cooperation:** India's bilateral trade in goods with the EU was USD 137.41 billion in 2023-24, making it the largest trading partner of India for goods.

- EU is India's largest trading partner for goods, 17% of India's exports go to the EU and 9% of EU exports come to India.

- India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) Negotiations:** Its objective is to finalize a comprehensive trade agreement covering goods, services, investments, and geographical indications.

- The EU and India are working to announce a 'Free Trade' Agreement (FTA) during the visit of E.U. leaders Republic Day later this month.

- Other areas of cooperation:**

- The India-EU Water Partnership (IEWP), established in 2016, aims to enhance technological, scientific, and policy frameworks in water management.

- In 2020, there was an agreement for research and development cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy between the European Atomic Energy Community and the Government of India.

- India and the EU established the Trade and Technology Council (TTC) in 2023. The TTC is a forum for the two parties to collaborate on trade, technology, and security. The TTC's goals.

- India's Two Levels of Engagement**

- EU as a bloc: Regular summits, strategic dialogues on trade, tech, security, foreign policy.

- Bilateral with major EU members: Deepening ties with France, Germany, Nordic and Eastern European countries.

Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative

- **Context:** India has welcomed Spain joining the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI).

About Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI)

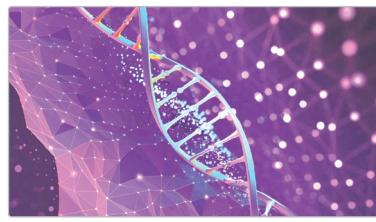
- It was launched by India in November 2019 at the ASEAN-led East Asia Summit (EAS) in Bangkok.
- It draws on existing regional cooperation architecture and mechanisms to focus on seven thematic areas, viz.:
 - Maritime Security;
 - Maritime Ecology;
 - Maritime Resources;
 - Capacity Building and Resource Sharing;
 - Disaster Risk Reduction and Management
 - Science, Technology and Academic Cooperation; and
 - Trade, Connectivity and Maritime Transport.
- **Objectives:** Its objective was to promote cooperation for a free and open Indo-Pacific and the rules-based regional order, which will contribute towards strengthening safety, stability and development in the maritime domain.

India's First 'State Bacterium'

- **Context:** Kerala is set to become the first state in India to declare a state bacterium to highlight the importance of beneficial microbes

About India's First 'State Bacterium'

- A bacterium is a microscopic, single-celled organism that belongs to the group prokaryotes.
- The initiative focuses on the role of microbes in agriculture, health, and environmental sustainability, and seeks to move public perception beyond viewing microbes only as disease-causing agents.



- The state bacterium has been selected by an expert committee under the Kerala State Council for Science, Technology and Environment.
- Importantly, the objective is not to conserve just one bacterium, but to represent and promote the entire spectrum of beneficial microbes.

Do you Know ?

India's national microbe is *Lactobacillus bulgaricus*, declared in 2012, and used in yogurt production.

24th JANUARY 2026

Granth Kutir

- **Context:** The President of India inaugurated Granth Kutir.



Key Facts

- Granth Kutir is a library at the Rashtrapati Bhawan which has the collection of around 2,300 books and about 50 manuscripts in 11 Indian classical languages: Tamil, Sanskrit, Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam, Odia, Marathi, Pali, Prakrit, Assamese, and Bengali.
- The collection reflects India's cultural, philosophical, literary, and intellectual heritage.
- Subjects include epics, philosophy, linguistics, history, governance, science, devotional literature, and the Constitution of India in classical languages.

- Several manuscripts are handwritten on traditional materials such as palm leaf, paper, bark, and cloth.
- Granth Kutir supports the vision of the Gyan Bharatam Mission, which aims to preserve, digitise, and disseminate India's manuscript heritage, blending tradition with modern technology.
- It is developed through collaboration with central and state governments, universities, research institutions, cultural organisations, and individual contributors.
- Supported by the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Culture.
- The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) provides expertise in manuscript conservation, documentation, management, and display.

Franz Edelman Award

- **Context:** The Department of Food and Public Distribution (DFPD) is among the six finalists for the prestigious 2026 Franz Edelman Award for its Anna Chakra initiative.

