

## Nicolas Maduro

The USA captured Venezuelan President, accusing him being the kingpin of narco-terrorism.



# WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

*Coverage of*

**2<sup>nd</sup> Jan. - 8<sup>th</sup> Jan., 2026**

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



2<sup>nd</sup> JANUARY 2026**Bulgaria: 21<sup>st</sup> country to join Eurozone**

- **Context:** Recently, Bulgaria became the 21<sup>st</sup> country to switch to the euro, nearly 20 years after the Balkan nation joined the European Union (EU).

**About European Union**

- The Maastricht Treaty of 1992 established the European Union.
- It paved the way for the formation of a common economic and monetary union, which is the European Economic and Monetary Union.
- It allowed the adoption of a common currency, which would be accepted as the sole legal tender, the euro.
- The euro was first rolled out in 12 countries on January 1, 2002. Croatia was the latest to join, in 2023.
- It also has a unified central banking system, which established the European Central Bank (ECB).

**About Eurozone**

- The eurozone, or officially the euro area, refers to the geographic and economic region comprising those members of the EU that have fully adopted the euro as their official currency.
- **Composition:** Bulgaria's admission to the eurozone makes it the 21<sup>st</sup> nation out of 27 EU members to do so. The remaining six use their own currencies instead.
  - Four microstates, Andorra, Monaco, the Vatican City and San Marino, also use the euro through agreements with the EU, while Kosovo and Montenegro use the euro as their sole currency without an agreement. However, none of these countries are not regarded as members of the eurozone.

- **Eligibility:** To be eligible for eurozone membership, an EU country (except Denmark, which has an opt-out) must meet "convergence criteria" ensuring alignment with other members economically, socially, and politically.
  - This includes adopting the euro, integrating into the common market, and adjusting national laws and monetary policies to comply with EU treaties, ensuring a smooth transition without disrupting the eurozone.

**Voice over WiFi (VoWiFi)**

- **Context:** State-owned telecom operator Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) has launched Voice over WiFi (VoWiFi) services nationwide across all telecom circles, allowing users to make voice calls and send SMS over Wi-Fi networks.

**About VoWiFi**

- Voice over WiFi (VoWiFi) is a technology that enables users to:
  - Make and receive voice calls and SMS using a Wi-Fi network instead of a mobile tower.
  - Use the same mobile number and default phone dialer.
  - Operate without any third-party app.
- It is built on IMS (IP Multimedia Subsystem) architecture, ensuring carrier-grade call quality and security.

3<sup>rd</sup> JANUARY 2026**Savitribai Phule**

- **Context:** PM Modi paid homage to social reformer Savitribai Phule on her birth anniversary, remembering her contributions to society in the field of education.

## About Savitribai Phule

- Savitribai Phule, a poet and social reformer, is widely recognised as the first female teacher of modern India.
- Born in 1831, she was married to social activist Jyotirao Phule at the age of 10.



## Key Contributions

- Pioneer of Women's Education:** In 1848, alongside her husband Jyotirao Phule, she established India's first school for girls at Bhide Wada in Pune. She founded the Mahila Seva Mandal in 1852 to raise awareness about women's rights and social status.
- Social Reformer:** She fought tirelessly against caste-based discrimination and untouchability.
- Advocate for Vulnerable Groups:** She established Balhatya Pratibandhak Griha, a shelter for pregnant rape victims and widows to prevent infanticide and provide them a safe place to deliver.
- Literary Work:**
  - Kavya Phule in 1854
  - Bavan Kashi Subodh Ratnakar in 1892.

## Live Events Development Cell (LEDC)

- Context:** The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has established a Live Events Development Cell (LEDC) to facilitate the expansion of "concert economy", boosting employment and tourism in the country.

## About Live Events Development Cell (LEDC)

- The LEDC has been constituted under the direction of the Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting.
- It functions as a single-window facilitation mechanism to address regulatory, logistical, and coordination challenges faced by the live events industry.

