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Current Affairs Today – January 2, 2026

2 January 2026

SUBJECTS COVERED**ECONOMY****SECURITY & DEFENCE****SCIENCE & TECH****IR****POLITY****ENVIRONMENT****PERSONS & AWARDS****REPORTS & SCHEMES****GEOGRAPHY****CURATED & WRITTEN BY****Bharat Choudhary**

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WHY IN NEWS

India overtook Japan to become the world's fourth-largest economy at USD 4.18 trillion. BSNL launched VoWiFi nationwide. The Ministry of Defence signed Rs 4,666 crore contracts for CQB Carbines and submarine torpedoes. Western Railways commissioned Kavach 4.0 on its first 96-km stretch.

INDIA BECOMES WORLD'S 4TH LARGEST ECONOMY — USD 4.18 TRILLION

The Government of India announced that **India has overtaken Japan** to become the **world's fourth-largest economy** with a GDP of **USD 4.18 trillion**:

Rankings (2025): 1st — USA; 2nd — China; 3rd — Germany; 4th — India (overtaking Japan)

Projected trajectory: India to surpass Germany and become 3rd largest within 2.5–3 years; GDP projected at ~USD 7.3 trillion by 2030

Growth: Real GDP growth at 8.2% in Q2 FY2025-26 (July–September); forex reserves USD 686.2 billion (11+ months import cover)

Viksit Bharat target: High Middle-Income country status by India@100 (2047)

FDI: Gross FDI April–September 2025 at USD 51.8 billion (+19.4% YoY); remittances up 10.7% YoY

CAD: Current Account Deficit moderated from 2.2% of GDP (Q2 FY25) to 1.3% (Q2 FY26)

UPSC Angle: GS-3 Economy — India's economic growth trajectory; GDP calculation methods (expenditure, income, output); Viksit Bharat 2047 vision; forex reserves significance; CAD management.

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE — RS 4,666 CRORE DEFENCE CONTRACTS

The Ministry of Defence (Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh) signed two major defence procurement contracts in December 2025:

Contract 1 — Rs 2,770 crore: Over 4.25 lakh **Close Quarter Battle (CQB) Carbines** for Indian Army and Indian Navy; **Bharat Forge Limited: 60%**; PLR Systems Pvt. Ltd. (JV: Adani Defence + Israel Weapon Industries): 40%; delivery: ~5 years; compact design for close combat

Contract 2 — Rs 1,896 crore: 48 **Heavy Weight Torpedoes (HWT)** for Indian Navy's **Kalvari-class submarines (Project-75)**; supplier: WASS Submarine Systems S.R.L. (Italy); delivery: April 2028 through early 2030

Context: Total MoD capital contracts in FY 2025-26: Rs 1,82,492 crore

UPSC Angle: GS-3 Security — Defence indigenisation (Atmanirbhar Bharat); Bharat Forge in defence; Project-75 Kalvari class submarines; Adani Defence; defence procurement process (Buy India, IDDM categories).

WESTERN RAILWAYS COMMISSIONS KAVACH 4.0

Western Railways' Vadodara division commissioned **Kavach 4.0** on the **Bajwa (Vadodara)–Ahmedabad section** (96 km, 17 stations) in Gujarat:

Kavach: India's indigenously developed **Automatic Train Protection (ATP)** system to prevent Signal Passing at Danger (SPAD), control over-speeding, and avert head-on/rear-end collisions

Safety level: Safety Integrity Level-4 (SIL-4) — highest international standard

Technology: RFID tags + Ultra High Frequency radio for real-time data exchange between tracks, signals, and locomotives

Kavach 4.0 improvements: Improved location accuracy, enhanced signal detection in complex yards, seamless interlocking integration, optical fibre-based station connectivity

Formal approval: Kavach 4.0 approved by RDSO (Research Designs and Standards Organisation) in July 2024

First Kavach train on route: Sankalp Fast (59549/59550)

National rollout: Kavach implemented on 2,200+ route kilometres across Indian Railways

UPSC Angle: GS-3 Science & Tech/Infrastructure — Kavach ATP system; RDSO's role; SIL safety standards; Indian Railways train safety measures; Balasore Odisha accident (2023) context.

