



WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

Coverage of

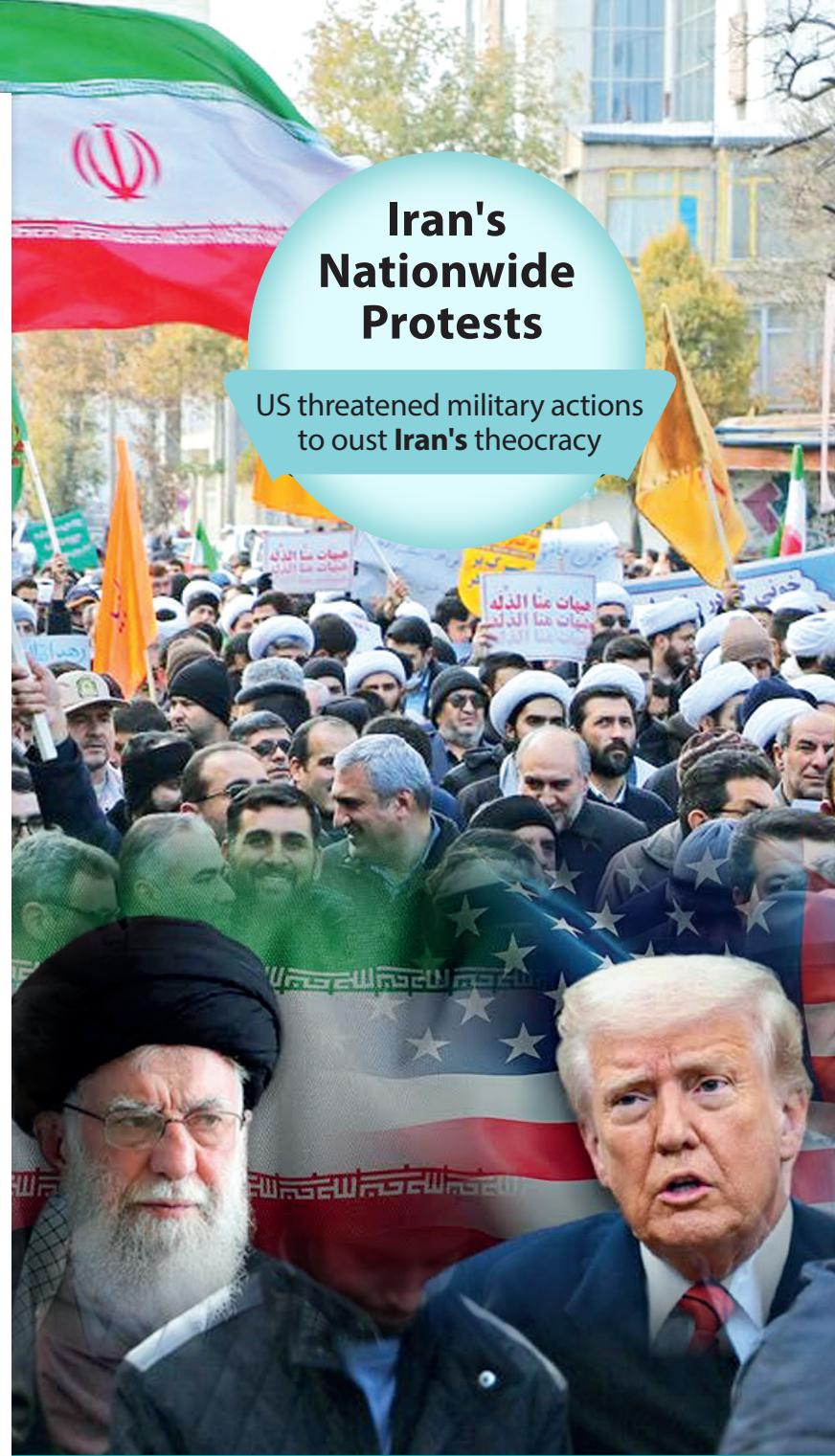
9th Jan. - 15th Jan., 2026

★★ Useful for ★★

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

Iran's Nationwide Protests

US threatened military actions to oust **Iran's** theocracy



9th JANUARY 2026

Census of India, 2027

- Context:** The Centre has issued the notification for the first phase of the Census of India 2027.

