



# WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

*Coverage of*

**16<sup>th</sup> Jan. - 22<sup>nd</sup> Jan., 2026**

★★ Useful for ★★

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



## Trump's Quest for Greenland

USA bullies NATO and EU allies over  
**Denmark-controlled** territory.

16<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2026

## Startup India

- **Context:** PM Modi participated in a programme marking a decade of the Startup India initiative on National Startup Day.

### Key Facts

- Startup India was launched on January 16, 2016, as a transformative national programme to promote entrepreneurship and enable investment-driven growth.
- India has rapidly evolved into one of the world's largest startup ecosystems, with more than 2 lakh startups as of 2025.
- India has the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest startup ecosystem in the world.
- Major hubs like Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Mumbai, and Delhi-NCR have been at the forefront of this transformation.
- India has over 120 unicorns with a valuation exceeding \$350 billion.
- **Global Innovation Index (GII) 2025 ranking:** It provides performance metrics and ranks around 140 economies on their innovation ecosystems. India has made a steady climb from 48 rank in 2020 to 38 in 2025.
- At the same time, smaller cities are also steadily contributing to the momentum with around 50% of the startups emerging from Tier II/ III cities.



## India's First National Capacity Building Programme for Tribal Healers

- **Context:** The Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) is organizing India's first National Capacity Building Programme for Tribal Healers on Strengthening Health Outreach in Tribal Areas.



### Key Facts

- The initiative will recognize and integrate tribal and indigenous healers as trusted community-level partners within India's public health ecosystem.
- Tribal healers remain the most culturally trusted touchpoint for healthcare-seeking behaviour, especially in remote habitations where frontline staff mobility and institutional access remain limited. Healers possess deep-rooted ethnomedicinal knowledge, are accessible to the community, and often act as the first point of health contact.
- An MoU will be signed between ICMR – Regional Medical Research Centre (RMRC) and MoTA to establish India's first National Tribal Health Observatory – the Bharat Tribal Health Observatory (B-THO) under Project DRISTI. It will institutionalize tribe-disaggregated health surveillance, implementation research, and research-driven disease elimination initiatives in tribal districts.
- The capacity building programme is being organized with strong technical and knowledge partnerships involving leading national and international institutions. These collaborations will bring global evidence, national best practices, and scientific rigour to structured engagement with tribal healers.

## Government Initiatives

- **AI Centers of Excellence:** Establishing dedicated AI hubs and innovation centers across the country to support AI startups and research.
- **India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI):** Combines public funding with private sector innovation to drive digital transformation.

17<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2026

## Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Treaty

- **Context:** An UN-backed treaty on biodiversity in international waters, formally known as the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Treaty, has entered into force, creating the first legally binding global framework to conserve and sustainably use the high seas.

### About High Seas

- High seas refer to ocean areas beyond national jurisdiction, i.e., beyond 200 nautical miles (Exclusive Economic Zones – EEZs).
- They cover nearly two-thirds of the global ocean and about half of the Earth's surface.
- Earlier governed mainly by general principles under UNCLOS, with limited biodiversity-specific regulation.

### About The Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Treaty

- The Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement was adopted in 2023 by an Intergovernmental Conference on Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction, convened under the auspices of the United Nations.
- It is the third implementing agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), after:
  - 1994 Part XI Implementation Agreement (Deep Seabed Mining)
  - 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement.
- **Objective:** To ensure the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ), commonly known as the high seas.
- It establishes a Conference of the Parties (COP) as the decision-making body.

- Creates a Clearing-House Mechanism for data, knowledge, and cooperation.
- Sets up a Secretariat and a dedicated funding mechanism to support implementation.
- **Membership Status:** 83 countries have ratified the treaty so far and India has signed but not yet ratified the BBNJ Agreement.

## Disobind: An Open-Source AI-Based Tool to Predict Protein

- **Context:** Indian researchers have developed Disobind, an open-source AI-based tool that predicts interactions of Intrinsically Disordered Proteins (IDPs) using protein language models.

### About Intrinsically Disordered Proteins (IDPs)

- IDPs are protein regions that lack a single stable three-dimensional structure under physiological conditions.
- Instead of a fixed shape, they remain flexible and shapeshifting, allowing them to interact with multiple partners. Traditional protein prediction tools rely on stable structures, making IDPs hard to analyse.
- IDPs control which genes are switched on or off by interacting with transcription factors and DNA-associated proteins.
- IDPs are involved in cancer progression, where abnormal interactions drive uncontrolled cell growth

## Sukhatme National Award in Statistics

- **Context:** The Government has called for nominations/applications for Sukhatme National Award in Statistics, 2026.