BSNL LAUNCHES VOWIFI NATIONWIDE

BSNL (Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited) launched **VoWiFi (Voice over WiFi / Wi-Fi Calling)** across all telecom circles in India on New Year's Day (January 1, 2026):

What it does: Enables voice calls and SMS using a Wi-Fi network via the same mobile number and dialer — no separate app needed

Key benefit: Works in areas with weak mobile signal (homes, basements, offices, remote regions)

Cost: Free of charge for BSNL subscribers

Technology: IMS (IP Multimedia Subsystem)-based; supports seamless Wi-Fi to mobile handover

Significance: BSNL is a public sector telecom company (established 2000; under DoT); 4G/5G rollout using indigenous TCS TataCom technology stack

UPSC Angle: GS-3 S&T – VoWiFi technology; BSNL revival under Atmanirbhar Bharat (Rs 1.64 lakh crore revival package 2022); DoT; telecom sector competition; digital connectivity.

GOA TO GET THIRD DISTRICT — KUSHAVATI

Goa announced the creation of its **third district — Kushavati** (named after the ancient Kushavati River in southern Goa):

Composition: Sanguem, Dharbandora, Quepem, and Canacona talukas

Headquarters: Quepem (southern Goa)

Governance: A new Zilla Panchayat will be established

Historical context: Kushavati River is connected to Chalukya dynasty history; Usgalimal petroglyphs (laterite rock engravings) in the area document early human settlement

Current structure: Goa has had North Goa and South Goa districts since statehood (1987)

UPSC Angle: GS-2 Polity — District creation process; Zilla Panchayats; Goa’s political geography; Art & Culture — Usgalimal petroglyphs; Chalukya dynasty history.

ISRO — SSLV 3RD STAGE STATIC TEST

ISRO successfully conducted a **static ground test of the enhanced 3rd stage** of the **Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV)**:

Facility: Solid Motor Static Test Facility, Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh

Duration: 108 seconds (closely matching predictions)

Sensors: ~233 sensors monitoring pressure, thrust, temperature, vibration, and control electronics

Upgrades: New carbon-epoxy motor case; payload capacity increased by ~90 kg; improved igniter and nozzle

SSLV: Three-stage, all-solid launch vehicle designed for quick/on-demand small satellite missions; low-cost launch for LEO satellites

UPSC Angle: GS-3 S&T — ISRO’s SSLV vs PSLV vs LVM3; Satish Dhawan Space Centre; commercial space launch; New Space India Limited (NSIL).

KAAMYA KARTHIKEYAN — YOUNGEST INDIAN TO SKI TO SOUTH POLE

Kaamyaa Karthikeyan (18, Mumbai) became the **youngest Indian and second-youngest woman globally to ski to the South Pole**:

Achievement (December 27, 2025): Skied 115 km from 89°S in 11 days to the South Pole (altitude 2,385 m) pulling a sled in -30°C temperatures

Prior milestones: Youngest girl to scale Aconcagua (2019); youngest Indian to summit Everest (2023); completed Seven Summits (Mt. Vinson, Antarctica — final summit)

Explorers Grand Slam: Requires Seven Summits + ski to both North and South Poles (she is progressing toward it)

UPSC Angle: GS-1 Geography — Seven Summits; Antarctic geography; South Pole altitude; Explorers Grand Slam.

MEERA SYAL — DAMEHOOD IN KING'S NEW YEAR HONOURS 2026

Meera Syal (British-Indian comedian, actress, and writer) received a **DBE (Damehood)** in **King Charles III's New Year Honours List 2026**:

Citation: Outstanding contributions to literature, drama, and charity

Prior honours: MBE (1997); CBE (2015)

Total 2026 honours: 1,157 recipients; other notable: Idris Elba, Cynthia Erivo, Jayne Torvill and Christopher Dean

Youngest recipient: Toby Roberts (20, MBE) — Britain's first Olympic gold medallist at Paris 2024

UPSC Angle: GS-2 — Persons in News; British Honours system; Indian diaspora contributions; soft power.

SEBI — NISM CERTIFICATION MANDATORY FOR AIF COMPLIANCE OFFICERS

SEBI mandated that **compliance officers of Alternative Investment Fund (AIF) managers** must obtain **NISM Series-III-C certification** (Securities Intermediaries Compliance — Fund):

Effective: January 1, 2027

Disclosure: Required in annual Compliance Test Report

Context: AIF assets in India grew from Rs 28,000 crore to over Rs 15 lakh crore in 10 years (CAGR of 49%)

UPSC Angle: GS-3 Economy — AIFs (Category I/II/III); SEBI as regulator; NISM; capital market intermediaries.