About Census

- The census is the systematic process of collecting, compiling, and analyzing a country's population. Historical references to population counts can be found from Kautilya's Arthashastra to Akbar's Ain-i-Akbari.
- The modern synchronous census, where data is collected simultaneously across the country, began in 1881 during British rule, with W. C. Plowden as India's first Census Commissioner.
- Information was recorded in census schedules, which evolved over time but generally included questions on age, sex, mother tongue, literacy, religion, and caste.
- The Census is a Union list subject while the Census Act, 1948 is the key legislation governing the Census process. It authorises the Central government to undertake Census operations and appoint a Census Commissioner to supervise the entire exercise.
- The Union Cabinet has approved the census at a cost of ₹11,718.24 crore, and caste enumeration will also be included in Census 2027.
- This will be India's first fully digital census, using mobile applications on Android and iOS.



rooms, construction materials, access to water, electricity, toilets, cooking fuel, and household assets. This phase provides an overview of housing conditions and access to basic amenities and is expected to be conducted in 2026.

- Population enumeration phase:** Conducted after house-listing, it collects individual-level data such as age, sex, education, occupation, religion, caste/tribe, disability, and migration history for every person, including the homeless. This forms the core demographic and socio-economic Census data.
- Data processing:** Information is centrally processed and released in stages, starting with provisional population figures, followed by detailed tables, with quality checks and audits ensuring accuracy.

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, 2026

- Context:** The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) is celebrated once in two years on 9th January. The 18th edition took place in 2025 and the 19th is expected in 2027.

Key Facts

- It is a significant event that honors the contributions of the Indian diaspora to their homeland.
- January 9th commemorates the day in 1915 when Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest Pravasi, returned to India from South Africa to lead the country's freedom struggle.
- The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) Convention was first established in 2003, it is the flagship event of the Ministry of External Affairs.
- Since 2015, it has evolved into a biennale event, with theme-based conferences held in the intervening years.



About Census Process

- The process is carried out in two broad phases:** The House-listing and Housing Census, followed by the Population Enumeration.
- House-listing phase:** Every building is surveyed to record details about households and housing, including structure type, ownership, number of

About Indian Diaspora

- The diaspora encompasses a group of people who can either trace their origins to India or who are Indian citizens living abroad, either temporarily or permanently.
- As per the Indian Ministry of External Affairs [2024], the global Indian diaspora numbers approximately 35.42 million, consisting of 15.85 million non-resident Indians (NRIs) and 19.57 million people of Indian origin (PIOs).

Top 5 countries where the Indian diaspora resides:

- United States of America (USA): 5.4Mn
- United Arab Emirates (UAE): 3.6Mn
- Malaysia: 2.9Mn
- Canada: 2.8Mn
- Saudi Arabia: 2.4Mn

- India is the origin of the largest number of international migrants in the world, touching nearly 18 million, according to the UN World Migration Report 2024.

Government Initiatives to Engage Diaspora

- Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) Card:** It offers lifelong visa-free entry, property rights (except agriculture), and economic privileges to eligible PIOs up to 4th generation (excluding Pakistan/Bangladesh origin).
- Know India Programme (KIP):** Short-term orientation programme for diaspora youth (21-35 years) to connect with Indian culture, institutions, and states.
- Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR):** Promotes Indian culture abroad through cultural exchanges, academic chairs, and artist delegations.
- e-Migrate System:** Online platform to protect Indian workers abroad by streamlining recruitment, employment contracts, and grievance redressal.
- Bharatiya Pravasi Samman Award:** Highest honor given by the Indian government to eminent diaspora members for their outstanding contributions.
- Madad Portal:** Online grievance redressal platform by MEA for Indians abroad seeking help with passports, consular services, and legal issues.