### About Sukhatme National Award in Statistics

- Instituted by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) in the year 2000.
- Named after P. C. Mahalanobis' contemporary and eminent statistician Prof. P. V. Sukhatme, known for contributions to agricultural and official statistics.

- It is given to Indian citizens of age 45 and above only. It is awarded in alternate years.
- The award aims to recognize exceptional and outstanding lifetime contributions in the field of Statistics, especially for improving the system of official statistics in India.
- The award will be conferred on 29 June 2026, coinciding with Statistics Day.

18<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2026

## BRICS Plus Naval Exercise

- Context:** India skipped the BRICS Plus naval exercise "Will for Peace 2026" hosted by South Africa, opting out entirely despite holding the BRICS chair this year.



### About BRICS Plus Naval Exercises

- BRICS Plus naval exercises are ad-hoc maritime drills involving BRICS members and selected non-BRICS partner countries.
- They are not mandated under the BRICS framework and do not form part of official BRICS mechanisms.
- Led by China, the exercise features active naval participation from Russia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and South Africa.

### About BRICS

- BRICS is an informal, non-institutionalized group of eleven countries from the Global South.
- The term "BRIC" was coined in 2001 by a Goldman Sachs economist. The group formally launched as

a diplomatic forum in 2006, with the first Summit of Heads of State held in 2009 in Russia.

- The group includes the five original members (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) and six members admitted during the 2024-25 expansion (Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates).
- The group aims to increase the influence of emerging economies in international governance. It seeks to reform global institutions like the UN, IMF, and World Bank to make them more equitable and representative.
- The New Development Bank (NDB) acts as the group's primary international financial organization to support infrastructure and sustainable projects.

## Chabahar Port

- Context:** India has reaffirmed that it remains engaged with both the U.S. and Iran to continue operations at the strategic Chabahar port, countering reports that it plans to exit due to renewed U.S. sanctions.

### About Chabahar Port

- Meaning:** Chabahar is made of Persian words Chahar meaning four; and bahar meaning spring.
- Location:** Off the Gulf of Oman in Iran's southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchistan & is the only Iranian port with direct access to the ocean. It is the only about 170 kilometers west of the Pakistani port of Gwadar.
- Chabahar Port consists of two separate ports called Shahid Kalantari and Shahid Beheshti. Chabahar city is also home to Iran's only deep-seaport with direct access to the ocean.

### Significance for India:

- It gives access to the energy-rich Persian Gulf nations' southern coast and Central Asia and India can bypass Pakistan. This port will reduce dependency on the Suez Canal and reduce transportation time.

- It allowed India to trade with the outside world via Iran, but India could not do so with Afghanistan in spite of being a very close neighbor.
- In May 2016, a trilateral agreement was signed between India, Iran and Afghanistan for using Chabahar Port.
- Chabahar Port is also quite near the Gwadar Port of Pakistan being developed by China. It helps counter CPEC and strengthen maritime power.

19<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2026

## Greenland

- Context:** EU lawmakers delayed approval of the EU-US trade deal after US President Donald Trump threatened tariffs on countries supporting Greenland's sovereignty.



## About Greenland

- It is located in the Northern Hemisphere and is surrounded by the Arctic Ocean in the north, the North Atlantic Ocean in the south, Baffin Bay in the west and the Greenland Sea in the east.
- It lies closer to North America, but culturally and politically it is tied to Denmark.
- It is mineral-rich with large deposits of traditional resources such as gold, nickel, and cobalt.
- It also has some of the biggest reserves of rare earth minerals such as dysprosium, praseodymium, neodymium, and terbium.
- Greenland gained home rule in 1979 and expanded self-government in 2009, giving it authority over domestic affairs like healthcare and education.

## Various Developments

- Denmark retains control over defense, foreign policy and monetary policy.
- Donald Trump earlier announced new tariffs of 10% from February 1, rising to 25%, unless the EU agrees to a deal over Greenland, prompting strong backlash from EU leaders. However, he put this measures on hold as of now.
- Critics argue the trade deal already favors the US, especially after Washington expanded 50% tariffs on steel and aluminium.
- As tensions rise, EU lawmakers suspended the agreement and potentially using the EU's anti-coercion instrument in response to US pressure, making passage of the trade deal increasingly uncertain.