- The cell brings together representatives from the Central and State governments, industry associations, music rights societies, and major live event companies.
- The objective is to create an enabling ecosystem for large-scale concerts, festivals, sports events, and cultural performances across India.

## India's Live Events market Growth

- The organised live events market was valued at ₹20,861 crore in 2024.
- The sector registered a 15% growth rate, outpacing several traditional media segments.
- Attendance at theatre events increased by 45%, indicating renewed public engagement with diverse cultural experiences.
- Expansion Beyond Metros:**
  - Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities are emerging as important cultural and entertainment hubs.
  - Northeastern cities have recorded sharp growth in live entertainment footfalls, including Shillong (213%), Guwahati (188%), and Kokrajhar (143%).
  - Visakhapatnam recorded the highest growth at 490%, followed by Vadodara (230%).

## Significance of rising Concert Economy

- Employment Generation:** A single large-format live event generates more than 15,000 direct and indirect employment opportunities, spanning artists, technicians, logistics, security, hospitality, and local vendors.
- Boost to Tourism:** Live events are increasingly driving domestic tourism, with audiences travelling across cities to attend concerts, theatre, and sports events.
- City Branding and Urban Economies:** Major concerts help brand cities as cultural and entertainment destinations, supporting experience-based while enhancing the cultural identity and global visibility of Indian cities.

- **Cultural Diplomacy:** International concerts and festivals enhance India's cultural soft power, projecting the country as a vibrant, youth-oriented, and culturally diverse global destination.

**4<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2026**

## Venezuela: USA Strikes and Captured President Nicolas Maduro

- **Context:** The US strikes on Venezuela and capturing its President, have brought to the forefront concerns over violations of international law, breach of national sovereignty and reinforcing perceptions of U.S. imperialism.



### Probable Reasons for US Attack on Venezuela

- **Oil Reserves:** Venezuela holds about 18% of the world's oil reserves, more than Saudi Arabia (around 16%), Russia (about 5-6%), or the United States (around 4%). Venezuela alone has more crude oil reserves than the US and Russia combined.
- **Countering China's Expansion in Latin America:** China, the world's largest crude oil importer, has emerged as the biggest buyer of Venezuelan oil. Venezuela is a strategic node in China's energy security and global influence, making it geopolitically sensitive for the U.S.
- **U.S. Deals:** The United States has signed trade deals with partners such as the European Union, Japan, South Korea and the United Kingdom, getting commitments from them to buy U.S. petroleum products and LNG, without having sufficient crude oil or refining capacity.

- **Resurrection of the Monroe Doctrine:** The US has described the operation as consistent with the US foreign policy known as the Monroe Doctrine.

- **Other Stated and Unstated Motives:** Allegations of state-sponsored drug trafficking
  - Containment of socialist political ideology
  - Addressing mass migration flows towards the U.S.

### Impact on India

- **Oil Import from Venezuela:** India imported \$255.3 million worth of oil from Venezuela in the current financial year in 2025, about 0.3% of its total oil import during this period.
  - Since 2019, India has been cutting its oil imports and commercial engagements with Venezuela in response to U.S. sanctions.
- **Bilateral Trade:** India's bilateral trade is now relatively small and shrinking further.
  - In 2024–25, India imported goods worth just \$364.5 million from Venezuela, of which crude oil accounted for \$255.3 million.
  - This marked a steep 81.3% decline from imports of \$1.4 billion in 2023–24.
  - India's exports to Venezuela stood at \$95.3 million, led mainly by pharmaceutical products worth \$41.4 million.
- **Impact on India:** Given the low trade volumes, existing sanctions constraints, and the large geographical distance, the current developments in Venezuela are not expected to have any meaningful impact on India's economy or energy security.

### About Monroe Doctrine

- It was announced by US President James Monroe in 1823 during his annual address to Congress. It came at a time when many Latin American countries had gained independence from European colonial powers.
- **Core Principles**
  - **Non-Colonisation:** The American continents were no longer open to future European colonisation.