- VAJRA Scheme:** Invites Indian-origin scientists abroad to collaborate with Indian institutions in advanced research projects.
- Global Pravasi Rishta Portal and App:** A digital platform to connect diaspora with Indian missions for registration, communication, and outreach activities.

PANKHUDI Portal

- Context:** The Ministry of Women and Child Development launched PANKHUDI Portal.



About PANKHUDI Portal

- It is an integrated Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and partnership facilitation digital portal.
- It is aimed at strengthening coordination, transparency, and structured stakeholder participation in initiatives for women and child development.

Features

- PANKHUDI is developed as a single-window digital platform that brings together individuals, Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) contributors, corporate entities, and government agencies working in the domain of women and child development.
- It streamlines and unifies voluntary and institutional contributions across key thematic areas including nutrition, health, Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), child welfare, protection and rehabilitation, and women's safety and empowerment.

- It supports and strengthens the implementation of the Ministry's flagship missions - Mission Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0, Mission Vatsalya, and Mission Shakti - through a structured and transparent digital mechanism.
- The PANKHUDI portal uses digital technology to strengthen CSR partnerships and improve infrastructure and services for women and children across India, enhancing service delivery through key institutions and benefiting millions of citizens.

10th JANUARY 2026

World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) 2026

- Context:** The United Nations' World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) 2026 has projected India's GDP growth to 6.6 percent in 2026 from 7.4 percent in 2025, largely due to tariffs imposed by the US on India's exports.

Key Highlights

- The report was produced by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA).
- Global Growth Outlook:** World output is projected to slow to 2.7% in 2026 before edging up to 2.9% in 2027. While domestic demand and policy easing are supporting activity in the United States and parts of Asia, growth remains weak in Europe, and high debt and climate shocks continue to constrain many developing economies.
- Trade and Investment Trends:** Global trade performed better than expected in 2025, driven by early shipments ahead of higher tariffs and robust services exports. But growth is projected to slow in 2026.
- Inflation and Cost-of-Living:** Global headline inflation is projected to fall to 3.1% in 2026 from 3.4% in 2025. However, high prices continue to erode real incomes, particularly for low-income households.
- Financial Conditions and Risks:** Lower interest rates and improved market sentiment have helped revive

capital flows, but high asset valuations and elevated borrowing costs continue to pose risks. Many developing economies remain constrained by heavy debt burdens and limited access to affordable finance.

International Solar Alliance

- Context:** The United States has announced its withdrawal from the International Solar Alliance (ISA).



About International Solar Alliance

- Genesis:** India and France jointly launched the International Solar Alliance (ISA) during 21st Conference of Parties (COP21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held in Paris in 2015.
- Aim:** To contribute to the implementation of the Paris Climate Agreement through the rapid and massive deployment of solar energy.
- Secretariat:** Gurugram.
- Governance:** The ISA's governance structure integrates decision-making across Regional Committees, the Standing Committee, and the ISA Assembly, ISA's apex decision-making body.
- Members:** Member Countries are countries which have signed and ratified the Framework Agreement of the ISA. At present, more than 120 countries are signatories to the ISA Framework Agreement.

Bio-bitumen

- Context:** India has become the first country in the world to commercially produce bio-bitumen in road construction.

Key Facts

- Bitumen is a black, viscous mixture of hydrocarbons produced by the fractionation of crude oil, and it serves as a crucial binder in road construction. The process of making bio-bitumen involves collection of post-harvest rice straw, palletisation, pyrolysis to produce bio-oil, and subsequent blending with conventional bitumen.
- India currently imports nearly 50% of its bitumen requirement, and innovations like bio-bitumen would significantly reduce foreign dependence while strengthening domestic capabilities.
- The initiative will help in reducing pollution from crop residue burning.

11th JANUARY 2026

Exercise Sanjha Shakti

- Context:** The Indian Army conducted Exercise Sanjha Shakti, a Military – Civil Fusion exercise, at the Dighi Hills Range under the aegis of the Southern Command, specifically the Maharashtra, Gujarat and Goa Area.