## UAE President's Visit to India

- Context:** President of the United Arab Emirates Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan paid an official visit to India.



## Major Outcomes

- Defence:** Letter of Intent between India and the United Arab Emirates on the Strategic Defence Partnership.
- Energy:** India signed a \$3 billion deal to buy liquefied natural gas from the United Arab Emirates, making it the UAE's top customer.

- **Bilateral Trade:** The two sides agreed to double bilateral trade to over US\$ 200 billion by 2032.
- **Nuclear Cooperation:** It was agreed to develop a partnership in advanced nuclear technologies, including development and deployment of large nuclear reactors and Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) and cooperation in advanced reactor systems, nuclear power plant operations and maintenance.
- **Investment:** Letter of Intent on Investment Cooperation between Gujarat, India and the United Arab Emirates for Development of Dholera Special Investment region.
- **Establishment of a supercomputing cluster in India:** It has been agreed in principle that C-DAC India and G-42 company of the UAE will collaborate to set up a supercomputing cluster in India.
- **Space:** Letter of Intent between the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe) of India and the Space Agency of the United Arab Emirates for a Joint Initiative to Enable Space Industry Development and Commercial Collaboration.

### India-UAE Ties

- **Political:** India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) established diplomatic relations in 1972.
  - Relationships were upgraded to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) in 2017.
- **Economic and Commercial:** CEPA was signed in 2022, since the agreement, bilateral merchandise trade has nearly doubled from USD 43.3 billion in FY 2020-21 to USD 83.7 billion in FY 2023-24.
  - UAE is the second largest export destination of India (after the US) with an amount of nearly US\$ 31.61 billion for the year 2022-23.
  - Bilateral trade is expected to surpass \$97 billion, with targets to hit \$100 billion in non-oil trade.
- **Defence cooperation:** It is steered through a Joint Defence Cooperation Committee (JDCC) at the Ministry level, with the signing of Agreement on Defence Cooperation in 2003, which came into effect in 2004.

- Extradition and mutual legal assistance treaties to combat transnational crime.
- **Space Cooperation:** Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the UAE Space Agency signed an MoU regarding cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes in 2016.
- **Indian Community:** Indian expatriate community of approximately 3.5 million is the largest ethnic community in UAE constituting roughly about 35% of the country's population.
- **Multilateral Cooperation:** India and the UAE are currently part of several plurilateral platforms such as India-Middle East EU Economic Corridor (IMEC), I2U2 (India-Israel-UAE-USA) and UFI (UAE-France-India) Trilateral, etc.

20<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2026

### India's First Open-Sea Marine Fish Farming Project

- **Context:** India's first open-sea marine fish farming project was launched at North Bay in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.



### Key Facts

- The primary goal is to transition towards a commercially viable model for open-sea farming, reduce pressure on traditional coastal fishing, and generate sustainable livelihoods for local fishing communities.
- The initiative focuses on cultivating high-value marine finfish species like Cobia (*Rachycentron canadum*) and Seabass (*Lates calcarifer*), alongside experimental deep-water seaweed cultivation.

- The project is a collaboration between the Ministry of Earth Sciences, the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands administration.
- The project uses advanced, indigenously developed open-sea cages designed by NIOT to withstand natural oceanic conditions.

- It is developed by World Intellectual Foundation (WIF) in collaboration with Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and Indian Institute of Management Mumbai.
- Singapore, Switzerland and Denmark topped the list and India ranks 16<sup>th</sup> globally.