- **Non-Intervention:** European powers should not interfere in the political affairs of the Americas.
- **Separate Spheres of Influence:** Western Hemisphere and Europe were to remain distinct political spheres.
- **US Assurance:** The US would not interfere in European internal affairs and would respect existing European colonies in the Americas.

## India: World's Largest Rice Producer

- **Context:** India has become the world's largest producer of rice, surpassing China.

### Key Facts

- India's rice production has reached 150.18 million tonnes, compared to China's 145.28 million tonnes.
- ICAR has developed India's first genome-edited rice varieties – DRR Rice 100 (Kamla) and Pusa DST Rice 1. These varieties have the potential to bring about revolutionary changes in terms of higher production, climate adaptability, and water conservation.

### About Rice

- It is the most important food crop of India.
- It is predominantly a Kharif or summer crop.
- **Geographical conditions:**
  - **Temperature:** Rice requires hot and humid conditions. The temperature should be fairly high i.e. 24°C mean monthly temperature with average temperature of 22°C to 32°C.
  - Rainfall ranging between 150-300 cm is suitable for its growth in areas of Punjab, Haryana and Western Uttar Pradesh where rainfall is less than 100 cm, rice is cultivated with the help of irrigation.
  - **Soil:** Rice is grown in varied soil conditions but deep clayey and loamy soil provides the ideal conditions.
- **Importance:**
  - It is the staple food crop of a majority of the people in India.

- It plays a significant role in the national food and livelihood security system
- It helps earn significant foreign exchange as it is exported to other countries

5<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2026

## Somnath Swabhiman Parv

- **Context:** PM Modi commemorated 1,000 years since the first attack on the Somnath Temple in 1026 AD, describing the iconic shrine as a timeless symbol of India's civilisational resilience and unbreakable spirit.



### About Somnath Temple

- Somnath is revered as the first of the twelve Jyotirlings of Lord Shiva, as mentioned in the Dwadasha Jyotirling Stotram.
- The temple is located at Prabhas Patan on the western coast of Gujarat, a region historically associated with maritime trade, cultural exchange, and prosperity.
- The shrine was first attacked in January 1026 by Mahmud of Ghazni, marking the beginning of a series of invasions aimed at destroying symbols of Indian civilization. Despite repeated devastation, the temple was rebuilt multiple times.

### Restoration of the Temple

- Ahilyabai Holkar played a crucial role in restoring the temple in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, demonstrating the role of indigenous rulers in cultural revival.
- After Independence, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel envisioned the reconstruction of Somnath.

6<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2026

- The present structure was completed and inaugurated on May 11<sup>th</sup> 1951, by Dr. Rajendra Prasad, reflecting the constitutional ethos of cultural freedom.
- K.M. Munshi was instrumental in the reconstruction of the temple.
- Swami Vivekananda viewed Somnath as a symbol of India's national spirit that regenerates despite adversity.

## Battery Pack Aadhaar Number (BPAN)

- Context:** The Union Government has proposed a Battery Pack Aadhaar Number (BPAN) system to create a unified digital identity for battery packs, especially electric vehicle (EV) batteries, to ensure their traceability across the entire lifecycle.

### About BPAN

- Battery Pack Aadhaar Number (BPAN) is a 21-character unique identification number proposed for every battery pack introduced in the Indian market.
- It works like a digital Aadhaar for batteries, allowing authorities to track batteries from manufacturing to recycling or disposal.
- The focus is primarily on EV batteries, which form the bulk of India's lithium-ion battery demand.
- This will promote efficient recycling, second-life use, and safe disposal of batteries.

