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Spotlight

- Wings India 2026
- Pax Silica
- World's Fourth Largest Economy
- India's First AI-Powered University
- UP's First Zero Fresh Waste Dump City
- Prelims Panacea



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NATIONAL AFFAIRS

Wings India 2026

Why in News: Asia's largest civil aviation event was held in **Hyderabad**, framed around the goal of turning India into a global centre for aviation by the middle of this century.

Key Highlights

- Organised jointly by the aviation ministry, the airports authority, and an industry body, the event featured a statement from the Prime Minister that India is on track to have **over four hundred** airports by 2047.
- Air India placed an order for thirty more aircraft from Boeing, taking its total order count to six hundred, while a public sector aerospace firm agreed to supply ten new helicopters to another operator.
- **Gujarat** received an award for promoting aviation in its state, shared jointly with Telangana and Uttarakhand. Discussions at the event also touched on newer technologies such as flying taxis and drones.

Important points for prelims:

- Organisers: Ministry of Civil Aviation, Airports Authority of India (AAI), and FICCI
- Long term target mentioned: over four hundred airports by 2047
- Emerging technology discussed: electric flying taxis (eVTOL)
- Award category won jointly by Gujarat, Telangana, and Uttarakhand: best state for promoting aviation
- The regional connectivity scheme aimed at improving air travel to smaller towns is called UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik)

Udai, the New Face of Aadhaar

Why in News: The Unique Identification Authority introduced a mascot named **Udai** to help ordinary people understand Aadhaar related information more easily.

Key highlights:

- Udai acts like a chatbot and visual helper, explaining things such as how to update Aadhaar details, how authentication works, service charges, and how to verify identity offline.
- The character was chosen through a nationwide contest run through the government's citizen engagement website, which received hundreds of entries from students, professionals, and designers.
- A participant from **Kerala** won the design contest, while participants from Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh took the next two places.
- A separate contest to name the mascot was won by an entrant from Bhopal. The overall aim is to reduce confusion around Aadhaar and encourage its safe use.

Important points for prelims:

- Responsible body: Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI)
- Selected through: a public contest on the MyGov platform
- Role of the mascot: acts as a chatbot and guide for Aadhaar services
- Background: the Authority was set up in 2009, and the Aadhaar Act was passed in 2016
- UIDAI functions under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)
- Aadhaar is a twelve-digit unique identity number based on biometric and demographic data

International Conference on Democracy and Election Management

Why in News: The Election Commission held its first international conference on democracy and election management in Delhi, timed alongside.

Key highlights:

- Run through the Commission's dedicated training institute, the three-day conference drew over a hundred delegates from other countries.
- Key outcomes included the launch of a new digital platform meant to be a single point of access for election related services, a joint declaration among election bodies focused on the accuracy of voter rolls and the use of technology, and an agreement with **Namibia** to help build capacity in election management.
- Separately, National Voters Day was marked for the sixteenth time under a theme centred on the citizen's role in Indian democracy, with awards given for the best use of technology and for voter awareness efforts.

Important points for prelims:

- Organised by: Election Commission of India, through its training institute, IIIDEM (India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management)
- New digital platform launched: ECINET
- Outcome document from the conference: known as the Delhi Declaration
- Theme of the sixteenth National Voters Day: focused on the citizen's role in Indian democracy
- National Voters Day is observed every year on 25 January, the foundation day of the Election Commission of India (established 1950)

Somnath Temple's Swabhiman Celebrations

Why in News: Somnath Temple, one of the **twelve Jyotirlingas** dedicated to **Lord Shiva**, was in the news for celebrations marking a thousand years since a historic invasion and seventy five years since the temple's restoration.

Key Highlights

- Located on the coast of **Gujarat**, the temple has been destroyed and rebuilt seventeen times over roughly fifteen hundred years, including attacks by several historical invaders.
- Its modern reconstruction, carried out after independence under the leadership of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, was formally completed and opened to devotees in the early 1950s in the presence of India's first President.
- The recent celebrations included the presence of hundreds of religious figures, seventy-two hours of continuous chanting, a symbolic procession involving over a hundred horses to honour those who once defended the temple, and a large-scale drone display.
- The Prime Minister took part in person, lighting a ceremonial lamp and describing the temple as a symbol of India's cultural identity.

Important Points for Prelims;

- One of the twelve Jyotirlingas associated with Lord Shiva
- Location: near Veraval, Prabhas Patan, on the coast of Gujarat
- Leader credited with the temple's modern reconstruction: Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel
- Number of times the temple has historically been destroyed and rebuilt: seventeen
- The historic invader referred to is Mahmud of Ghazni, who attacked the temple in 1026 CE
- India's first President, present at the temple's post-independence reopening, was Dr Rajendra Prasad

India Energy Week 2026

Why in News: Goa hosted the **fourth edition** of India Energy Week, an event meant to present India as a leading player in the shift towards cleaner energy.