About Anna Chakra Initiative

- Anna Chakra is operations research (O.R.) based decision support solution that strengthens India's Public Distribution System by optimizing state-specific logistics.
- It is developed in partnership with the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) in India and the IIT, Delhi.
- It was launched in 2025 to strengthen the movement of food grains across India. Its national deployment has generated:
 - Estimated annual savings of INR 250 crore.
 - A 35% reduction in emissions, supporting India's climate commitments.
 - Efficiency gains that benefit more than 81 Crore PDS beneficiaries, including the most vulnerable populations.

About Franz Edelman Award

- It is the world's most prestigious award in the field of Operations Research (OR) and advanced analytics.
- It is widely known as the "Nobel Prize of Operations Research and Analytics."
- Instituted by: INFORMS (Institute for Operations Research and the Management Sciences) a global professional body for analytics and OR.
- It is named after Franz Edelman, a pioneer in management science and operations research.
- The award recognizes the real-world, high-impact applications of operations research, advanced analytics, mathematical modeling and data-driven decision-making.



25th JANUARY 2026

One District One Product (ODOP)

- **Context:** The One District One Product (ODOP) initiative has completed 8 years of transformative impact by promoting traditional industries.



ਨੰਕ ਤਕਾਨ, ਨੰਕ ਪਹਾੜਾਨ

Key Highlights

- The ODOP initiative, spearheaded by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), aims to unlock each district's unique

economic potential, drive balanced regional growth, and equip local artisans to compete in national and global markets.

- **Product Selection Framework under ODOP:** Products are selected by States and Union Territories based on the existing ecosystem on the ground and the final list is communicated to the DPIIT.
- ODOP was first launched in 2018 with Moradabad's brassware in Uttar Pradesh and has since expanded nationwide.
- The ODOP has so far identified 1243 products from 775 districts across the country encompassing various sectors such as textiles, agriculture, food processing, handicrafts and more
- Through e-commerce initiatives like the Government e-Marketplace (GeM)-ODOP Bazaar, India's finest ODOP products are being showcased to wider markets, empowering artisans and expanding market access.
- PM Ekta Malls (Unity Malls) are envisaged as dedicated retail and display hubs for promoting and selling ODOP, GI and handicraft products.

• **Global Outreach of ODOP:**

- 80+ Indian Missions have promoted products abroad through exhibitions, showcases, ODOP walls or diplomatic gifting.
- In order to popularize ODOP products internationally, they were included as part of gifting during G-20 meetings.
- Three international stores are selling ODOP products (02 in Singapore – in Mustafa Centre and in Kashmir Heritage and One in Kuwait-Hakimi Centre) to strengthen sustained overseas market presence.
- Under the District as Export Hub (DEH) initiative, identification of the products and services with export potential in all the districts of the country is done in consultation with all stakeholders including the States/UTs.

Fourth Industrial Revolution (Industry 4.0)

- **Context:** The World Economic Forum (WEF) will establish five new Centres for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, including one in India's Andhra Pradesh.

About Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) Network

- The Fourth Industrial Revolution Network is a global platform for multi-stakeholder collaboration involving governments, industry, academia and civil society.
- It was launched by the World Economic Forum in 2017 to ensure that emerging and exponential technologies deliver societal benefits while minimising risks.
- The focus areas of these centres would include AI innovation, the energy transition, cyber resilience, and frontier technologies.
- Existing centres span Europe, the Middle East, Asia and the Americas, reflecting region-specific priorities within a global governance framework.

Newly Announced Centres

- **European Centre for AI Excellence, Paris (France):** Aims to enhance Europe's global competitiveness through sovereign and trustworthy AI.
- **Centre for AI-Driven Innovation, London (United Kingdom):** Explores AI convergence with frontier technologies such as quantum and biotechnology.
- **Centre for Frontier Technologies, Abu Dhabi (UAE):** Concentrates on quantum technologies, robotics and space, with strong public-private collaboration.
- **Centre for Intelligent Future, Abu Dhabi (UAE):** Focuses on linking frontier AI research with economic and societal challenges.
- **Centre for Energy and Cyber Resilience, Andhra Pradesh (India):** Promotes innovation in energy transition and strengthens cyber resilience across industries.

About Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR)

- The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) refers to a new phase of technological transformation in which the physical, digital and biological worlds are increasingly converging.
- Unlike earlier revolutions that were driven by a single breakthrough, 4IR is powered by the simultaneous, rapid advancement and fusion of multiple technologies.