Key Facts

- The exercise aimed to strengthen civil-military coordination, enhance rapid response capabilities, and ensure public safety in rear areas, especially during disasters, internal security challenges, and other emergency situations in the hinterland.
- More than 350 personnel participated, involving the Indian Army and 16 civilian agencies, including Maharashtra Police, Force One, and fire and

emergency services, highlighting the importance of integrated planning and joint execution.

- Exercise Sanjha Shakti underlined that rear area security is a key responsibility of the armed forces and requires close cooperation with civilian institutions during both peace-time emergencies and security contingencies.

Bhairav Battalions

- Context:** The Army's newly raised Bhairav Battalions will participate in the Army Day Parade in Jaipur for the first time.

About Bhairav Battalions

- They are raised by Army headquarters by drawing lessons from global conflicts as well as India's own operational experience, including the recent Operation Sindoora.
- They are designed as high-speed, offensive units capable of executing Special Forces' tasks at multiple levels, depending on operational requirements, the officer added.
- They are intended to bridge the gap between Para Special Forces and regular infantry units, enabling them to conduct special operations from tactical to operational depth.
- They focus on modern warfare, including drone operations.
- The Army plans a pool of over 1 lakh drone operatives.
- Currently, 15 Bhairav Battalions exist, with plans to raise 25 in total.



Other Related Developments

- The Army has also formed Rudra Brigades, combining infantry, mechanised units, tanks, artillery, special forces, drones, and support elements.

- Artillery, mechanised infantry, and armoured corps are being upgraded with modern battlefield systems for enhanced operational effectiveness.

Param Shakti

- **Context:** The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has launched 'PARAM SHAKTI', a supercomputing facility hosting the indigenous PARAM RUDRA system, at the IIT Madras.

Key Facts

- The system has been developed and implemented by the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) under the National Supercomputing Mission (NSM).
- PARAM SHAKTI is powered by the PARAM RUDRA supercomputing cluster, built using C-DAC's indigenous RUDRA series of servers.
- The system delivers a peak computing capacity of 3.1 petaflops, meaning it can perform over 3.1 quadrillion calculations per second.
- The facility has been fully developed and manufactured in India and runs on open-source software.
- Significance: The system enables large-scale simulations that reduce dependence on prolonged experimental trials and accelerate research timelines.

About National Supercomputing Mission

- The National Supercomputing Mission was launched in 2015 with the aim of building supercomputing capabilities in the country, both in terms of manufacturing and usage.
- The NSM planned to install 37 supercomputers across the country's educational institutions, like IITs, NITs, IISER, and IISc for use by researchers.
- PARAM Shakti in IIT Madras marked the 37th supercomputer installed.
- Currently, the strongest supercomputer in the country is the PARAM Siddhi AI, which has a capacity

of 5.2 petaflops and is housed in C-DAC, Pune. However, the computer is a global design and not entirely indigenous.

12th JANUARY 2026

National Youth Day, 2026

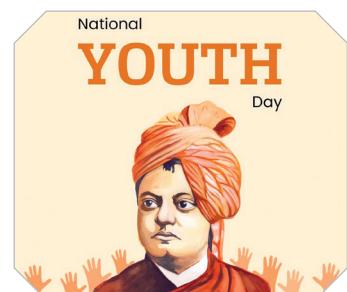
- **Context:** Recently, National Youth Day was observed to mark the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda.

About National Youth Day or Rashtriya Yuva Divas

- It is celebrated on 12th January every year in commemoration of the great spiritual leader, philosopher and thinker Swami Vivekananda, whose unwavering belief in the potential of youth continues to resonate deeply with young citizens of the country.
- His inspiring life and empowering message urge the youth to nurture their dreams, unleash their energies, and shape a future worthy of his envisioned ideals.
- The youth, defined as those within the age group of 15-29 years, make up nearly 40% of India's total population.

Importance

- National Youth Day highlights the aspirations and responsibilities of India's youth, who make up over 65% of the population under 35 and are key to achieving Viksit Bharat 2047.
- The government has created a comprehensive youth empowerment framework covering civic engagement, skill development, entrepreneurship, health, fitness, and national service, led by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports in collaboration with other ministries, aiming to involve youth as active partners in nation-building.