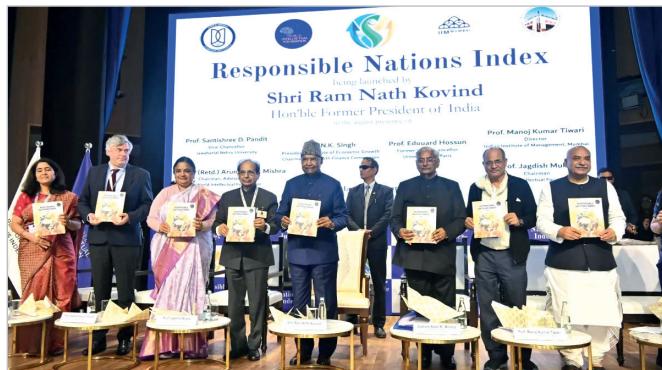
21<sup>st</sup> JANUARY 2026

## About Andaman Sea

- The Andaman Sea, a marginal sea in the northeastern Indian Ocean, holds historical trade significance and strategic value for maritime routes and regional biodiversity.
- It controls key chokepoints like the Ten Degree Channel and Six Degree Channel, vital for 25% of global trade via Malacca Strait.

## Responsible Nations Index (RNI)

- Context:** India has recently introduced the Responsible Nations Index (RNI).



## Key Facts

- The Responsible Nations Index (RNI) is a global benchmarking framework that shifts the focus from mere economic power to ethical governance, sustainability, and global responsibility in assessing national performance.
- The index evaluates countries across four core dimensions: ethical governance, social well-being, environmental stewardship and global responsibility.

## World Economic Forum (WEF) Meeting, 2026

- Context:** World leaders, including the US President, addressed annual summit of World Economic Forum at Davos, Switzerland. This year's summit was held amid straining of Europe-US ties over Greenland.

## About World Economic Forum (WEF)

- It is an international non-profit organization that brings together business, political, and social leaders to discuss global challenges.
- Established in 1971, the WEF promotes stakeholder theory for broader societal impact.
- This body has a concise mission:** 'To improve the state of the world through public-private cooperation'.
- The WEF is best known for its annual WEF Meeting at Davos, the Swiss ski resort.
- The WEF Annual Meeting brings together top decision-makers from government, business, and civil society to address major global issues and priorities for the year ahead.
- WEF addresses major global concerns such as climate change, economic challenges, and global security.
- The organization is funded by its diverse membership, which includes prominent global figures.

## Pax Silica Summit

- Context:** Recently, the United States convened the inaugural Pax Silica Summit, emphasizing reducing coercive dependencies, securing the flow of critical minerals, and promoting trusted digital ecosystems.

## About Pax Silica

- The term 'Pax Silica' derived from Latin 'Pax' (peace) and 'Silica' (a core compound in semiconductors).
- It symbolizes the pursuit of technological peace and prosperity through resilient, transparent, and cooperative supply chains.

## Need for Pax Silica



- Supply Chain Security:** To ensure reliable and diversified access to Rare Earth Elements (REEs) and critical minerals essential for semiconductors and AI technologies.
- Reducing Dependence on China:** To counter China's dominance and coercive control over global REE supply chains and technology exports.
- Resilient Technology Ecosystem:** To build resilient, transparent, and trusted global supply chains for frontier technologies like AI and semiconductors.
- Economic Stability and Strategic Balance:** To safeguard the global economy from disruptions caused by monopolized production or geopolitical tensions.
- Allied Technological Collaboration:** To bring together technological powerhouses (US, Japan, South Korea, Netherlands, Israel) and resource-rich nations (Australia, UAE, Qatar) for joint innovation.
- Building Trusted Digital Infrastructure:** To establish ethical AI frameworks, cybersecurity standards, and secure semiconductor ecosystems among like-minded nations.
- Encouraging Sustainable Mining and Innovation:** To promote responsible extraction, recycling, and green manufacturing of critical minerals.

- Maintaining U.S. Technological Leadership:** To reaffirm the US's leadership in global innovation governance and ensure technological primacy in the emerging AI–semiconductor era.

## Composition of Pax Silica

- United States and Japan:** Innovation and R&D giants in semiconductors and AI.
- Australia:** Leading exporter of lithium and a key player in REE mining.
- Netherlands:** Home to ASML, a global leader in advanced lithography systems.
- South Korea:** Dominant in memory chip manufacturing.
- Singapore:** Longstanding chip manufacturing base linked with U.S. firms.
- Israel:** Specializing in AI software, cybersecurity, and defense technologies.
- United Kingdom:** The world's third-largest AI market with a vibrant innovation ecosystem.
- Qatar and UAE:** Financial powerhouses investing heavily in AI and advanced technologies.
- Observers at the inaugural summit included Canada, the European Union, OECD, and Taiwan, all of whom may become members as the initiative evolves.

