



Daily Current Affairs

20th Jan 2026



BANKING, FINANCE & BUSINESS
Reserve Bank of India Notifies Reserve Bank – Integrated Ombudsman Scheme (RB-IOS), 2026 to Streamline Customer Grievance Redressal Mechanism

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) issued the Reserve Bank – Integrated Ombudsman Scheme (RB-IOS) 2026 to simplify and strengthen grievance redressal for customers of banks and financial institutions.
- RB-IOS 2026 will replace RB-IOS 2021 and will come into effect from 1 July 2026.
- The scheme follows a “One Nation, One Ombudsman” approach by integrating multiple legacy ombudsman schemes into a single unified framework.


Key Highlights :

- **Applicable Regulated Entities (REs) under RB-IOS 2026 include:**
- All **Commercial Banks (CBs), Regional Rural Banks (RRBs), State Co-operative Banks (StCBs), Central Co-operative Banks (CCBs), Scheduled UCBs, and Non-Scheduled UCBs** with deposits of ₹50 crore or more.
- All **Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFC)** (excluding Housing Finance Companies (HFCs), Core Investment Company (CIC), Infrastructure Debt Fund-NBFC, NBFC – Infrastructure Finance Company (IFC), Non-Operative Financial Holding Company (NOFHC), Primary Dealers (PDs), Mortgage Guarantee Companies (MGC)) that **accept deposits** or have customer interfaces with asset size of ₹100 crore or more.
- Non-bank **Prepaid Payment Instrument (PPI) Issuers.**
- **Credit Information Companies.**
- **Key Features and Limits :**
- The scheme **removes the dispute amount cap**, allowing complaints of **any value** to be taken up by the **RBI Ombudsman or Deputy Ombudsman.**
- **Compensation limits enhanced under RB-IOS 2026:**
 - Up to ₹30 lakh for **consequential financial loss** (earlier ₹20 lakh).
 - Up to ₹3 lakh for **mental anguish, harassment, time loss and expenses** (earlier ₹1 lakh).
- RBI will establish a **Centralised Receipt and Processing Centre (CRPC)** to receive and process complaints filed under the scheme.
- Customers can file complaints through the **RBI Complaint Management System (CMS) portal**, or by **email or post** to the **CRPC.**
- An **appeal mechanism** is available, allowing both complainants and regulated entities to appeal before the **Appellate Authority** within the prescribed timeline.
- RBI may appoint one or more officers as **RBI Ombudsman and Deputy Ombudsman** to discharge functions under the scheme.
- The **tenure** of RBI Ombudsman / Deputy Ombudsman is generally **three years** at a time.

About Reserve Bank of India (RBI) :

- **Governor: Sanjay Malhotra**
- **Headquarters: Mumbai, Maharashtra**

Reserve Bank of India Extends Interest Subvention on Short-Term Crop and Allied Loans Through Kisan Credit Cards for FY 2025-26

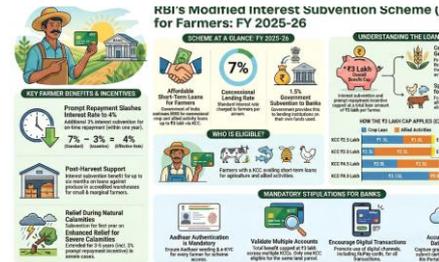
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- The **Government of India** has continued the **Modified Interest Subvention Scheme (MISS)** for **2025-26** to provide **short-term crop loans** and **allied activity loans** to farmers through **Kisan Credit Cards (KCC)**.

Key Highlights :

- Farmers can avail loans up to **₹3 lakh** at a concessional interest rate of **7%**, while banks will receive **1.5% interest subvention** from the Government.
- Farmers **repaying on time** will get an **additional 3% incentive**, reducing the **effective interest rate to 4%** per annum.
- Interest benefits are available for crop loans and **allied activities** such as **animal husbandry, dairy, fisheries, and beekeeping**, with a maximum cap of **₹2 lakh** for allied activities.
- **Small and marginal farmers** storing produce in **WDRA-accredited warehouses** can avail interest benefits for up to **six months after harvest**.
- Farmers affected by **natural calamities** will receive interest subvention for **one year** on restructured loans, while those affected by **severe calamities** can receive benefits for up to **five years**, including the **3% prompt repayment incentive**.
- **Aadhaar seeding and authentication** are **mandatory** for availing benefits under the scheme, and all lending institutions must ensure **e-KYC** is completed for every farmer.
- A farmer is eligible to receive **MISS benefits** through **multiple KCC accounts**, subject to an overall limit of **₹3 lakh per farmer**, but for a **specific land parcel**, benefits can be availed through **only one KCC account**.
- **Interest subvention** will be calculated on the loan amount from the date of **disbursement, drawal, or renewal** up to the actual repayment date or tenure/due date, subject to a maximum period of **one year**.
- An **additional 3% interest subvention** will be provided to farmers **repaying on time**, implying that prompt repayment will result in an **effective interest rate of 4% per annum** for short-term crop and allied loans.
- The **crop loan component** will take **priority** for interest subvention and prompt repayment incentive, and the residual amount will be considered towards **allied activities**, respecting the **₹2 lakh cap**.
- The scheme provides interest subvention for **small and marginal farmers** storing produce in warehouses to **discourage distress sale**, applicable up to **six months post-harvest** against **negotiable warehouse receipts** from **WDRA-accredited warehouses**.
- For **natural calamities**, interest subvention will be available to banks for the **first year** on **restructured loans**, with normal rates from the second year onwards.
- For **severe natural calamities**, interest subvention will be provided for up to **five years**, and the **3% prompt repayment incentive** will also be extended, subject to approval by a **High-Level Committee (HLC)** based on recommendations from **IMCT and SC-NEC**.
- All banks must ensure **Aadhaar authentication** and **e-KYC** for every farmer to enable **seamless access** to benefits under the scheme.



Modified Interest Subvention Scheme for Short Term Loans for Agriculture and Allied Activities availed through Kisan Credit Card (KCC) during the financial year 2025-26

RBI/2025-26/193
FID.O.CO.FSD.BC.No.10/05.02.001/2025-26

January 13, 2026

The Chairman/Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer
All Public Sector Banks, Private Sector Banks and
Small Finance Banks

Madam/Dear Sir,

Modified Interest Subvention Scheme for Short Term Loans for Agriculture and Allied Activities availed through Kisan Credit Card (KCC) during the financial year 2025-26

Please refer to our circular FID.O.CO.FSD.BC.No.8/05.02.001/2024-25 dated August 06, 2024 conveying the decision of the Government of India for continuation of the Modified Interest Subvention Scheme for short term loans for agriculture and allied activities for the year 2024-25.