Pax Silica

- **Context:** The US Ambassador announced that India would be invited next month to join Pax Silica.

About Pax Silica

- Pax Silica is a US-led strategic initiative to build a secure, prosperous, and innovation-driven silicon supply chain from critical minerals.
- The inaugural Pax Silica Summit was held in December 2025 and the signatories include Australia, Israel, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, the UK, the Netherlands, and the UAE.
 - Together, these countries are home to the most important companies and investors powering the global AI supply chain.
 - Qatar became the latest signatory to Pax Silica.
- Its objective is to reduce coercive dependencies, protect the materials and capabilities foundational to artificial intelligence, and ensure aligned nations can develop and deploy transformative technologies at scale.
- Countries will partner on securing strategic stacks of the global technology supply chain, including, but not limited to, software applications and platforms.

Significance for India

- Joining Pax Silica might help India diversify away from China to more secure suppliers like Australia for critical minerals.
- It is likely to facilitate investments and technology transfer via partnerships with Japan and the Netherlands.
- It might boost India's capabilities for advanced extraction and processing of rare earth minerals from its vast monazite and thorium resources.

13th JANUARY 2026

Protests in Iran

- **Context:** Recently, the U.S. President Donald Trump threatened intervention if Iran used lethal force against protesters, sharply escalating tensions amid deadly nationwide economic protests.

About Iran Protests

- **Background:** Protests began in late December 2025 after a sharp fall in the Iranian rial, worsening inflation, and prolonged economic hardship aggravated by sanctions and conflict.
- **Demands:** Protesters, including shopkeepers and urban workers, demanded economic relief, currency stabilisation, and better governance rather than regime change.
- **Nature of Protests:** Initially peaceful demonstrations spread from Tehran to several cities, later turning violent with clashes between security forces and protesters.
- **Government Response:** Iranian authorities acknowledged economic grievances but labelled violent elements as "rioters," leading to a security crackdown and reported civilian casualties.



Recent U.S. Interference in Iran

- **Sanctions (2018–present):** The U.S. withdrew from the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) nuclear deal in 2018 and reimposed severe economic sanctions, severely constraining Iran's economy.
- **Assassination of Qasem Soleimani (2020):** The U.S. killed Iran's top military commander in a drone strike in Baghdad, sharply escalating bilateral hostility.

- **Support to Israel (2025):** The U.S. backed Israeli airstrikes on Iran's nuclear facilities in June 2025, followed by direct U.S. strikes and Iranian retaliation against a U.S. base in Qatar.
- **Information Warfare (2025):** Israeli intelligence agencies openly encouraged Iranian protests through social media messaging, with U.S. political backing.
- **Renewed Military Threats (2026):** Trump warned of fresh attacks if Iran rebuilt its missile or nuclear capabilities, linking internal protests to external intervention.

PSLV-C62 Mission

- **Context:** ISRO's first launch of the year, the PSLV-C62 mission failed to place its 16 satellites into the intended orbit, marking the second consecutive failure of the long-reliable PSLV rocket.

About The PSLV-C62 / EOS-N1 Mission

- PSLV-C62, the 64th flight of India's PSLV and ninth commercial mission by NewSpace India Limited (NSIL), aimed to launch the EOS-N1 Earth observation satellite along with 15 co-passenger satellites.
- EOS-N1 is an Earth observation satellite intended for environmental monitoring, resource mapping, and disaster management.
- The mission also carried a technology demonstration, the Kestrel Initial Technology Demonstrator (KID) from a Spanish startup, a small re-entry vehicle prototype designed to return to Earth and provide data for future re-entry system development.



About PSLV

- Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) is the third generation launch vehicle of India.
- It has also been called "the workhorse of ISRO" for consistently delivering various satellites into low earth orbits with a high success rate.
- It is the first Indian launch vehicle to be equipped with liquid stages.
- It is a four-stage rocket in which each stage has its own engine and fuel. These stages operate one after another during flight, propelling the mission forward and then separating once their role is completed.