26th JANUARY 2026

Padma Awards

- Context:** On the eve of Republic Day, President Droupadi Murmu approved the conferment of 131 Padma Awards.

Key Facts

- The awards instituted in 1954 initially as a single class, they were restructured in 1955 into the current three levels.
- Padma Awards are among India's highest civilian honours, recognising exceptional contributions across diverse fields like art, social work, science and public affairs.
- They are presented in three categories, Padma Vibhushan (topmost for extraordinary service), Padma Bhushan (high-order service), and Padma Shri (distinguished service) - with Bharat Ratna as the nation's supreme civilian award above them.



Eligibility and Process

- Open to all persons, including citizens, foreigners / NRI / PIO / OCI and posthumous awards allowed in highly deserving cases. Government servants, including PSU employees are not eligible except Doctors and Scientists.

- Nominations go to a Padma Awards Committee (chaired by Cabinet Secretary), whose recommendations reach the Prime Minister and President for approval.
- Cannot be used as titles (per Article 18(1) and 1996 Supreme Court ruling) and higher awards require a 5-year gap from prior ones.

ASC ARJUN: Humanoid Robot

- Context:** Indian Railways has deployed a humanoid robot named 'ASC ARJUN' at Visakhapatnam Railway Station.



Key Facts

- ASC ARJUN is a humanoid robot that works with the Railway Protection Force (RPF) for security, surveillance and assistance at the station.
- It is fully designed and developed in Visakhapatnam using indigenous, home-grown technology by a dedicated technical team.
- Significance**
 - Enhance safety and security of passengers at a busy station.
 - Optimise manpower by taking over routine patrolling and monitoring tasks so RPF staff can focus on critical work.
 - Use emerging technologies (AI, IoT, robotics) to improve service delivery and modernise rail operations.

27th JANUARY 2026

UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2026

- Context:** The University Grants Commission (UGC) notified new regulations aimed at addressing discrimination, particularly caste-based discrimination, in higher education institutions.

Key Provisions

- As per Regulation 3(c) of the UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2026, “caste-based discrimination” means “discrimination only on the basis of caste or tribe against the members of the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and other backward classes”.
- It aims to curb caste-based discrimination on campuses and ensure a safe, dignified and inclusive academic environment for students, teachers and non-teaching staff.
- Every higher education institution is mandated to have an Equal Opportunity Centre, an Equity Committee and Equity Squads.
 - The Equal Opportunity Centre (EOC) will oversee the implementation of policies related to disadvantaged groups, coordinate with the district administration and police, and help provide legal aid when necessary.
 - Equity Committee:** The EOC will have a ten-member Equity Committee chaired by the head of the institution. Five of its members must be from reserved categories.
 - Equity Squads:** These are to be constituted to “maintain vigil and prevent discrimination on campus”.
- A 24-hour ‘Equity Helpline’ and Equity Ambassadors will be appointed.
- The UGC will monitor compliance, and non-compliant institutions with the risk of losing UGC funding, degree-granting powers, and even recognition.

Constitutional Provisions

- Article 46 under the Directive Principles of State Policy, mandates the State to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections, particularly Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs).
- Article 14 guarantees equality before law and equal protection of laws.
- Article 15(4) & 15(5) enable affirmative action for socially and educationally backward classes.
- Article 16(1) & 16(4) ensure equality of opportunity and reservation in public employment.
- Article 17 abolishes untouchability and forbids its practice in any form.

Legal and Statutory Measures

- Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, criminalises caste-based harassment and violence.
- Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955, penalises the practice of untouchability.
- Right to Education Act, 2009, mandates non-discrimination in elementary education.
- University Grants Commission Act, 1956, empowers UGC to regulate equity in higher education.

Gig Workers' Welfare Board

- Context:** Karnataka has constituted a Gig Workers' Welfare Board to strengthen social security coverage for platform-based workers in the State.



Key Facts

- It is constituted under the Karnataka Platform-Based Gig Workers (Social Security and Welfare Development) Act, 2025. The Labour Minister serves as ex-officio Chairperson.
- The Board oversees mandatory registration of aggregators and gig workers, issuing unique IDs valid across platforms. Aggregators must contribute 1-1.5% welfare fee (capped, potentially up to 5%) per transaction to fund social security schemes like health and income support.
- The Board will monitor schemes, grievance redressal, and transparent contracts, addressing gig economy growth projected at 4.1% of India's workforce by 2030.