2. In this regard, it is advised that Government of India has approved the continuation of the Modified Interest Subvention Scheme (MISS) for the financial year 2025-26 with the following stipulations:

(i) In order to provide short term crop loans and short term loans for allied activities including animal husbandry, dairy, fisheries, bee keeping etc. upto an overall limit of ₹3 lakh to farmers through KCC at concessional interest rate during the year 2025-26, it has been decided to provide interest subvention to lending institutions viz. Public Sector Banks (PSBs) and Private Sector Banks (in respect of loans given by their rural and semi-urban branches only), Small Finance Banks (SFBs) and computerized Primary Agriculture Cooperative Societies (PACS) seeded with Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs), on use of their own resources. This interest subvention will be calculated on the loan amount from the date of its disbursement/drawal/renewal up to the date of actual repayment of the loan by the farmer or up to the tenure/ due date/renewal of loans fixed by the banks/PACS, whichever is earlier, subject to a maximum period of one year. The applicable lending rate to farmers and the rate of interest subvention for the financial year 2025-26 will be as follows:

| Financial Year | Lending rate to farmers | Rate of Interest Subvention to Lending Institutions |
|----------------|-------------------------|---|
| 2025-26 | 7% | 1.50% |

(ii) An additional interest subvention of 3% per annum will be provided to such of those farmers repaying in time, i.e., from the date of disbursement/drawal/renewal of the loan up to the date of actual repayment of the loan by the farmer or up to the tenure/ due date/renewal of loans fixed by the banks/PACS, whichever is earlier, subject to a maximum period of one year. The applicable lending rate to farmers and the rate of interest subvention for the financial year 2025-26 will be as follows:

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- A farmer with **multiple KCC accounts** can avail **MISS benefits** subject to the **₹3 lakh overall limit**, but only the account with the **highest sanctioned loan amount** linked to a **specific land parcel** will be eligible.
- Banks may encourage **digital transactions**, including the use of **RuPay cards**, to facilitate **seamless account operations**.
- Banks must capture and report **granular data** of individual farmer beneficiaries on **KRP (Kisan Rin Portal)**, including their **social category**, ensuring **data integrity** for settlement of **MISS claims** for 2025–26.
- **Field functionaries** must accurately report **crop data** on **KRP** to avoid **validation errors**.
- All **eligible financial institutions** must ensure **timely uploading** of **MISS claims** on **KRP**, certified by **Statutory Auditors** as true and correct.

Reserve Bank of India Releases Draft Guidelines on Tier-1 Capital Calculation and Credit-Investment Limits for NBFCs and ARCs

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** issued draft amendment directions to clarify the calculation of **Owned Fund / Tier-1 Capital** for **NBFCs** and **Asset Reconstruction Companies (ARCs)** to comply with **credit and investment concentration limits** and invited public comments till **28 January 2026**.
- Currently, **NBFCs** (other than **NBFC-UL**) and **ARCs** reckon **Tier-1 Capital** as on **31 March of the previous year** for compliance with **credit/investment concentration norms**.
- RBI received requests from NBFCs for review and clarification on aspects of **Owned Fund / Tier-1 Capital**, as the existing method created ambiguity, especially regarding the **inclusion of quarterly profits**.
- Under the new draft, **free reserves**, including **quarterly profits**, can now be included in the **Owned Fund**, subject to specified conditions.
- **Quarterly profits** must be reviewed by **statutory auditors** through a **limited review** before being treated as capital.
- **Eligible profits** will be reduced by **25% of the average dividend** paid in the **last three years**, multiplied by the **number of quarters completed** in the year.
- Any **losses** during the **current year** must be **fully deducted** from the **Owned Fund** while calculating **Tier-1 Capital**.
- The draft is aimed at providing **greater clarity and consistency** in capital computation and is effective **immediately for consultation purposes**.

RBI invites public comments on Draft Amendment Directions on 'Clarification on Owned Fund / Tier 1 Capital computation for NBFCs / ARCs and applicability to "Credit / Investment Concentration" Norms' which amend the Master Directions listed below:

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has released today the Draft Amendment Directions on 'Clarification on Owned Fund / Tier 1 Capital computation for NBFCs / ARCs and applicability to "Credit / Investment Concentration" Norms' which amend the Master Directions listed below:

- Reserve Bank of India (Non-Banking Financial Companies – Prudential Norms on Capital Adequacy) Directions, 2015 vide Reserve Bank of India (Non-Banking Financial Companies – Prudential Norms on Capital Adequacy) Second Amendment Directions, 2026.
- Master Direction – Reserve Bank of India (Non-Banking Financial Companies – Concentration Risk Management) Directions, 2015 vide Reserve Bank of India (Non-Banking Financial Companies – Concentration Risk Management) Second Amendment Directions, 2026.
- Reserve Bank of India (Housing Finance Companies) Directions, 2015 vide Reserve Bank of India (Housing Finance Companies) Amendment Directions, 2026.
- Reserve Bank of India (Core Investment Companies) Directions, 2015 vide Reserve Bank of India (Core Investment Companies) Amendment Directions, 2026.
- Reserve Bank of India (Mortgage Guarantee Companies) Directions, 2015 vide Reserve Bank of India (Mortgage Guarantee Companies) Amendment Directions, 2026.
- Reserve Bank of India (Asset Reconstruction Companies) Directions, 2015 vide Reserve Bank of India (Asset Reconstruction Companies) Amendment Directions, 2026.
- Reserve Bank of India (Standalone Primary Dealers) Directions, 2015 vide Reserve Bank of India (Standalone Primary Dealers) Amendment Directions, 2026.

The comments on the said Draft Amendment Directions are invited from the stakeholders till **January 28, 2026**. The comments / feedback may be submitted through the link under the 'Connect 2 Regulator' section available on the Reserve Bank's website or may alternatively be forwarded to:

Piramal Finance Raises USD 350 Million in Multilateral Funding from International Finance Corporation and Asian Development Bank

- **Piramal Finance Limited (PFL)** secured **USD 350 million** multilateral funding, marking its **first borrowing** from **Development Finance Institutions (DFIs)**.
- The funding includes **USD 200 million** from the **International Finance Corporation (IFC)** and **USD 150 million** from the **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** under the **Sustainable Finance Framework (SFF)**.
- The facilities have a **five-year maturity**, with funds to be drawn in tranches between **January 2026 and March 2026**.



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- PFL is in advanced discussions to raise an additional **USD 150 million** from DFIs, targeting **USD 500 million** total multilateral funding in **FY26**.
- The multilateral funding reflects strong confidence in PFL's **governance standards, risk management practices, and technology-led lending platform**.
- The funds will be deployed to expand **affordable housing finance, scale MSME credit, and increase lending to women borrowers and women-led enterprises**.
- Lending focus areas include **Tier-2, Tier-3, semi-urban, and rural markets, supporting inclusive growth**.
- The borrowing helps **diversify PFL's funding sources** and reduce dependence on **domestic capital markets**, strengthening its long-term funding profile.