## Chagos Islands

- Context:** The UK Government defended its deal to transfer the Chagos Islands to Mauritius while retaining a lease for a strategic military base, amid criticism from US President Donald Trump.



## About Chagos Archipelago

- It comprises more than 60 low-lying islands in the Indian Ocean roughly 1,600 km to the northeast of the main island of Mauritius.
- It was separated from Mauritius in 1965, when Mauritius was still a British colony.
- Britain purchased the islands for three million pounds but Mauritius has argued that it was illegally forced to give them away as part of a deal to gain independence from Britain.
- In the late 1960s, Britain invited the US to build a military base on Diego Garcia, the largest of the Chagos Islands, removing thousands of people from their homes.
- Since the 1980s, Mauritius has claimed sovereignty over the Chagos Islands.
  - In 2019, the UN's International Court of Justice ruled that Mauritius' decolonisation was incomplete at independence in 1968 and advised that the UK must end its administration of the islands as soon as possible.
  - In 2025 The United Kingdom signed an agreement handing sovereignty over the contested and strategically located Chagos Islands to Mauritius.

22<sup>nd</sup> JANUARY 2026

## Board of Peace

- Context:** The US President Donald Trump's a new organization named the Board of Peace and invited various countries to join, including India.

## About Board of Peace

- It is an international body chaired by US President Donald Trump, first created to oversee the October 2025 ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war and manage Gaza's post-war transition.



## Members:

- Around 35 global leaders have agreed to join the proposed Board of Peace, out of about 50 invited.
- Participants include key Middle Eastern allies such as Israel, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Jordan, Qatar and Egypt, along with NATO members Turkey and Hungary. Several other countries across Asia, Africa, Europe and Latin America—including Pakistan, Indonesia, Vietnam, Morocco, Armenia and Azerbaijan—have also joined.
- Membership terms would run for three years, with the option of renewal.
- Countries seeking to extend their participation beyond the initial term may be required to contribute \$1 billion, while short-term participation would not involve any financial commitment.

## Mandate of Board

- The Board will supervise a transitional Palestinian technocratic administration in the Gaza Strip, known as the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG).
- The Board's mandate also includes efforts to disarm Hamas and oversee the deployment of an International Stabilization Force (ISF), a multinational peacekeeping mission tasked with maintaining security and training a new Palestinian police force.

## Kashiwazaki-Kariwa Nuclear Power Plant

- Context:** Japan has restarted operations at the world's largest nuclear plant (Kashiwazaki-Kariwa) for the first time since the 2011 Fukushima disaster.



## Key Facts

- **Location:** It spans the towns of Kashiwazaki and Kariwa in Niigata Prefecture, (Island of Honshu) Japan, on the coast of the Sea of Japan.
- **Capacity:** Approximately 8,200 MW, making it the largest nuclear power plant globally.
- **Operator:** Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO).
- Japan is the world's fifth-largest single-country emitter of carbon dioxide, after China, the United States, India and Russia, and is heavily dependent on imported fossil fuels. Nearly 70% of Japan's power needs in 2023 were met by power plants burning coal, gas and oil.
- Before the 2011 quake and tsunami, nuclear power generated about a third of Japan's electricity.
- Japan aims to make renewables its top power source by 2040. Under the plan, nuclear power will account for around 20% of Japan's energy supply by 2040 – up from 5.6% in 2022.

## Indira Gandhi Peace Prize

- **Context:** Mozambican rights activist and humanitarian Graca Machel has been selected for the Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development for 2025, announced by the Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust. She was chosen for her "path-breaking work" in the fields of education, health and nutrition, economic empowerment and humanitarian action.

## About Indira Gandhi Peace Prize

- It is an annual award established by the Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust in India.



- The prize is named in honor of the late Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi, and it was instituted in 1986.
- The award is presented to individuals or organizations that have made significant contributions to the promotion of international understanding and peace, the development of new international economic order, and the strengthening of democracy.
- The award carries a cash prize of ₹1 crore along with a citation and a trophy.
- The award is presented in three categories:
  - **Peace:** Recognizes efforts to promote and maintain international peace and security.
  - **Disarmament:** Acknowledges contributions to the reduction and elimination of weapons of mass destruction.
  - **Development:** Honors work in promoting economic and social development.
- The award ceremony typically takes place on November 19<sup>th</sup>, the birth anniversary of Indira Gandhi.