• Stages:

- The first stage provides lift-off, overcoming gravity and air resistance using a powerful solid-fuel engine, and is jettisoned after about two minutes.
- The second stage, powered by the liquid-fuel Vikas engine, continues the climb and accelerates the rocket to high speeds at around 220–250 km altitude.
- In the third stage, solid fuel is used to rapidly increase horizontal speed, placing the vehicle on a sub-orbital path.
- The fourth and final stage, using liquid propulsion, precisely manoeuvres and places the satellite into its designated low-Earth orbit.

Third-Generation MPATGM

- **Context:** The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has successfully flight-tested the third-generation Fire & Forget Man Portable Anti-Tank Guided Missile, or MPATGM, with top attack capability against a moving target.

Key Facts

- The fire-and-forget missile was developed indigenously by DRDO. The 'Fire and forget' type of missile refers to a weapon system that locks onto a target before launch and does not require further guidance from the operator after firing.

- It is equipped with state-of-the-art indigenous technologies, including an Imaging Infrared homing seeker, tandem warhead, all-electric control actuation system, fire control system, propulsion system and a high-performance sighting system.
- The missile is capable of day and night combat operations and can effectively defeat modern main battle tanks.
- It can be launched from a tripod as well as a military vehicle launcher.

14th JANUARY 2026

NIRANTAR Platform

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

About NIRANTAR

- It is a platform of institutions under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) aimed at improving coordination and collaboration.
- Its four verticals focus on research, assessment, and utilisation of resources, particularly bioresources, to ensure their sustainable use for development.
- The NIRANTAR platform can play a key role in ensuring bioresources sustainable use for development.

10-minute Quick Commerce Service

- **Context:** Indian quick commerce firms Swiggy and Zepto have changed the branding of their quick commerce operations to stop promoting it as a "10-minute" service following a government order. The move is aimed at ensuring greater safety, security and improved working conditions for gig workers.

About Gig Workers

- Non-standard or gig work consists of income-earning activities outside of standard, long-term employer-employee relationships.
- It relies heavily on temporary and part-time positions filled by independent contractors and freelancers rather than full-time permanent employees.
- The term is borrowed from the music world, where performers book "gigs" that are single or short-term engagements at various venues.
- The gig economy uses digital platforms to connect freelancers with customers to provide short-term services or asset-sharing.

Examples include ride-hailing apps, food delivery apps, and holiday rental apps.



India's Gig Economy

- India's gig workforce is projected to grow from 1 crore in 2024–25 to 2.35 crore by 2029–30.
- Code on Social Security, 2020 provides legal recognition and social security benefits to gig and platform workers
- e-Shram portal has registered over 30.98 crore unorganised workers, including 3.37 lakh platform workers. Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and West Bengal have the highest registrations, with strong female participation.

15th JANUARY 2026

World Employment and Social Outlook (WESO) Report

- **Context:** Recently, the International Labour Organization (ILO) released its latest World Employment and Social Outlook (WESO) Report highlighting persistent inequalities in the global labor market.

Key Findings of Report

- **Global Unemployment:** The global unemployment rate is projected to remain at 4.9% in 2026, equivalent to 186 million people. However, progress toward decent work has stagnated, with millions still lacking access to quality, secure employment.
- **Persistent Poverty Despite Economic Growth:** Nearly 300 million workers live in extreme poverty, earning less than US\$3 per day.
 - Informality is increasing, about 2.1 billion workers aim to hold informal jobs by 2026, largely concentrated in Africa and Southern Asia.
 - Low-income countries face severe challenges in transitioning to higher-value industries, limiting productivity and job security.
- **Youth Employment Crisis Deepens:** Youth unemployment rose to 12.4% in 2025.
 - Around 260 million young people are Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET), a rate of 27.9% in low-income countries.
 - AI and automation threaten to intensify challenges for young job seekers, especially educated youth in high-income economies.
- **Persistent Gender Gaps:** Women make up only two-fifths (40%) of global employment.
 - They are 24% less likely than men to participate in the labour force.
 - Gender equality progress has stalled, driven by social norms and structural barriers.
- **Demographic Shifts Reshaping Labour Markets:** Ageing populations in rich countries are slowing labour force growth.
- **Rapid population growth in poor nations is not translating into productive jobs.**
 - Projected employment growth for 2026:
 - 0.5% in upper-middle-income countries;
 - 1.8% in lower-middle-income economies;
 - 3.1% in low-income countries;
 - Weak labour productivity in poorer regions is widening global inequalities.