About Piramal Finance Limited (PFL):

- PFL is an **RBI-regulated NBFC – Investment and Credit Company (NBFC-ICC)**.
- It is a **wholly-owned subsidiary of Piramal Enterprises**.
- PFL was formed after **Piramal Capital & Housing Finance Limited** acquired **DHFL** in **September 2021**.
- **Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Limited (DHFL)** was originally founded on **11 April 1984**.
- **MD & CEO: Jairam Sridharan**.
- **Headquarters: Mumbai, Maharashtra**.

Reserve Bank of India Plans to Reopen Urban Co-operative Bank Licences, Prioritising Large Credit Societies After Two Decades of Suspension Due to Past Urban Co-operative Banks Failures

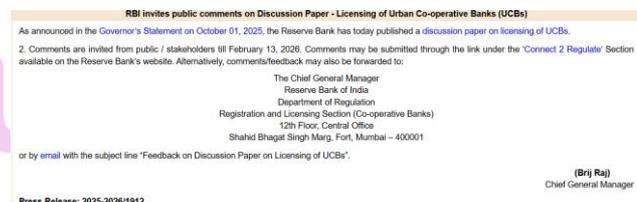
- **The Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has proposed **reopening the licensing window for new Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs)** after **22 years**, as the previous window was closed in **2004** due to widespread failures of newly licensed banks.
- **RBI plans to prefer large and well-run co-operative credit societies** for new UCB licences, as most past failures occurred in **small UCBs**.

Key Highlights :

- **Co-operative credit societies**, unlike banks, are regulated by the **Registrar of Co-operative Societies**, deal only with their **members**, and cannot offer full banking services like **cheques or online fund transfers**.
- In **2004**, **RBI** stopped issuing new UCB licences because **31%** of newly licensed UCBs failed; now, after sector reforms, **RBI** is reconsidering the restart of licensing.
- Following the **Banking Regulation Amendment Act, 2020**, **RBI** obtained strong powers over UCBs, similar to commercial banks, and UCBs are now classified into **4 tiers** based on deposits.
- **Tier 1:** Deposits < ₹100 crore; **Tier 2:** Deposits ₹100–₹1,000 crore; **Tier 3:** Deposits ₹1,000–₹10,000 crore; **Tier 4:** Deposits ≥ ₹10,000 crore.
- India has **1,457 UCBs** with **₹5.84 lakh crore deposits** and **₹7.38 lakh crore assets**; **52%** of banks are small, but **7%** of large UCBs hold **62.5%** of total deposits, indicating sector consolidation.
- The **National Urban Co-operative Finance and Development Corporation (NUCFDC)**, established in **Feb 2024**, will provide **technology, liquidity, and investment support** to UCBs.
- To be eligible for a UCB licence, a co-operative society must have: **10 years of operations**, minimum **5-year strong financial track record**, **CRAR ≥12%**, and **Net NPA ≤3%**.

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- All co-operative societies, whether registered under **State Co-operative Societies Act** or **Multi-State Co-operative Societies Act**, must obtain a licence under **Section 22 read with Section 56** of the **Banking Regulation Act, 1949**.
- **Malegam Committee (2011)** suggested low and differentiated capital (**₹0.5–₹5 crore**) and allowed new societies in **unbanked areas** to get UCB licences.
- **R Gandhi Committee (2015)** tightened norms, allowing licences only to well-run societies with **5-year track record** and capital **₹25–₹100 crore**.
- **Vishwanathan Committee (2021)** advised focusing on expansion of existing UCBs and granting new licences only after the **Umbrella Organisation (NUCFDC)** becomes fully effective.
- Currently, **82 weak UCBs** are under supervisory restrictions; **28 very weak UCBs** are under **All-Inclusive Directions (AID)**, **32 UCBs** under **Prompt Corrective Action (PCA)**, and **22 UCBs** under **Supervisory Action Framework (SAF)**. These fall under **Tier 1 to Tier 3**.

NATIONAL AND STATE NEWS

Government Blocks 242 Illegal Betting and Gambling Website Links

- The **Government of India** blocked **242 illegal betting and gambling website links** in **January 2026** as part of an intensified enforcement drive.
- With this action, the total number of illegal betting and gambling platforms blocked has crossed **7,800 nationwide**.
- Illegal online betting and gambling platforms have become a major concern in India's digital ecosystem.
- These platforms often operate through **offshore servers, mirror websites, and encrypted domains**, allowing them to bypass Indian laws and taxation.
- Users face risks such as **financial fraud, data theft, addiction, and lack of grievance redressal mechanisms**.
- The crackdown has gained momentum after the enactment of the **Online Gaming Act**.
- The Act provides **clear legal distinction between permissible skill-based online games and illegal betting or wagering activities**.
- It empowers authorities to coordinate with **internet service providers, payment gateways, and digital intermediaries** for faster blocking and disruption of financial flows.
- Illegal betting platforms pose **financial risks** such as tax evasion, unregulated money flows, and potential links to money laundering.
- In India, **skill-based online games are permitted** under regulatory compliance, while **betting and gambling are largely prohibited**, except in limited state-specific cases.
- The **Online Gaming Act** seeks to balance **innovation and regulation**, allowing legitimate gaming platforms to operate while systematically eliminating illegal betting websites.



सत्यमेव जयते

Government Of India

The Government has blocked 242 illegal betting and gambling website links. Sources said that so far, over 7 thousand 800 illegal betting and gambling websites have been taken down, with a significant increase in enforcement actions after the passage of the Online Gaming Act.

India's First NAMO Book Fest Launched in New Delhi

- **India witnessed** a new literary initiative with the launch of the **first-ever NAMO Book Fest** in **New Delhi**.
- **Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh** released two books at the event, marking the debut of a national-level literary festival focused on ideas and leadership.

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- At the inaugural NAMO Book Fest, the books '**Gen V Bano**' and '**Mahatma**' were released.
- The books focus on **inspiration, leadership, vision, values, and ethical living** in contemporary India.
- The releases highlighted the role of literature in shaping **national character** and a **forward-looking mindset among youth**.
- The **NAMO Book Fest** is being organised as a **two-day event**.
- It features a curated exhibition of books centred on the **life, ideas, and leadership of Narendra Modi**.
- The festival provides a platform for **authors, intellectuals, thinkers, and young readers** to engage in dialogue and exchange ideas.
- The initiative aims to promote **reading culture, intellectual engagement, and discussion** on governance, nation-building, and innovation.
- It reflects growing recognition of the importance of **books and ideas in shaping public discourse**.
- The festival seeks to connect **governance, culture, and youth participation** within India's intellectual ecosystem.