Key highlights:

- Organised jointly by an industry body representing petroleum companies and an international events firm, under the guidance of the **petroleum ministry**, the gathering brought together delegates from more than a hundred and twenty countries, several hundred exhibitors, and tens of thousands of professionals from the energy sector.
- Talks at the event focused on energy security, cutting carbon emissions, and new areas for investment, with separate zones set up for hydrogen, biofuels, renewable power, and artificial intelligence.
- A public sector oil company displayed new products including a drone and a scooter that both run on hydrogen fuel cells.

Important points for prelims:

- Ministry involved: Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas
- Organised by: Federation of Indian Petroleum Industries and dmG Events
- This was the fourth edition of the event
- Focus areas: hydrogen, biofuels, renewable energy, artificial intelligence
- Related national mission: National Green Hydrogen Mission, launched in 2023
- Public sector company mentioned: Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL)
- Related flagship scheme for biofuels: SATAT (Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation)

India Marks Its Seventy Seventh Republic Day

Why in News: India celebrated its seventy seventh Republic Day at Kartavya Path, with the year's theme built around one hundred and fifty years of the national song Vande Mataram.

Key highlights:

- The President led the celebrations, with **Antonio Costa** heads of the European Council and **Ursula von der Leyen**, President of European Commission attending as chief guests, marking the first time a European Union military unit took part in a parade held outside Europe.
- The parade included around thirty tableaux from states, union territories, and central departments, along with a display by all tri-services showing weapon systems used during a recent military operation, including missile systems and an indigenous rocket launcher.
- A new marching formation representing a battlefield array was shown for the first time. An air force officer received the country's highest peacetime award for bravery, and the celebrations ended with a flypast of twenty-nine aircraft.

Important points for prelims:

- Theme of the year: one hundred and fifty years of Vande Mataram
- Highest peacetime award for bravery given during the parade: Ashoka Chakra
- Notable first: a European Union military unit marched in a parade outside Europe for the first time
- The Constitution of India came into force on 26 January 1950, giving India a republican form of government
- Vande Mataram was composed by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and adopted as the National Song in 1950.

HAL Dhruv NG Helicopter Completes First Flight

Why in News: The Civil Aviation Minister flagged off the first flight of HAL's new Dhruv NG helicopter in **Bengaluru**, a major step for India's helicopter programme.

Key highlights;

- The Dhruv NG is the civilian version of an indigenous helicopter that was first shown to the public at Aero India last year.
- It is a light, twin engine, multipurpose helicopter that can carry about five and a half tonnes, fitted with a modern glass cockpit and systems that reduce vibration for a smoother ride.
- It can fly at speeds close to 285 kilometres per hour and seat up to fourteen people.
- Airlines and operators can use flexible payment models based on flying hours or performance. Officials see it as a cheaper, high performing option compared to imported helicopters of a similar size.

Important points for prelims:

- Made by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), headquartered in Bengaluru
- Runs on twin Shakti engines, jointly developed by HAL and France's Safran
- First displayed publicly at Aero India, held at Yelahanka Air Force Station, Bengaluru
- It is the civilian version of the ALH Dhruv helicopter
- HAL falls under the Ministry of Defence and is a Maharatna Central Public Sector Enterprise

New Logo and Mascot for the Statistics Ministry

Why in News: The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation unveiled a fresh logo and mascot as part of an effort to modernise its public image.

Key highlights:

- The new logo carries the message "**Data for Development.**" It uses the **Ashok chakra** to represent honesty and good governance, and the rupee symbol to show how important statistics are to economic planning.
- Its colours, drawn from the national flag along with deep blue, stand for growth, truth, sustainability, stability, and knowledge.
- Alongside the logo, the ministry introduced a friendly mascot named **Sankhyiki**, designed to make statistics feel approachable to ordinary citizens and to appear across surveys, awareness drives, and public events.

Important points for prelims:

- Ministry: Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)
- Name of the new mascot: Sankhyiki
- Tagline on the new logo: Data for Development
- Symbols used: Ashoka Chakra and the rupee sign
- MoSPI conducts key national surveys such as the National Sample Survey (NSS) and Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)
- MoSPI is also responsible for compiling India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) data and the Index of Industrial Production (IIP)

Second Edition of the Young Leaders Dialogue

Why in News: The **second edition** of a dialogue aimed at bringing young people into public life was held at Bharat Mandapam, ending on National Youth Day.

Key highlights:

- The event forms part of a wider effort announced by the Prime Minister to involve a hundred thousand young people who do not come from political backgrounds in politics and public service.