- **Trade Uncertainty Threatens Job Stability:** Global trade disruptions and supply chain bottlenecks are cutting into wages, especially in Asia and Europe.
 - Trade supports 465 million jobs worldwide, with over half in Asia and the Pacific.
 - Digitally delivered services now make up 14.5% of global exports.
 - Trade remains a powerful driver of decent work but unevenly benefits regions.
- **Inequality Between Regions Widening:** Productivity gaps between advanced and developing economies are deepening. Low-income countries are at risk of missing their demographic dividend due to weak job creation and limited investment.
- **Regional Labour Market Variations:** The ILO forecasts that Latin America and the Caribbean may continue reducing unemployment rates in the medium term, while Northern America could face worsening conditions. The broader labour underutilisation (jobs gap) is projected at 408 million people in 2026, indicating widespread hidden unemployment and underemployment beyond official figures.

About The International Labour Organization (ILO)

- **Founded:** 1919; became the first specialized UN agency in 1946.
- **Headquarters:** Geneva, Switzerland.
- **Mandate:** Promote rights at work, encourage decent employment opportunities, enhance social protection, and strengthen dialogue on work-related issues.
- **Tripartite Structure:** Brings together governments, employers, and workers from member states.
- **Other Key Flagship Reports Published by the ILO:** Global Wage Report, Global Employment Trends for Youth, Social Protection Reports, World Social Protection Report.



Global Risks Report, 2026

- Context:** The World Economic Forum (WEF) released the 21st edition of the Global Risks Report (2026), warning that geo-economic confrontations pose the biggest risk to major powers.

Key Highlights

- Geo-economic Confrontation:** Rated as the top risk for 2026. This includes the “weaponization” of trade, finance, and technology through sanctions and tariffs (such as the US tariffs imposed by the US, banning critical minerals by China etc).
- State-Based Armed Conflict:** This is the second highest risk, fueled by ongoing wars like the conflict in Ukraine and recent volatility in regions like Venezuela and the Middle East.
- Extreme Weather:** While environmental risks remain the top priority for the next decade, they have slipped to third place (8%) in the immediate two-year outlook due to the urgency of economic and military conflicts.
- Societal Risks:** Polarization, misinformation, and AI-generated deepfakes are cited as major threats to social stability, especially during election cycles.

Biggest Risks to India

- Cybersecurity:** This is ranked as the top risk for India and India is going more towards digital payments.
- Wealth Inequality and Social Safety Nets:** Lack of robust social welfare schemes combined with rising income inequality poses a significant threat to internal stability.
- Economic External Shocks:** India is susceptible to domestic slowdowns caused by global supply chain disruptions and international tariffs.

- Critical Infrastructure and Resource Security:** The report highlights “water security” as a potential flashpoint, specifically noting that the Indus River Basin remains a point of contention between India and Pakistan, especially following the suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty.

Export Preparedness Index (EPI), 2024

- Context:** NITI Aayog released the Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2024.



Key Facts

- It is a comprehensive assessment of export readiness across India's states and union territories.
- The first edition of the EPI was published in 2020 and this is the 4th edition.
- EPI provides an evidence-based framework to evaluate the strength, resilience, and inclusiveness of sub-national export ecosystems.
- Top Performers:** In 2024, Maharashtra, along with Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh, are leading performers among large states. Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir, Nagaland, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, and Goa are listed as leading performers in the category of small states, northeastern states and union territories.