Karnataka Amends Land Revenue Law to Reform Jamma Bane Lands in Kodagu

- The **Karnataka government** amended the land revenue law to address long-pending documentation issues related to **Jamma Bane lands** in **Kodagu district**.
- The **Karnataka Land Revenue (Second Amendment) Act, 2025** received the **Governor's assent on January 7, 2026**, and has been officially notified.
- The amendment aims to modernise land governance, ensure **clear ownership records**, and benefit **indigenous communities** in the region.
- It seeks to align Kodagu's unique land record system with the **Karnataka Land Revenue Act, 1964**.
- The reform also supports **land record digitisation under the Bhoomi Project**, providing a statutory basis to correct outdated and inconsistent entries.
- **Jamma Bane lands** are hereditary land holdings unique to Kodagu, granted between the **17th and 19th centuries** by Coorg kings and later by the British, mainly for military service.
- These holdings include **paddy fields and forested uplands**, many of which later became **coffee plantations**.
- Traditionally, land records continued to carry the name of the **original pattedar**, even after ownership passed through generations.
- Legacy records showing **deceased ancestors as pattedars** caused difficulties in **mutation, inheritance, land sale, and access to bank credit**.
- Even after the **Karnataka Land Revenue Act, 1964** replaced the **Coorg Land Revenue Act, 1899**, outdated practices continued informally.
- The **Karnataka High Court** has upheld **Kodava ownership rights** in several cases, including *Chekkera Poovaiah vs State of Karnataka*.



- The amendment empowers **Tahsildars in Kodagu** to correct inconsistencies in the **Record of Rights** after due enquiry.
- A new subsection has been added to **Section 127 of the Karnataka Land Revenue Act, 1964**, allowing correction or deletion of improper historical entries.

About Karnataka:

- Capital: Bengaluru
- Chief Minister: Siddaramaiah
- Governor: Thaanukar Gehlot
- National Parks: Bandipur National Park, Nagarhole National Park, Kudremukh National Park, Anshi (Kali) National Park, Bannerghatta National Park
- Wildlife Sanctuaries: Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary, Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary, Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary, Brahmagiri Wildlife Sanctuary, Pushpagiri Wildlife Sanctuary, Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary

Supreme Court Rules Unreserved Seats Open to All Candidates on Merit

- The **Supreme Court of India** ruled that **unreserved (general) category seats** in public recruitment are **open to all candidates purely on merit**, irrespective of social category.
- The Court clarified that **unreserved seats are not meant exclusively for general category candidates**.
- **SC, ST, and OBC candidates** who qualify **without availing any relaxation** such as lower cut-off marks, age relaxation, or fee concession must be counted against **unreserved seats**, not reserved quotas.
- The Bench comprising **Justice M. M. Sundresh and Justice Satish Chandra Sharma** held that the unreserved category functions as an **open competition pool** based strictly on merit.
- Justice **Satish Chandra Sharma**, who authored the judgment, explained the principle of “**merit-induced shift**”, under which meritorious reserved category candidates move to the unreserved category if they qualify on equal standards.
- The ruling arose from a **2013 Airports Authority of India (AAI)** recruitment for **Junior Assistant (Fire Service)** posts.
- A **2020 Kerala High Court verdict** that ruled against AAI was **set aside** by the Supreme Court.
- The Court reaffirmed that the judgment flows from **Article 14 (Equality before law)** and **Article 16 (Equality of opportunity in public employment)** of the Constitution.
- The judgment aims to **preserve reserved seats for candidates who genuinely require reservation benefits** while maintaining **meritocracy**.
- It is expected to **standardise recruitment practices**, reduce litigation, and bring clarity to **central and state recruitment agencies**.



Supreme Court on reservation. (Representative Image)

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Friday said that candidates from reserved categories who secure higher marks than the **general category cutoff** must be adjusted against unreserved seats.

Reaffirming the landmark legal principle, a bench comprising Justices M M Sundresh and Satish Chandra

Sharma said, "It is now a settled proposition of law that a candidate belonging to reserve category (SC, ST and OBC) who has scored marks higher than the cut off marks for the General Category is to be treated as having qualified against an open or unreserved vacant post."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Lays Foundation Stone of ₹6,957 Crore Kaziranga Elevated Corridor in Assam

- Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** laid the foundation stone of the **₹6,957 crore Kaziranga Elevated Corridor**, in Assam.
- He also **virtually flagged off two Amrit Bharat Express trains** to enhance **long-distance rail connectivity**.

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- The **Kaziranga Elevated Corridor** is a **34.5-kilometre-long elevated road** being constructed as part of the widening of **National Highway-715 (NH-715)**.
- **NH-715** runs along the **southern boundary of Kaziranga National Park**, separating it from the **Karbi Anglong hills**.
- During **monsoon floods**, wildlife migrates southwards to higher ground, but **heavy traffic** on the highway blocks animal movement.
- The elevated corridor allows **vehicles to move above**, while **animals cross safely underneath**, reducing human-wildlife conflict.
- The project includes **bypasses around Jakhlabandha and Bokakhat** to reduce urban traffic congestion.
- **NH-715** is considered one of the **biggest threats to wildlife** in Kaziranga due to increasing vehicular traffic.
- Studies have recorded **over 6,000 animal deaths in a single year**, especially during the **monsoon season**, on this highway stretch.
- **High vehicle speed, night-time traffic**, and **poor visibility** make crossings dangerous for animals like **deer, leopards, and one-horned rhinoceroses**.
- By diverting traffic onto elevated sections, the **natural habitat below remains accessible** to wildlife.
- Forest officials expect a **significant reduction in roadkill**, while conservationists emphasise **eco-sensitive construction practices**.
- Once completed, the corridor will improve connectivity between **Guwahati, eastern Assam, and Numaligarh**.
- The project is expected to boost **trade, tourism, employment, and local livelihoods** in the region.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi, centre, inspects during the 'Shoorni Puja' ceremony of the Kaziranga Elevated Corridor Project, in Kallabor, Assam on Sunday (January 18, 2026). (PTI)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday (January 18, 2026) laid the foundation stone for the Rs 6,957-crore Kaziranga Elevated Corridor, and virtually flagged off two Amrit Bharat trains in Assam's Nagaon district.