- Around three thousand young leaders took part this year, chosen through online quizzes, essay contests, and presentations held at the state level. New areas of focus, covering design thinking and technology for national development, were added this time.
- The broader aim is to carry youth ideas directly to senior government leadership as part of the push to make India a developed country by 2047.

Important points for prelims:

- Venue: Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi
- The event concludes on National Youth Day, the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda (12 January)
- Broader target mentioned by the Prime Minister: engaging a hundred thousand young people without political backgrounds
- Long term national vision referenced: a developed India by 2047 (Viksit Bharat @2047), the centenary year of India's independence
- Swami Vivekananda was born in 1863 and represented India at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893
- Bharat Mandapam, the venue, is part of the Pragati Maidan complex in New Delhi and hosted the G20 Summit in 2023

NHAI Sets Two Guinness World Records

Why in News: The National Highways Authority of India entered the **Guinness World Records** twice for laying road surfacing material on a six-lane highway within a single day, a first anywhere in the world for a highway of this size.

Key highlights:

- The records were set on a stretch of highway connecting **Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh**, where an unusually large amount of road surfacing material was laid within twenty-four hours.
- The corridor, running for over three hundred kilometres, is expected to help trade and tourism while cutting travel time between the two states.
- Two further records were later achieved on the same stretch, bringing the total to four records on this one project, a sign of India's growing road construction capability.

Important points for prelims:

- Corridor involved: the Bengaluru to Kadapa to Vijayawada Economic Corridor
- States it connects: Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh
- Total Guinness World Records achieved on this corridor: four
- The National Highways Authority of India was set up under a law passed in 1988
- NHAI functions under the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways
- NHAI is also responsible for implementing the Bharatmala Pariyojana, a major highway development programme

Third International Conference on Indian Languages

Why in News: India's Vice President opened this conference in **New Delhi**, describing the country's many languages as guardians of its cultural identity.

Key highlights:

- Discussions at the conference centred on encouraging the use of Indian languages not just in everyday conversation but also in government offices, courts, and classrooms, and on how artificial intelligence might help translate between the country's many regional languages.

- This ties in with the broader education policy goal of teaching young children in their mother tongue so they remain connected to their roots.
- The Vice President remarked that languages carry a community's history and values, and are far more than simple tools for communication.

Important Points for Prelims:

- Inaugurated by: the Vice President of India
- India (also the ex officio Chairman of the Rajya Sabha)
- Technology discussed: artificial intelligence for translating between regional languages
- Related education policy goal: teaching in the mother tongue at the early school level, under NEP 2020
- Related government initiative: the Bhashini language platform (cross reference entry 21)
- Part XVII of the Constitution (Articles 343 to 351) deals with official languages
- Hindi in the Devanagari script is the official language of the Union, alongside English, as per Article 343

Second Global Buddhist Summit

Why in News: India hosted the second edition of a global gathering of Buddhist leaders in Delhi, focused on shared wisdom and peaceful coexistence.

Key highlights:

- Jointly organised by the **culture ministry** and an international Buddhist body, the summit brought together roughly two hundred delegates from abroad, including senior monks and scholars, with total attendance crossing eight hundred people.
- Sessions covered topics ranging from social harmony and livelihood in Buddhist thought to healthcare, education, and the role of the monastic community.
- A new artificial intelligence tool trained to understand Buddhist teachings and language was introduced at the event. The first such summit had been held in **Delhi** a few years earlier.

Important points for prelims:

- Organisers: Ministry of Culture and the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC)
- Venue: Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi
- New AI tool launched at the summit: named Norbu
- The first summit in this series was held earlier (2023) in New Delhi
- The International Buddhist Confederation is headquartered in New Delhi and works to promote Buddhist heritage globally

Fifty Third Edition of the New Delhi World Book Fair

Why in News: This year's **third edition** of the **New Delhi World Book Fair** drew record numbers of visitors thanks to a theme centred on Indian military history and, for the first time and free entry for everyone.

Key highlights:

- Organised by the **National Book Trust** at Bharat Mandapam, the fair's theme celebrated the history and contributions of the Indian armed forces, with hundreds of books on display along with models of indigenous defence equipment such as tanks, warships, and fighter jets.
- Making entry completely free for the first time led to more than two million visitors over the course of the fair. Qatar was invited as the guest of honour country, while Spain was highlighted as a special focus country. Other attractions included a digital library offering thousands of free e books, cultural performances, and a dedicated area for children's activities.

Important points for prelims:

- Organiser: National Book Trust (NBT), under the Ministry of Education
- Venue: Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi
- Guest of honour country: Qatar; focus country: Spain
- The National Book Trust was established in 1957 to promote book reading and publish affordable books.

Himachal Pradesh Allows Industrial Hemp Farming

Why in News: Himachal Pradesh has legalised regulated cultivation of industrial hemp under a plan it calls "**Green to Gold**," aimed at boosting both the economy and the environment.