### Key Features of BPAN

- Mandatory Unique ID:** Every battery producer or importer must assign a BPAN to batteries sold or used internally.
- Lifecycle Data Capture:** Covers sourcing of raw materials, manufacturing, usage, performance, repurposing, recycling, and final disposal.
- Dynamic Updating:** Any major structural or ownership change in the battery requires issuance of a new BPAN.
- Visible and Durable Marking:** BPAN must be marked on the battery pack at a location that cannot be easily destroyed or degraded.

## Piprahwa Relics

- Context:** PM Modi inaugurated the Grand International Exposition of Sacred Piprahwa Relics, titled "The Light and the Lotus: Relics of the Awakened One", in New Delhi, marking the return of sacred Buddhist relics to India after more than a century.



### About Piprahwa Relics

- The Piprahwa relics were discovered in 1898 by British civil engineer William Claxton Peppé in Piprahwa, Uttar Pradesh. They are excavated from the Piprahwa Stupa — widely recognized as the ancient city of Kapilavastu, the birthplace of Lord Buddha.
- They include bone fragments, soapstone and crystal caskets, a sandstone coffer, and offerings such as gold ornaments and gemstones.
- They are believed to be associated with the mortal remains of Lord Buddha. An inscription in the Brahmi script on one of the caskets confirms these as relics of the Buddha deposited by the Saky clan.
- Status:** Most of these relics were moved to the Indian Museum in Kolkata in 1899 and are legally protected as 'AA' antiquities, forbidding their sale or removal.
- While some bone relics were gifted to the King of Siam, a portion kept by Peppé's descendants.

## Major Schools of Buddhism

- **Theravada Buddhism:** Focuses on individual liberation and is prominent in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia.
- **Mahayana Buddhism:** Emphasises compassion and the Bodhisattva ideal, spreading across East Asia.
- **Vajrayana Buddhism:** Incorporates ritual practices and tantric elements, prevalent in Tibet, Bhutan, and the Himalayan region.

## Core Philosophical Foundations of Buddhism

- Four Noble Truths:
  - **Dukkha:** Life is suffering or unsatisfactory.
  - **Samudaya:** Suffering is caused by craving and attachment (tanha).
  - **Nirodha:** The cessation of suffering is possible by letting go of craving.
  - **Magga:** The path to the cessation of suffering is the Eightfold Path.
- **The Noble Eightfold Path (Magga):** Right Understanding/View, Right Thought/Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration.

## SAMPANN (System for Accounting and Management of Pension)

- **Context:** SAMPANN (System for Accounting and Management of Pension) is an integrated, online pension management system for Department of Telecommunications (DoT) pensioners.

### Key Facts

- SAMPANN creates a single platform for processing, sanctioning and disbursing pension directly to the bank account of pensioners.
- It also offers online grievance redressal, digital profile management and transaction record, enhancing transparency and efficiency for telecom retirees.
- The pension related documents i.e., Gratuity Payment Orders, Pension Certificates/ePPOs, Pension Commutation Payment Orders and Form 16 are now made available through DigiLocker.

7<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2026

## Madhav Gadgil

- **Context:** Noted ecologist Madhav Gadgil, known for his work on the conservation of Western Ghats, has passed away.

### Major Contributions

- In 2010, the Ministry of Environment and Forests appointed Madhav Gadgil to chair the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP), known as the Gadgil Commission.
- His 2011 report recommended classifying 64% of the 1,40,000 sq km Ghats, spanning six states, as Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESAs) in three tiers: ESZ-1 (no mining, dams or large projects), ESZ-2 (restricted activities) and ESZ-3 (regulated development).
- It led to debate and discussion on the significance of the Western Ghats as an ecological hotspot and the efforts to conserve them.
- He played a key role in declaring the Nilgiris as India's first biosphere reserve in 1986.
- He later helped shape the Biological Diversity Act, 2002, and Forest Rights Act 2006, introducing the concept of People's Biodiversity Registers to document and protect local ecological knowledge.
- He served on the Prime Minister's Scientific Advisory Council and the National Tiger Authority, successfully bridging academic research with grassroots environmental activism.
- His contributions were widely recognised with major honours, including the Padma Shri (1992), Padma Bhushan (2006), the Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement (2015) and the UNEP Champions of the Earth award (2024).
- The annual Champions of the Earth award is the U.N.'s highest environmental honour awarded for his seminal work in the Western Ghats.