About Assam:

- Chief Minister: Himanta Biswa Sarma
- Governor: Lakshman Prasad Acharya
- Capital: Dispur
- National Parks: Kaziranga National Park, Manas National Park, Dibru-Saikhowa National Park
- Wildlife Sanctuaries: Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary, Orang National Park, Bura-Chapori Wildlife Sanctuary, Nameri Wildlife Sanctuary

India's First Sleeper Vande Bharat Train Launched Between Howrah and Guwahati

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched India's first Sleeper Vande Bharat train**, flagging it off from **Malda, West Bengal**.
- The train connects **Howrah (Kolkata)** with **Kamakhya (Guwahati)**, strengthening rail connectivity between eastern and northeastern India.
- This is the **first-ever Vande Bharat sleeper version**, designed specifically for **overnight long-distance travel**.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi today flagged off India's first Vande Bharat Sleeper Train between Howrah and Guwahati (Kamakhya) at Malda town railway station. Mr. Modi also virtually flagged off the Guwahati-Howrah

- The **Sleeper Vande Bharat** is an upgraded version of the Vande Bharat Express, offering **sleeping berths**, modern interiors and **Rajdhani-class comfort** with faster travel.
- It is **fully Made in India**, reflecting Indian Railways' focus on **self-reliance, modernization and passenger comfort**.
- The train will operate **six days a week** in both directions and will complete the journey in **about 14 hours**.
- **Departure timings:** Howrah at **6:20 PM** and Kamakhya at **6:15 PM**, making it suitable for overnight travel.
- The service is expected to **boost tourism, trade and people-to-people movement** between **West Bengal and Assam**.
- Along with this train, **four Amrit Bharat Express trains** were also launched from West Bengal, improving long-distance connectivity to **southern and western India**.
- At the same event, **rail and road projects worth ₹3,250 crore** were inaugurated and foundation stones laid to strengthen **infrastructure in eastern India**.
- **Vande Bharat trains**, introduced in **2019**, are **semi-high-speed trains manufactured under Make in India**, with around **150 trains operational nationwide**, and the **sleeper variant expanding services to long inter-state routes**.

MSME Ministry Approves Two New Technology Centres in Himachal Pradesh

- The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises approved two new **MSME Technology Centres** in Himachal Pradesh at **Pandoga (Una district)** and **Parwanoo (Solan district)**.
- Each **Technology Centre** will be developed at an estimated cost of **₹10 crore**, aimed at strengthening **industrial growth, skill development and employment generation** in the state.
- **Pandoga and Parwanoo** are part of **13 new MSME Technology Centre Extension Centres approved nationwide**, reflecting the government's focus on expanding technical infrastructure for MSMEs.
- **Parwanoo**, located near **Chandigarh**, is an established industrial hub, while **Pandoga's selection is expected to promote balanced regional industrial development** in Himachal Pradesh.
- The centres will provide **advanced manufacturing support, design assistance, quality improvement services and technical training** to local MSMEs.
- A key objective is **skill development of youth**, through **hands-on technical training, entrepreneurship support and employability enhancement**.
- The initiative is expected to **attract fresh industrial investment, support startups, reduce migration and strengthen the local economy**, particularly in manufacturing and allied sectors.



Jharkhand Implements PESA Act After 25 Years

- Jharkhand has notified rules under the **Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA)** nearly **25 years** after its enactment, marking a significant step towards **tribal self-governance in Fifth Schedule areas**.

- The move has triggered **debate and concern among tribal leaders and activists**, who fear that the new rules may **dilute the constitutional authority of Gram Sabhas** and weaken **customary governance systems**.
- **PESA Act, 1996** aims to **extend self-rule to Scheduled Areas**, empower **Gram Sabhas**, protect **customary laws**, and ensure **community control over land, forests and natural resources**.
- In Jharkhand, the rules apply **fully in 13 districts** including **Ranchi, Khunti, Gumla, Simdega, West Singhbhum, East Singhbhum, Dumka and Pakur**, with **partial implementation in Palamu, Godda and Garhwa**.
- Jharkhand has a **tribal population of 26.3%**, spread across **over 12,000 villages**, and is home to **32 tribal communities**, including **8 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)**.
- The rules declare the **Gram Sabha as the supreme institution** in Scheduled Areas, with powers over **minor minerals, small water bodies, community resources, dispute resolution and action against social evils**, including imposing fines up to **₹2,000**.
- **Gram Sabha leadership is to be chosen as per traditional customs**, but **official notification of Gram Sabha boundaries by district administration** has raised concerns over **bureaucratic control**.
- **Customary leaders and tribal organisations** expressed concern that **Gram Sabhas have no control over District Mineral Foundation funds and Tribal Sub Plan allocations**, despite Jharkhand holding **nearly 40% of India's mineral resources**.
- Jharkhand has **around 29.5% forest cover** and produces minerals worth **about ₹15,000 crore annually**, yet tribal communities continue to face **poverty, malnutrition, anaemia and livelihood insecurity**.

PESA Act, 1996

(Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996)

Background

- Enacted by Parliament of India in 1996
- Extends Part IX of the Constitution (related to Panchayati Raj) to Scheduled Areas (as per the Fifth Schedule)
- Aims to empower tribal communities in India through self-governance

Key Provisions of PESA Act

| Feature | Description |
|----------------------|---|
| Applicability | Only to Fifth Schedule areas (not Sixth Schedule) |
| Gram Sabha Powers | Approval of development plans, managing resources (land, minor forest produce, water), resolving disputes |
| Customary Laws | Recognizes traditional tribal practices, laws, and procedures |
| Land | Gram Sabha to prevent land alienation of tribals |
| Mining & Land Acquis | Mandatory consultation with Gram Sabha before land acquisition or mining projects |



About Jharkhand:

- Capital: Ranchi
- Chief Minister: Hemant Soren
- Governor: Santosh Gangwar
- National Parks: Betla National Park
- Wildlife Sanctuaries: Palamau Wildlife Sanctuary, Hazaribagh Wildlife Sanctuary, Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary, Koderma Wildlife Sanctuary, Mahuadanr Wolf Sanctuary, Topchanchi Wildlife Sanctuary

Spituk Gustor Festival Begins in Ladakh

- The **two-day Spituk Gustor Festival** has commenced at **Spituk Monastery in Ladakh**, marking the **first monastic festival of the year** in the region.
- The festival is held after **seven days of prayers and rituals** seeking **world peace, prosperity and victory over evil forces**.
- Spituk Gustor symbolically marks the **end of the first and coldest phase of**



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Ladakh's harsh winter, indicating a **seasonal transition**.