Key highlights:

- Officials have made clear that the permission is only for industrial and medicinal use, and the intoxicating compound in the plant must stay below a very low limit, with the seeds used for farming kept under close watch.
- **Hemp** has thousands of possible uses, from textiles to paper to fuel, and the state expects it could bring in eight hundred to a thousand crore rupees a year.
- It also needs very little water, does not require pesticides, and unlike most crops is not damaged by monkeys or stray animals, which is a big relief for farmers who often lose crops to them.
- Farms will be tracked using drones and digital maps, and licences will be compulsory.

Important points for prelims:

- Maximum allowed level of the intoxicating compound: below zero point three percent
- Governing law: Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985
- Expected yearly revenue: eight hundred to a thousand crore rupees
- Monitoring tools: drones and digital mapping, along with mandatory licences
- The intoxicating compound referred to is Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC)
- Uttarakhand was among the earlier states to legalise industrial hemp cultivation, making Himachal Pradesh one of the few states to formally permit it

President Murmu Opens the Grantha Kutir Library

Why in News: President Droupadi Murmu inaugurated a new library of scriptures at her residence in Secunderabad, part of an effort to preserve India's literary traditions.

Key highlights:

- Known as **Grantha Kutir**, the library replaces a collection of colonial era literature that had previously been kept at the site.
- It now houses important texts such as the Vedas, Puranas, and Upanishads, along with more than fifty rare manuscripts written on materials like palm leaf, bark, and cloth.
- The collection includes works from all of the languages that India has formally recognised as classical, with the aim of connecting younger generations to this ancient body of knowledge.
- The site has now been opened for public visits.

Important points for prelims:

- Location: Rashtrapati Nilayam, Secunderabad (the President's official retreat in Telangana)
- Classical languages represented: Tamil, Sanskrit, Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam, Odia, Marathi, Pali, Prakrit, Assamese, and Bengali
- Most recently added classical languages (2024): Marathi, Pali, Prakrit, Assamese, and Bengali
- Classical language status is granted by: the Ministry of Culture, based on criteria including antiquity and a distinct literary tradition

- The President has two official retreats besides Rashtrapati Bhavan: Rashtrapati Nilayam (Secunderabad) and the Retreat Building (Shimla)
- Rashtrapati Bhavan in Delhi was designed by architect Edwin Lutyens

New Rankings and a Chatbot for Village Governance

Why in News: The government released state rankings for how well the law giving self-governance to tribal areas is being implemented, alongside a new chatbot to assist village councils.

Key highlights:

- Among the ten states that have areas covered under this law, **Maharashtra** was ranked first, followed by Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh, while Odisha and Jharkhand were placed in the lowest performing category.
- Alongside the rankings, a new chatbot named PANCHAM was launched to support elected village representatives, offering simple guidance and easy access to information needed for their day to day work.
- Officials noted that most village councils already use digital systems for planning and accounts, and the chatbot was built with support from a United Nations agency focused on children.

Important points for prelims:

- State ranked first overall: Maharashtra
- New chatbot introduced: PANCHAM (Panchayat Assistance and Messaging Chatbot), developed with support from UNICEF
- Underlying law referred to: the law extending panchayat governance to scheduled areas, passed in 1996 (PESA Act)
- The nodal ministry for panchayat related matters is the Ministry of Panchayati Raj
- The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 gave constitutional status to Panchayati Raj institutions.

Discovery of Buddhist Stupas at Zehanpora

Why in news: The Prime Minister spoke about three ancient Buddhist stupas found at **Zehanpora** in **Baramulla, Jammu and Kashmir**, during one of his public radio addresses.

Key highlights:

- The remains of these stupas may date back to the Kushan period or later, and they point to how deeply **Buddhism** once influenced the Kashmir valley.
- Baramulla, known in ancient times by a different name, has long served as a hub for trade and culture, and this discovery adds further weight to the region's historical importance.
- Highlighting the find is meant to make local people, especially young residents, more aware of their heritage and encourage its protection, while also drawing more visitors interested in heritage tourism to the region.

Important points for prelims:

- Location of the find: Zehanpora, in Baramulla district, Jammu and Kashmir
- Possible time period: Kushan era or later
- Old name for Baramulla: Varahmulla
- The Kushan period is generally placed between roughly the first and third centuries of the common era
- Mann Ki Baat is the Prime Minister's monthly radio programme, first broadcast in 2014
- Notable Kushan ruler associated with the spread of Buddhism: Kanishka, who held the Fourth Buddhist Council (Kundalvan)

India Ranks Third Globally for Rare Earth Reserves

Why in news: A recent global report placed **India third** in the world for reserves of rare earth minerals, even though its actual output remains very small.