## Suryastra Rocket Launcher System

- Context:** The Indian Army has signed a ₹293 crore contract with the NIBE Limited, in collaboration with Israel, for the supply of the long-range Suryastra Rocket Launcher system.



### About Suryastra Rocket Launcher

- Suryastra is India's first indigenously manufactured universal multi-calibre rocket launcher capable of precision surface-to-surface strikes up to 300 km.
- The system can integrate and fire multiple rocket types from the same launcher, enabling flexibility across operational scenarios.
- It has demonstrated a Circular Error Probable (CEP) of less than five metres, indicating high-precision deep-strike capability.
- The launcher is also capable of firing loitering munitions up to 100 km, expanding its role beyond conventional rocket artillery.

8<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2026

## USA's withdrawal from 66 international organizations

- Context:** The US has withdrawn from 66 international organizations, including 31 UN entities and 35 non-UN bodies.

### Key Facts

- The entities include forums such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), and the International Solar Alliance (ISA).

- It also names development/governance and rights-related entities such as UN Women, UNFPA (UN Population Fund), UNCTAD, and UN-Habitat, along with multiple UN offices linked to peacebuilding and protection of children in conflict.

### Major Reasons

- Sovereignty Concerns:** Resistance to binding international rules perceived to constrain domestic policy autonomy.
- Perceived Institutional Bias:** Allegations of politicisation, inefficiency, and bias against US or allied interests.
- Domestic Political Pressures:** Multilateral commitments viewed as costly with limited direct electoral benefits.
- Burden-Sharing Argument:** Claim that the US contributes disproportionately to global institutions.
- Strategic Reorientation:** Preference for bilateral or minilateral arrangements over universal institutions.
- Strategic Competition:** Desire to limit platforms where rival powers gain influence.

### Potential Impacts

- Climate Change Setback:** Weakens global efforts to curb greenhouse gas emissions and provides other countries an excuse to delay climate commitments and finance pledges.
- Fragmentation of Multilateralism:** Further erodes international governance, intensifies power rivalries, and accelerates a shift towards protectionism and smaller ad-hoc regional blocs.
- Development and Humanitarian Slowdown:** US funding cuts worsen already declining international development and humanitarian aid, affecting health, education, food security, and SDG progress.
- Global Peace and Security Risks:** Reduced US support to bodies like the UN Peacebuilding Commission hampers peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery, especially in conflict-prone regions such as Africa and the Caribbean.

- **Weakening of Global Norms:** Encourages selective compliance with international law and treaty obligations by other states.
- **Leadership Vacuum:** Creates space for other major powers to shape global rules and institutions.

## Dust Experiment

- **Context:** The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) used the first homegrown cosmic dust detector, the Dust EXperiment (DEX), to confirm that a cosmic dust particle hits Earth's atmosphere approximately every thousand seconds (around 16 minutes).



## About Dust EXperiment (DEX)

- ISRO developed the Dust EXperiment (DEX), a 3 kg instrument that was launched into space onboard the XPoSat mission.
- It is the first-of-its-kind instrument designed to detect Interplanetary Dust Particles (IDPs).
- **Interplanetary Dust Particles (IDPs):** IDPs are microscopic shrapnel from comets and asteroids that form the atmosphere's "meteor layer", and show up as "shooting stars" at night.

## Significance

- The findings are significant as understanding cosmic dust particles helps protect satellites and spacecraft from high-speed micro-impacts.
- Data on cosmic dust particles will also aid in planning and executing India's first manned space mission – Gaganyaan mission.
- DEX-like instruments are crucial in planetary exploration as they can help study the atmospheres of Venus, Mars and other celestial bodies.