28th JANUARY 2026

Diamond Triangle: Buddhist Heritage Sites from Odisha

- Context:** UNESCO has reportedly included three Buddhist heritage sites from Odisha — Ratnagiri, Udayagiri and Lalitgiri, in India's tentative list for potential recognition as UNESCO World Heritage Sites.



Key Facts

- The tentative list identifies sites that are of outstanding universal value, either culturally or naturally, and suitable for potential inscription in the World Heritage List
- These sites, collectively known as the 'Diamond Triangle', are believed to reflect the spread and evolution of all three major schools of Buddhism: Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana.

Buddhist Site of Lalitagiri, Cuttack

- It is located on Nandapahad hillock in the Assia hill range, within the Birupa river valley. It shows uninterrupted cultural continuity from the 2nd – 3rd century BCE to the 13th century CE.
- Archaeological Findings:** Discovery of an inscribed terracotta sealing reading "Sri Chandraditya Vihara Samagra Arya Bhikshu Sanghasa" (9th – 10th century CE).
 - A massive stupa of Theravada phase containing relic caskets of khondalite stone, with inner steatite, silver, and gold caskets.
 - Images from Mahayana and Vajrayana pantheon such as Vajrapani, Manjusri, Tara, Jambhala, Hariti, and Aparajita.

Buddhist Site of Udayagiri, Jajpur

- It is situated in the Assia hill range on the right bank of the Birupa River. It is also known as "Sunrise Hill" due to its east-facing crescent-shaped hill.
- Architectural Importance:** Discovery of a massive Chaityagriha showing architectural evolution from circular to apsidal to rectangular.
 - Sculptures of Avalokiteswara (colossal), Tara, Manjusri, Bhrikuti, Hariti, Chunda, Maitreya, Vairochana, Vasudhara, and others.
 - Inscriptions with Buddhist Dharanis on terracotta plaques and stone tablets.

Buddhist Site of Ratnagiri, Jajpur

- It is located in the Assia hill range on the left bank of the Kelua River, a distributary of the Brahmani. It is also Known as the "Hill of Jewels".
- It received major patronage from the Bhaumakara dynasty (8th – 10th century CE).
- Copperplate inscription records residence of Queen Karpurashri, indicating female patronage.

Tulu Language

- Context:** The Karnataka government has expressed support for declaring Tulu as the State's second additional official language. Currently, Kannada is Karnataka's sole official language, while English is used as an additional official language.

About Tulu

- With a recorded history of over 3,000 years, Tulu is predominantly spoken in the coastal districts of Udupi and Dakshina Kannada in Karnataka.
- It has its own script and is one of only five literary Dravidian languages, the other four being Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam.
- The language is gaining global recognition, with academic research in Germany and France, and inclusion in Google Translate.

NOTE

In 2023, the Karnataka government constituted a committee headed by educationist Mohan Alva, which recommended declaring Tulu as the State's second official language under Article 345 of the Constitution.

29th JANUARY 2026

Blue Category of Industries

- Context:** The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has classified Common Effluent Treatment Plants (CETPs) under the new Blue Category as Essential Environmental Services (ESS), incentivizing pollution control infrastructure. CETPs are centralised facilities designed to treat industrial effluents from a cluster of industries.

About Blue Category of Industries

- Blue Category includes essential environmental services (ESS). These are facilities necessary to control, abate, and mitigate pollution arising from domestic activities and industrial activities.
- ESS are facilities that directly contribute to pollution control and environmental management. For example: Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs), Common Effluent Treatment Plants (CETPs), Waste-to-Energy Plants etc.

Gita Mittal Committee

- Context:** The Supreme Court extended the tenure of the Justice Gita Mittal Committee by six months till July 31, 2026, to continue overseeing humanitarian relief for Manipur violence victims.



About The Committee

- This all-women panel, formed in August 2023 under Articles 32 and 142, comprises former judges Justice Gita Mittal (Chairperson, ex-CJ J&K HC)
- It probes violence against women, ensures medical/psychological aid, compensation, rehabilitation, legal support, and property restitution amid Meitei-Kuki clashes since May 2023.
- The panel has submitted 42 reports directly to SC, covering victim aid, skill development, and housing, despite no formal extension since July 2025.