Key highlights:

- India is estimated to hold between six and seven percent of the world's rare earth reserves, behind **China and Brazil**, yet it contributes less than one percent of global production, putting it seventh in terms of actual output.
- Most of India's reserves lie within sand deposits that also contain a radioactive element, which makes mining and processing more complicated and heavily regulated.
- To close this gap between reserves and production, and to reduce dependence on China, the government launched a dedicated mission focused on critical minerals.

Important points for prelims:

- Countries with the largest reserves, in order: China, Brazil, and then India
- Key mining challenge: reserves are found in sand deposits (monazite sands) that also contain radioactive thorium
- Government initiative launched to address this: the National Critical Mineral Mission (2025)
- Related fact: the Ministry of Mines has listed about thirty minerals as critical for India, including lithium, graphite, and cobalt
- Rare earth elements are a group of 17 chemically similar elements used in electronics, defence equipment, and green technologies like EV motors and wind turbines
- Indian Rare Earths Limited (IREL) is the public sector undertaking responsible for mining and processing these minerals in India.

Uttar Pradesh Launches the One District One Cuisine Scheme

Why in news: Uttar Pradesh introduced a new scheme to promote a signature dish from each of its **seventy five districts**, both within India and abroad.

Key highlights:

- Modelled on an earlier scheme that promoted one distinctive product from each district, this new initiative focuses on preserving local food traditions, maintaining quality standards, improving packaging, securing geographical indication tags, and helping local food businesses reach customers online.
- Around a hundred and fifty traditional dishes have been shortlisted, with at least one signature dish chosen for every district, such as the famous sweet from Agra, a well known kebab dish from Lucknow, and a popular sweet paan preparation from Varanasi.

Important Points for Prelims;

- Earlier scheme this is modelled on: the One District One Product (ODOP) scheme
- Number of districts covered: all seventy five districts of Uttar Pradesh
- Objectives include: geographical indication (GI) tagging, online sales access, and food tourism
- Example dishes: petha from Agra, tunday kebab from Lucknow, and peda from Mathura
- The ODOP scheme was first launched by the Uttar Pradesh government in 2018 and later adopted at the national level in the Union Budget
- Uttar Pradesh Day is observed on 24 January, marking the day the state was renamed from United Provinces in 1950

Lighthouse Festival Held in Visakhapatnam

Why in news: A cultural festival was held around the historic **Visakhapatnam lighthouse** as part of a wider plan to turn old lighthouses into tourist attractions.

Key highlights:

- Organised by the ministry responsible for shipping and ports, the festival featured local folk music, dance, and art representing the culture of Andhra Pradesh.
- Officials plan to build museums, children's parks, and other recreational facilities around lighthouses to make them attractive tourist stops.
- The **Visakhapatnam lighthouse** sits on a hill overlooking the Bay of Bengal and has guided ships safely for many years. Nationally, the government has plans to develop seventy five historic lighthouses in a similar way.

Important points for prelims:

- Ministry involved: Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways
- Location of the Visakhapatnam lighthouse: on a hill known as Dolphin's Nose, along the Bay of Bengal
- National target for lighthouse tourism development: seventy five historic lighthouses
- The Directorate General of Lighthouses and Lightships (DGLL) is the body responsible for lighthouse administration in India
- Visakhapatnam (Vizag) is home to the headquarters of the Eastern Naval Command of the Indian Navy
- This initiative supports the broader Sagarmala Programme for port led development.

Second Phase of the Sampoonata Abhiyan Campaign

Why in news; The government's policy think tank launched a **three-month campaign** aimed at fully achieving news: a set of development indicators in the country's most underdeveloped districts and blocks.

Key highlights:

- The campaign targets full achievement of five key indicators in aspirational districts and six indicators in **aspirational blocks** across the country.
- Among the indicators tracked for blocks are the share of young children regularly receiving supplementary nutrition and how well their growth is being monitored at local child care centres.
- The overall goal is to close remaining gaps in basic services in the areas that have historically lagged behind the rest of the country.

Important points for prelims:

- Launching body: NITI Aayog
- Name of the campaign: Sampoonata Abhiyan, second edition
- Coverage: five indicators for aspirational districts, six for aspirational blocks
- Related scheme referenced: the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme, which runs through Anganwadi Centres
- The Aspirational Districts Programme was launched by NITI Aayog in 2018 to improve socio economic indicators in India's most backward districts
- The Aspirational Blocks Programme, a similar initiative at the block level, was launched in 2023.

Cultural Meet Among India's Major Ports

Why in news: Workers and artists from India's major ports gathered at Paradip Port in Odisha for a cultural competition featuring dance, drama, and music.