- A major attraction of the festival is the **Cham (sacred masked dance)** performed by monks in **elaborate costumes**, representing the **destruction of negative energies** and triumph of good over evil.
- The festival is celebrated at **Spituk Monastery**, one of the **oldest Buddhist monasteries in Ladakh**, and follows the traditions of the **Geluk-pa (Yellow Hat) order of Tibetan Buddhism**.
- The term '**Gustor**' means '**sacrifice of the 29th day**' in the local language and the festival is observed on the **28th and 29th days of the 11th month of the Tibetan calendar**.
- Rituals include the **burning of effigies representing evil forms**, symbolising purification and protection.
- **Monks from Stok, Sankar, Saboo and Spituk monasteries** congregate, and the **protective amulet of the monastery** is unveiled for public blessings.

About Ladakh (Union Territory):

- **Lieutenant Governor:** Kavinder Gupta
- **Capital:** Leh (summer), Kargil (winter)
- **Districts:** Leh and Kargil
- **National Parks:** Hemis National Park
- **Wildlife Sanctuaries:** Changthang Wildlife Sanctuary, Karakoram Wildlife Sanctuary

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

India and Israel Formalise Partnership to Boost Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector

- **India and Israel** signed a **Joint Ministerial Declaration of Intent** to deepen bilateral cooperation in **Fisheries and Aquaculture**.
- The Declaration was signed during a high-level Indian visit to Israel (**13–15 January 2026**).
- The Indian delegation was led by **Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh**, Ministry of **Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying (MoFAH&D)**.
- The signing took place on the sidelines of the **Second Global Summit on "Blue Food Security: Sea the Future 2026"** held in **Eilat, Israel**.

India-Israel Partnership Expands to Fisheries and Aquaculture Sectors



Key Highlights :

- A major focus of the agreement is the establishment of a new **Indo-Israel Centres of Excellence (CoE)** for Fisheries and Aquaculture.
- Both countries will undertake joint **Research & Development (R&D)** in advanced **aquaculture technologies**.
- Key technologies include **Recirculating Aquaculture Systems (RAS)**, **biofloc**, **cage culture**, **aquaponics**, and **aquarium systems** including **oceanariums**.
- Cooperation will cover **high-yield species breeding**, **pathogen-free seed production**, and **broodstock development**.
- The declaration also includes **genetic improvement programmes**, **mariculture**, and **seaweed cultivation**.
- **Efficient water management** in aquaculture will be strengthened using **Israeli water-saving technologies**.
- The agreement emphasises **sustainable fishing practices** and **technology-driven fisheries monitoring systems**.
- **Capacity building** is a key pillar, including **training for fishers**, **start-up exchanges**, and **innovation support**.

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- The Declaration aims to strengthen the **Blue Economy, food security, and climate-resilient aquaculture development** in both countries.

About Israel :

- **President : Isaac Herzog**
- **Prime Minister : Benjamin Netanyahu**
- **Capital : Jerusalem**
- **Currency : New shekel**

Vietnam Hosts 6th ASEAN–India Digital Ministers’ Meeting in Virtual Mode

- The **6th ASEAN–India Digital Ministers’ Meeting (ADGMIN)** was hosted virtually by **Vietnam** under the theme “**Adaptive ASEAN: From Connectivity to Connected Intelligence.**”
- The meeting was co-chaired by **Amit Agrawal**, Secretary, Department of Telecommunications (DoT), India, and **Nguyen Manh Hung**, Minister of Science and Technology, **Vietnam**.
- **ADGMIN** is an annual dialogue platform bringing together telecom and digital ministers of **11 ASEAN Member States** along with **ASEAN Dialogue Partners** to enhance regional and global digital cooperation.
- The meeting approved the **ASEAN–India Digital Work Plan 2026**, focusing on **ICT training, capacity-building programmes, the India–ASEAN Regulators’ Conference**, and the deployment of **telecom ICT solutions**.
- The **ASEAN–India Fund** was officially **operationalised**, aimed at financing **digital transformation and innovation projects** across ASEAN member countries.
- The meeting adopted the **Hanoi Declaration**, emphasizing cooperation in **Artificial Intelligence (AI), broadband connectivity, resilient digital infrastructure, and digital inclusion**.
- The Declaration also reaffirmed commitment to the **ASEAN Digital Masterplan 2026–2030**, strengthening long-term **digital integration** between India and ASEAN.



DEFENCE NEWS

INS Sagardhwani Flagged Off from Kochi for 5th Edition of Sagar Maitri by DRDO’s Naval Physical and Oceanographic Laboratory

- **INS Sagardhwani**, India’s **oceanographic research vessel** under the **Naval Physical and Oceanographic Laboratory (NPOL)** of **DRDO**, was flagged off for the **5th edition of Sagar Maitri (SM-5)** from **Southern Naval Command, Kochi** on **17 January 2026**.
- The vessel was flagged off by **Radha Mohan Singh**, Chairperson of the **Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence**, in the presence of senior officials from the **Indian Navy and DRDO**.
- **Sagar Maitri** is a flagship collaborative initiative of the **Indian Navy and DRDO**, aligned with India’s **MAHASAGAR vision (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions)**, aimed at enhancing **scientific and socio-economic cooperation** among **Indian Ocean Rim (IOR)** countries.

INS SAGARDHWANI FLAGS OFF FOR SAGAR MAITRI V

Flagged Off: 18 JAN 2026 1:40PM by PIB Delhi

INS Sagardhwani, India’s oceanographic research vessel under the Naval Physical and Oceanographic Laboratory (NPOL) of DRDO, was flagged off for the 5th edition of the Sagar Maitri (SM-5) initiative from Southern Naval Command, Kochi on 17 Jan 2026. The vessel was flagged off by Shri Radha Mohan Singh, Honourable Member of Parliament and Chairperson, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence, in the presence of Honourable Members of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence, Dr Sanjay V Kanetkar, Secretary, Department of Defence R&D and Chairman DRDO, Rajin Ujwal Khandke, Chief of Staff, Southern Naval Command, Dr B. V. Hans Prasad, Director General (Naval Systems & Materials) and Dr Devraj Senthilganesan, Director, NPOL, along with senior officials from the Indian Navy and DRDO.

Sagar Maitri is a flagship collaborative initiative of the Indian Navy and DRDO, aligned with the Government of India’s vision of ‘Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions (MAHASAGAR)’. The initiative aims to promote closer cooperation in socio-economic aspects and greater scientific interaction, especially in ocean research, among Indian Ocean Rim (IOR) countries.

Naval Physical and Oceanographic Laboratory (NPOL), Kochi has been conducting oceanographic missions under the Sagar Maitri programme with the objective of strengthening scientific cooperation and capacity building among IOR nations. Under the aegis of this programme, DRDO initiated a scientific component titled ‘MAITRI (Mutual & Allied Interdisciplinary Training and Research Initiative)’ to establish long-term collaboration with IOR countries in the field of ocean research and development.