Key highlights:

- Jointly organised by the **Paradip Port** authority and a sports body representing major ports, the four day event brought together around two hundred artists from nine ports across the country, aimed at building a sense of cultural connection among port communities.
- After competitions across different categories, the port authority based in Kolkata was declared overall champion, with the Mumbai port authority finishing as runner up, and the Kandla and Cochin port authorities sharing joint second place.

Important points for prelims:

- Venue: Paradip Port, Odisha
- Number of major ports that took part: nine
- Overall winning port authority: the one based in Kolkata, named after Syama Prasad Mookerjee (formerly Kolkata Port Trust)
- Organisers: Paradip Port Authority and the Major Ports Sports Control Board
- India currently has twelve major ports, administered under the Major Port Authorities Act, 2021
- Paradip Port, located in Odisha on the Bay of Bengal, is one of India's major ports and a key hub for coal and iron ore exports

India's First Open Sea Fish Farming Project

Why in news: India launched its first fish farming project set up in open sea waters, located in the **Andaman Sea**, aiming to support both marine resource use and local fishing communities.

Key highlights:

- Set up near the **Andaman capital** in an area known as **North Bay**, the pilot project uses advanced cage based technology to farm fish species such as seabass and cobia, along with seaweed, out in open water rather than close to shore.
- The goal is to make sustainable use of marine resources, help meet growing demand for seafood, and give coastal fishing communities a more reliable source of income.
- The project is being run jointly by the earth sciences ministry, a national ocean technology institute, and the local island administration.

Important points for prelims:

- Location: North Bay, near the capital of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Sri Vijayapuram)
- Bodies involved: Ministry of Earth Sciences, the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT, Chennai), and the local island administration
- Species being farmed: seabass, cobia, and seaweed
- Broader economic theme this supports: the ocean based, or blue, economy
- The central scheme supporting fisheries development in India is the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY)
- Open sea cage culture, also called mariculture, is being promoted as a way to boost fish production without depleting near shore fish stocks

WORLD AFFAIRS

World Economic Forum's 56th Annual Meeting Focuses on "A Spirit of Dialogue"

Why in news: The 56th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum was held in Davos. It brought together a record number of world leaders under the theme **"A Spirit of Dialogue."** The main aim was to rebuild trust and encourage cooperation during a time of global tensions.

Key highlights:

- The discussions focused on five main areas: strengthening geopolitical cooperation in a divided world, finding new ways to boost economic growth, using artificial intelligence responsibly, balancing economic development with climate and environmental goals, and investing in education, skills, and healthcare.
- Around 65 heads of state attended the meeting. Important leaders included President Trump, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, French President Emmanuel Macron, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. Global leaders such as UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva, and World Bank President Ajay Banga also took part. Technology leaders like Microsoft's Satya Nadella and Nvidia's Jensen Huang were also present.
- India sent a large delegation to promote **"Make in India 2.0"** and its digital infrastructure. States such as Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Karnataka set up their own pavilions to attract investment. CEOs from more than 100 Indian companies also participated.

Important points for prelims:

- Edition: 56th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum
- Theme: **"A Spirit of Dialogue"**
- Five focus areas: Geopolitical cooperation, economic growth, AI and innovation, climate and nature, education, skills and health
- Around 65 heads of state attended
- Indian states with pavilions: Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka
- Headquarters of the World Economic Forum: Cologny, Switzerland
- The WEF is best known for its annual meeting in Davos.

India Unveils Its Logo, Theme, and Website for the BRICS Chairmanship

Why in news: External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar launched the official logo, theme, and website for India's BRICS Chairmanship. The launch was held on the occasion of **Makar Sankranti**.

Key highlights:

- The logo combines traditional and modern elements. Its colourful petals represent the BRICS member countries, while the **Namaste** symbol in the centre reflects mutual respect and cooperation.
- The theme, **"Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability,"** highlights India's focus on inclusive development, innovation, and long-term cooperation.
- BRICS was formed in **2006**, and its first summit was held in **2009**. The original members were Brazil, Russia, India, and China. South Africa joined the group in **2010**.
- The grouping has expanded in recent years. Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the UAE became members in **2024**, while Indonesia joined as a full member in **2025**. This expansion has strengthened BRICS as a platform for developing countries.

Important points for prelims:

- Official website: **brics2026.gov.in**
- Theme: **"Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability"**

- BRICS was established in **2006**
- First BRICS Summit: **2009**
- Original members: Brazil, Russia, India, China
- South Africa joined in **2010**
- New members: Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, UAE (2024), Indonesia (2025)
- BRICS Bank: **New Development Bank (NDB)**, established in **2014**, headquartered in **Shanghai**
- India has previously hosted BRICS Summits in **New Delhi (2012)**, **Goa (2016)**, and **virtually in 2021**.

Pax Silica: A New US-Led Alliance on Chips and Critical Technology

Why in news: The United States invited India to join **Pax Silica** as a full member. It is a new US-led alliance created to secure global supply chains for semiconductors, artificial intelligence (AI), and critical minerals.

Key highlights:

- Pax Silica brings together countries that the US considers trusted partners to reduce dependence on China in key future technologies. The US described India as an **"essential partner"** because of its large engineering workforce and its growing semiconductor industry.
- The original members of the alliance are the US, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, the UK, the Netherlands, Israel, the UAE, and Australia. Qatar joined the group later.
- For India, joining Pax Silica could provide access to advanced chip design and manufacturing technology. It may also bring more foreign investment into India's semiconductor and AI sectors and improve access to rare earth minerals, which are important for products such as smartphones and electric vehicles.

Important points for prelims:

- Pax Silica is a US-led alliance for securing supply chains of semiconductors, AI, and critical minerals.
- India has been invited as a full member and called an **"essential partner"** by the US.
- Original members: US, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, UK, Netherlands, Israel, UAE, Australia.
- Qatar joined later.
- Related Indian programme: **India Semiconductor Mission (ISM)**.
- Main objective: Reduce dependence on China for critical technology supply chains.
- Canada, the European Union, the OECD, and Taiwan have not joined Pax Silica.

India and the EU Conclude the "Mother of All Deals," a Long-Awaited Free Trade Agreement

Why in news: After almost twenty years of negotiations, India and the European Union announced the completion of their **Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** during the **16th India-EU Summit** in New Delhi. The agreement has been called the **"Mother of All Deals"** in trade circles.

Key highlights:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen signed the agreement at **Hyderabad House** in New Delhi.
- The agreement covers trade in goods and services, investment protection, and geographical indications. Together, India and the EU represent nearly one-fourth of the global economy and a market of around two billion people.
- Under the agreement, the EU will remove tariffs on about **99.5%** of Indian exports. India will gradually reduce tariffs on about **97.5%** of EU exports over the next ten years.
- A major feature of the agreement is the **auto and wine** deal, which lowers import duties on European cars and wine.
- Indian sectors such as textiles, leather, gems, and jewellery will get immediate zero-duty access to the European market. This is expected to improve India's exports. However, Indian exporters will still have to

meet the EU's strict environmental and labour standards. The agreement also requires approval from the European Parliament and the Indian Cabinet before it comes into force.

Important points for prelims:

- Signed at **Hyderabad House, New Delhi**, during the **16th India-EU Summit**.
- Known as the **"Mother of All Deals."**
- Around **99.5%** of Indian exports will receive zero tariffs in the EU.
- India will reduce tariffs on **97.5%** of EU exports over ten years.
- Sectors benefiting immediately: Textiles, leather, gems, and jewellery.
- Major challenge: **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)**.
- India has also signed FTAs with the UK, UAE, Australia, Mauritius, and the EFTA bloc.

Quad Ambassadors Hold a Rare Public Meeting in Beijing

Why in news: The ambassadors of the four **Quad** countries—India, the United States, Japan, and Australia—held a rare public meeting at the **US Embassy in Beijing**. The meeting was seen as an important diplomatic message to China.

Key highlights:

- India's Ambassador **Pradeep Kumar Rawat** joined the ambassadors of the US, Japan, and Australia at the meeting.
- US Ambassador David Perdue described the Quad as a **"force for good"** that supports a free and open Indo-Pacific. He also said that cooperation among the four countries remains strong and stable.
- The meeting took place while China was conducting military exercises in the South China Sea and around Taiwan. Because of this timing, the public meeting in Beijing was widely viewed as a clear sign of unity among Quad members.
- China has often criticised the Quad, calling it an **"Asian NATO"** and accusing it of promoting group politics. However, Quad countries continue to state that the grouping is not directed against any particular country and is committed to maintaining a free, open, and rules-based international order.

Important points for prelims:

- Quad members: India, United States, Japan, Australia.
- India's representative: **Pradeep Kumar Rawat**.
- Meeting venue: **US Embassy, Beijing, China**.
- Full name: **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD)**.
- Proposed by Japanese Prime Minister **Shinzo Abe** in **2007**.
- Revived in **2017** after nearly a decade.
- First virtual leaders' summit held in **2021**.
- China often refers to the Quad as an **"Asian NATO"**.

Trump's Board of Peace Takes Shape as a New Global Body

Why in news: A new body called the **Board of Peace**, supported by President Trump, was officially formed to oversee the ceasefire, reconstruction, and governance of Gaza after the Israel– Hamas conflict. India is among the countries invited to join.