Under the Sagar Maitri programme, INS Sagardhwani will retrace the historic routes of INS Khima, which participated in the International Indian Ocean Expedition during 1962-65. The initiative seeks to build sustained scientific collaboration with eight IOR countries, namely Oman, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and Myanmar. The ongoing mission marks the initiation of collaborative oceanographic studies with Maldives, enabling joint research and professional exchange among scientists of IOR nations.

Sagar Maitri represents the confluence of DRDO’s efforts towards achieving relevant Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA) for the Indian Navy. During these missions, oceanographic and acoustic data of interest can be collected using distributed observation nodes by DRDO research vessel INS Sagardhwani, shared with relevant IOR countries.

- Under the programme, **INS Sagardhwani** will retrace the historic routes of **INS Kistna**, which participated in the **International Indian Ocean Expedition (1962–65)**.
- The initiative seeks to build sustained scientific collaboration with **eight IOR countries: Oman, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and Myanmar**.
- **INS Sagardhwani** is a specialised **marine acoustic research vessel** designed by **NPOL** and built by **Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE)**, commissioned in **July 1994**, and has contributed significantly to India's maritime scientific capabilities for over three decades.
- The **Sagar Maitri programme** promotes closer **socio-economic cooperation** and scientific interaction, especially in **ocean research**, among IOR nations, and includes the **MAITRI (Marine & Allied Interdisciplinary Training and Research Initiative)** for long-term collaboration in ocean R&D.
- During the missions, **oceanographic and acoustic data** are collected along designated observational tracks, supporting **Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA)** for the Indian Navy.
- The ongoing **SM-5 mission** marks the initiation of **collaborative oceanographic studies with Maldives**, enabling joint research and professional exchange among scientists of IOR nations.
- **NPOL, Kochi**, has been conducting oceanographic missions under **Sagar Maitri** to strengthen scientific cooperation and **capacity building** among IOR countries.

16th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting -Plus Counter Terrorism Experts Group Meeting Scheduled in New Delhi

- The **16th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM)-Plus Experts Working Group (EWG) on Counter Terrorism (CT)** will be held in **New Delhi** from **14–16 January 2026**.
- **India and Malaysia** will **co-chair** the 16th ADMM-Plus EWG on Counter Terrorism.
- The meeting will be attended by **11 ASEAN member countries: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Vietnam, Singapore, Thailand, and Timor Leste**.
- **Seven Dialogue Partners**—Australia, New Zealand, Japan, **Republic of Korea (South Korea)**, China, the **United States**, and **Russia**—along with **ASEAN Secretariat** representatives, will participate.
- This will be the **third meeting** of the **2024–2027** three-year cooperation cycle under the ADMM-Plus Counter Terrorism framework.
- The meeting aims to **review progress**, deliberate on ongoing initiatives, and plan future activities under the **three-year Counter Terrorism work plan**.
- A **Final Planning Conference (FPC)** for the **Table-Top Exercise (TTX)** will be conducted on **14 January 2026**.
- **Malaysia** will host the **Table-Top Exercise (TTX)** later in **2026**.
- **India** will conduct a **Field Training Exercise (FTX)** in **2027** to test the practical outcomes of the three-year cooperation cycle.
- The **ADMM-Plus** is a platform for **practical defence cooperation** among member nations.

Meeting of 16th ADMM-Plus EWG on Counter Terrorism & Final Planning Conference for Table Top Exercise to be held in New Delhi

Posted On: 13 JAN 2026 4:07PM by PIB Delhi

The meeting of 16th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM)-Plus Experts Working Group (EWG) on Counter Terrorism (CT) and Final Planning Conference for Table Top Exercise is scheduled to be held in New Delhi from January 14 to 16, 2026. India and Malaysia will co-chair the 16th EWG on CT meeting. Delegations from 11 ASEAN members (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Vietnam, Singapore, Thailand and Timor Leste) and 07 dialogue partners (Australia, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Japan, China, USA and Russia) along with ASEAN Secretariat representatives will participate in the EWG on CT. This will be the third meeting for the ongoing cycle from 2024-2027.

The meeting will provide an important platform to review progress since the previous session, deliberate on the ongoing and planned activities under the three-year work plan to further strengthen India's multilateral cooperation on Counter-Terrorism with the ADMM-Plus framework.

The Final Planning Conference for Table Top Exercise will be conducted on 14 January. Malaysia will host Table Top Exercise during the next edition of EWG meeting in 2026. India will subsequently hold Field Training Exercise in 2027.

The ADMM-Plus serves as a platform for practical cooperation among the participating countries' defence establishments. It currently focuses on seven areas of practical cooperation namely maritime security, counter-terrorism, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, peacekeeping operations, military medicine, humanitarian mine action and cyber security. The EWGs have been established to facilitate cooperation in these seven areas.

The task of the co-chairs is to lay down the objectives, policy guidelines and directions for the EWG for the three-year cycle at the commencement of the chairmanship, conduct of regular EWG meetings (minimum two in year) and an exercise of any (TTX/FTX/STAFFEX/COMDEX etc.) for all member nations in the third year to test the progress made in practical cooperation during the three-year cycle.

- ADMM-Plus focuses on **seven areas of cooperation**: Counter Terrorism, **Maritime Security, Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), Peacekeeping Operations, Military Medicine, Humanitarian Mine Action, and Cyber Security.**
- **Experts Working Groups (EWGs)** are established to facilitate cooperation in each of these seven focus areas.
- The **co-chairing countries** are responsible for setting **objectives, policy guidelines, and directions** for the EWG during the **three-year chairmanship cycle.**

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

Kotak Mahindra Bank Appoints Former Bajaj Finance MD Anup Kumar Saha as Whole-Time Director, Pending RBI Approval

- **Anup Kumar Saha**, former **Managing Director (MD)** of **Bajaj Finance**, has been appointed as **Whole-Time Director** on the board of **Kotak Mahindra Bank**, subject to **RBI approval**, for a **three-year term.**
- The appointment is part of **leadership rebuilding** at Kotak Mahindra Bank following multiple **senior exits** and the earlier fragmentation of the **consumer banking business.**
- **Anup Kumar Saha** played a **pivotal role** over **eight years** at **Bajaj Finance**, transforming it into one of India's **largest and most profitable** consumer finance **NBFCs.**



About Kotak Mahindra Bank Limited :

- Headquarters : **Mumbai, Maharashtra.**
- **MD & CEO : Ashok Vaswani**

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Indian Institute of Technology Madras Creates Data-Driven Dashboard to Enhance Road Safety Governance

- The **Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras)** has developed an **Integrated Road Safety Dashboard** to strengthen **road safety governance** and help reduce road accidents across India.
- The dashboard is designed as a **scalable and replicable digital public infrastructure**, enabling **States and Union Territories** to adopt it according to their road safety strategies.
- The platform has already been successfully adopted by the **Government of Odisha** during **Road Safety Month 2026**, demonstrating its practical governance value.
- The dashboard was developed by the **Rehabilitation Bioengineering Group (RBG Labs)** at IIT Madras, showcasing how academic research and technology can directly support **e-governance and public service delivery.**
- The platform was **conceptualised and designed by RBG Labs** and implemented by **National Informatics Centre Services Inc (NICSI)**, integrating data from multiple departments and presenting it through **real-time analytics** and **actionable insights.**
- **RBG Labs** is an interdisciplinary research group focused on solving societal problems through **evidence-based innovation**, especially in **transportation safety, human factors, medical devices, and lean operations.**



- The dashboard is positioned for **wider replication** across India to enhance **road safety planning and monitoring**.

Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh Inaugurates India's First Open-Sea Marine Fish Farming Project at North Bay, Andaman Sea in Collaboration with Ministry of Earth Sciences and A&N UT Government

- **Jitendra Singh**, Union Minister of State (IC) for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences, launched India's **first-ever open-sea Marine Fish Farming project** from the **Andaman Sea at North Bay, Sri Vijaya Puram** on **January 18, 2026**.
- The initiative is a key step towards achieving India's **Blue Economy** vision, emphasised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, by leveraging the untapped economic potential of **ocean resources**.
- The project is implemented through collaboration between the **Ministry of Earth Sciences**, its technical arm **National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT)**, and the **Andaman & Nicobar Islands UT Administration**.
- The project focuses on **open-sea cultivation** of **marine finfish** (such as seabass and cobia) and **seaweed** in natural ocean conditions using **NIOT-developed open-sea cages**, integrating advanced marine science with **livelihood generation**.
- During his visit, Dr Jitendra Singh also toured the **Mahatma Gandhi Marine National Park (MGMNP)** near **Wandoor**, one of India's first marine parks, established in **1983**, spread across **15 islands**, and known for protected islands like **Jolly Buoy and Red Skin**, accessible via the **Wandoor Jetty**.



MOUS AND AGREEMENT

India–Germany Sign Joint Declaration of Intent on Telecommunications Cooperation

- **India and Germany** signed a **Joint Declaration of Intent (JDI) on Telecommunications Cooperation** during the official visit of **German Federal Chancellor Friedrich Merz to India in January 2026**.
- The JDI was signed by **Amit Agrawal, Secretary (Telecom), Government of India**, and **Philipp Ackermann on behalf of the Government of Germany**.
- The agreement was concluded between **India's Department of Telecommunications (DoT)** and **Germany's Federal Ministry for Digital Transformation and Government Modernisation (BMDS)**.
- The declaration aims to **deepen bilateral cooperation in telecommunications and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)**.
- It reflects the growing momentum in **India–Germany strategic relations** supported by sustained high-level political engagement.
- The JDI focuses on **innovation-driven growth** and **inclusive, sustainable digital transformation** in both countries.
- Key areas of cooperation include **exchange of information and best practices**, collaboration in **emerging and future digital technologies**, and cooperation in **policy and regulatory frameworks**.



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- It also emphasises **strengthening telecom and ICT manufacturing capabilities** and improving **ease of doing business**, supporting industry-led growth.
- The JDI establishes an **institutional framework** with **regular consultations and annual high-level meetings**.
- Dedicated **working groups** and **multi-stakeholder engagement** involving government, industry, academia, and research institutions will support implementation.
- India and Germany will also cooperate in **international and multilateral fora** to promote shared perspectives on **digital governance, connectivity, and emerging technologies**.
- Joint engagement at global platforms is expected to contribute to **norm-setting in telecommunications and digital development**.

Daily CA One- Liner: January 20

- The **Government of India** blocked **242 illegal betting and gambling website links** in **January 2026** as part of an intensified enforcement drive
- **India witnessed** a new literary initiative with the launch of the **first-ever NAMO Book Fest** in **New Delhi**
- The **Karnataka government** amended the land revenue law to address long-pending documentation issues related to **Jamma Bane lands** in **Kodagu district**
- The **Supreme Court of India** ruled that **unreserved (general) category seats** in public recruitment are **open to all candidates purely on merit**, irrespective of social category
- Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** laid the foundation stone of the **₹6,957 crore Kaziranga Elevated Corridor**, in **Assam**
- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** launched **India's first Sleeper Vande Bharat train**, flagging it off from **Malda, West Bengal**
- The **Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises** approved two new **MSME Technology Centres** in **Himachal Pradesh** at **Pandoga (Una district)** and **Parwanoo (Solan district)**.
- **Jharkhand** has notified rules under the **Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA)** nearly **25 years** after its enactment, marking a significant step towards **tribal self-governance in Fifth Schedule areas**.
- The **two-day Spituk Gustor Festival** has commenced at **Spituk Monastery** in **Ladakh**, marking the **first monastic festival of the year** in the region
- **India and Germany** signed a **Joint Declaration of Intent (JDI) on Telecommunications Cooperation** during the official visit of **German Federal Chancellor Friedrich Merz to India in January 2026**
- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** issued the **Reserve Bank – Integrated Ombudsman Scheme (RB-IOS) 2026** to simplify and strengthen **grievance redressal** for customers of banks and financial institutions.
- The **Government of India** has continued the **Modified Interest Subvention Scheme (MISS)** for **2025-26** to provide **short-term crop loans** and **allied activity loans** to farmers through **Kisan Credit Cards (KCC)**.
- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** issued draft amendment directions to clarify the calculation of **Owned Fund / Tier-1 Capital** for **NBFCs** and **Asset Reconstruction Companies (ARCs)** to comply with **credit and investment concentration limits** and invited public comments till **28 January 2026**.
- **Piramal Finance Limited (PFL)** secured **USD 350 million** multilateral funding, marking its **first borrowing** from **Development Finance Institutions (DFIs)**.

- **The Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has proposed **reopening the licensing window** for new **Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs)** after **22 years**, as the previous window was closed in **2004** due to widespread failures of newly licensed banks.
- **India and Israel** signed a **Joint Ministerial Declaration of Intent** to deepen bilateral cooperation in **Fisheries and Aquaculture**.
- The **6th ASEAN–India Digital Ministers’ Meeting (ADGMIN)** was hosted **virtually** by **Vietnam** under the theme “**Adaptive ASEAN: From Connectivity to Connected Intelligence.**”
- **INS Sagardhwani**, India’s **oceanographic research vessel** under the **Naval Physical and Oceanographic Laboratory (NPOL)** of **DRDO**, was flagged off for the **5th edition of Sagar Maitri (SM-5)** from **Southern Naval Command, Kochi** on **17 January 2026**.
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