Key highlights:

- The Board was created under a **UN Security Council Resolution** and announced during the World Economic Forum in Davos. It is meant to support peacekeeping and rebuilding in Gaza. Its responsibilities include disarming Hamas, training a new Palestinian police force, and supervising Gaza's temporary administration through the **National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG)**.

- Donald Trump was named the **President for Life** of the Board. The executive council includes former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, Jared Kushner, and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio.
- Countries that want permanent membership must contribute **one billion US dollars** for Gaza's reconstruction. Countries that do not contribute can join only for a three-year term. Around 36 countries have joined so far, while some major European countries have stayed out. Canada was later removed from the Board.

Important points for prelims:

- Legal basis: **UN Security Council Resolution 2803 (2025)**
- Gaza's interim administrative body: **NCAG**
- President for Life: **Donald Trump**
- Permanent membership contribution: **US\$1 billion**
- Member countries include India, Pakistan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the UAE.

US Strikes Venezuela and Captures President Maduro

Why in news: The United States carried out air strikes on Venezuela, including Caracas, and later detained President **Nicolas Maduro** and his wife. The action has led to international debate over its legality.

Key highlights:

- The operation, called **Absolute Resolve**, was launched on the orders of President Trump. Maduro declared a state of emergency before being arrested and taken to New York to face drug trafficking charges.
- The US said the operation was aimed at fighting narco-terrorism and restoring democracy. Russia and China criticised it as a violation of the UN Charter.
- Venezuela's Vice President **Delcy Rodriguez** became the acting President. Opposition leader **Maria Corina Machado** has emerged as an important political figure. India called for respect for national sovereignty and peaceful diplomacy, while expressing concern that instability in Venezuela could increase global oil prices.

Important points for prelims:

- Operation: **Absolute Resolve**
- Emergency meeting called by: **UN Security Council**
- Capital: **Caracas**
- Currency: **Bolivar**
- Largest proven oil reserves in the world
- Highest waterfall: **Angel Falls**
- Main river: **Orinoco**
- Borders: Caribbean Sea, Guyana, Brazil, Colombia
- Related UN Charter provision: **Article 2(4)**

The Chagos Islands Change Hands After a Decades-Long Legal Battle

Why in news: Britain agreed to transfer sovereignty over the **Chagos Archipelago** to Mauritius while keeping the **Diego Garcia** military base for another 99 years. The issue remained in the news after President Trump criticised the agreement.

Key highlights:

- Britain separated the Chagos Islands from Mauritius in 1965 before Mauritius became independent. During the 1960s and 1970s, the local people were removed to build the Diego Garcia military base, which is jointly used by the UK and the US.
- Mauritius argued that its independence was incomplete without the return of the islands. In 2019, the **International Court of Justice (ICJ)** ruled that Britain's continued control was unlawful.

- Under the 2024 agreement, Britain recognised Mauritius' sovereignty but retained control of the Diego Garcia base for another 99 years to meet security needs.

Important points for prelims:

- Sovereignty transferred: **UK to Mauritius**
- About **60 islands** forming **7 atolls**
- Largest island: **Diego Garcia**
- ICJ advisory opinion: **2019**
- Diego Garcia lease: **99 years**
- Located in the **Indian Ocean**, south of the Maldives.

German Chancellor Merz Makes His First Visit to India

Why in news:

German Chancellor **Friedrich Merz** visited India for the first time after taking office. During the visit, both countries signed **19 agreements** and made **8 major announcements**.

Key highlights:

- The visit began in Ahmedabad, where Prime Minister Modi welcomed Chancellor Merz. They visited **Sabarmati Ashram**, where Merz paid tribute to Mahatma Gandhi and tried spinning the charkha.
- The two countries finalised the **P75I submarine project**, under which Germany's **ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems** will work with **Mazagon Dock** to build six submarines for the Indian Navy.
- Germany also agreed to support India's Green Hydrogen programme and renewable energy projects. Both countries decided to simplify visa rules for Indian professionals and strengthen skill development cooperation.

Important points for prelims:

- Agreements signed: **19 MoUs**
- Defence project: **P75I**
- German partner: **ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems**
- Indian partner: **Mazagon Dock**
- German development bank: **KfW**
- Celebrated: **25 years of Strategic Partnership** and **75 years of diplomatic relations**
- Capital: **Berlin**
- Currency: **Euro**

Five New Non-Permanent Members Join the UN Security Council

Why in news:

Bahrain, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Latvia, and Liberia started their two-year term as non-permanent members of the **UN Security Council** on January 1.

Key highlights:

- These countries were elected in June of the previous year and replaced outgoing members whose terms had ended.
- Latvia's election is historic because it is the country's first-ever membership in the Security Council.
- The seats are divided among different regional groups to ensure balanced representation.

Important points for prelims:

- New members (2026–27): Bahrain, Colombia, DR Congo, Latvia, Liberia