INDIA IMPOSES FINAL SAFEGUARD DUTY ON STEEL IMPORTS

The Ministry of Finance imposed a **definitive 3-year safeguard duty** on steel imports (Notification No. 02/2025-Customs SG, dated December 30, 2025):

Duty structure: 12% (Year 1: Apr 2025–Apr 2026); 11.5% (Year 2); 11% (Year 3: Apr 2027–Apr 2028)

Products covered: Hot rolled coils/plates, cold rolled coils/sheets, metallic coated coils, colour coated coils/sheets (Customs Tariff headings 7208, 7209, 7210, 7211, 7212, 7225, 7226)

Investigating authority: DGTR (Director General of Trade Remedies; under MoCI)

Purpose: Protect domestic steel industry from surge in imports (primarily from China, Vietnam, South Korea)

UPSC Angle: GS-3 Economy/Trade — Safeguard duty vs anti-dumping duty vs countervailing duty; DGTR role; WTO Agreement on Safeguards; India’s steel sector; Make in India.

PERU — AMAZONIAN STINGLESS BEES GET LEGAL RIGHTS (WORLD FIRST)

Local municipalities in **Peru** passed an ordinance granting **legal rights to Amazonian stingless bees** — the first time in history an insect species has been granted legal rights:

Rights recognised: “To exist, survive, and flourish”

Species: Native stingless bees of the Amazon; crucial pollinators for Indigenous communities and ecosystems

Significance: Establishes global precedent for Rights of Nature movement; stingless bees produce medicinal honey and are essential for Amazonian biodiversity

UPSC Angle: GS-3 Environment — Rights of Nature concept; pollinator decline and ecological significance; Amazon biodiversity; Rights of Nature movement (Ecuador’s Pachamama rights; Whanganui River rights, New Zealand).

JAL SEVA AANKALAN — DIGITAL DRINKING WATER ASSESSMENT TOOL

The Ministry of Jal Shakti (MoJS) virtually launched “**Jal Seva Aankalan**” — a digital tool to assess the functionality and service quality of drinking water supply systems at the village level:

Launched by: Union Minister **C R Patil** (MoJS), Union MoS **V. Somanna**, MoS **Raj Bhushan Choudhary** — December 2025

Platform: Hosted on the **Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) portal**

Purpose: Assess drinking water service quality at gram panchayat level; identify functional/non-functional connections

Assessment team: Village Water & Sanitation Committee (VWSC), Panchayat Secretary, system operators, water users (women and vulnerable groups mandated)

Transparency: Results presented to **Gram Sabha** for endorsement; uploaded to **JJM Panchayat Dashboard**; accessible on **eGramSwaraj** and **Meri Panchayat App**

Citizen feedback window: 30 days before finalisation

Deadline: All Har Ghar Jal (HGJ) Gram Panchayats must complete by **January 26, 2026**

JJM context: Launched August 2019; target — tap water connections to all rural households; ~99%+ coverage achieved as of 2025

UPSC Angle: GS-2 Governance — Jal Jeevan Mission monitoring; VWSC institutional framework; Gram Sabha role in service delivery; decentralised accountability; GS-3 Water management — rural drinking water infrastructure; Swachh Bharat + JJM convergence.

ACC APPOINTMENTS — DG DGFT AND CMD FCI

The **Appointments Committee of Cabinet (ACC)**, chaired by PM Narendra Modi, approved a reshuffle of 25 senior civil servants:

Lav Aggarwal — Director General, DGFT:

DGFT: Director General of Foreign Trade; under Ministry of Commerce & Industry; regulates India's foreign trade policy, export-import licenses, MEIS/RoDTEP/SEIS schemes

Cadre: **1996-batch IAS**, Andhra Pradesh cadre

Previous role: Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health; Additional Secretary, Women & Child Development

Rabindra Kumar Agarwal — CMD, Food Corporation of India (FCI):

FCI: Food Corporation of India; established **1965** under the **Food Corporation Act, 1964**; under Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution; procures, stores, and distributes foodgrains under National Food Security Act 2013

Cadre: **1997-batch IAS**, Kerala cadre

Previous roles: Deputy Director AIIMS New Delhi; JS Ministry of Ports; Additional Secretary Ministry of Cooperation; Central Registrar of Cooperative Societies (CRCS)

UPSC Angle: GS-2 Governance — Civil services; FCI's role in food security (buffer stocks, price stabilisation, PDS); DGFT's role in export promotion; ACC's role in senior appointments.

NMCG — INDIAN SKIMMER CONSERVATION IN GANGA BASIN

The **Executive Committee (EC) of National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)** approved a project to protect sandbar-nesting birds in the Ganga basin (68th EC meeting, December 2025):

Meeting chaired by: Rajeev Kumar Mital, Director General, NMCG

Focus species: Indian Skimmer (Rynchops albicollis) — critically dependent on sandbars and gravel banks for nesting

Conservation status: Endangered (IUCN) — population declining due to sand mining, river regulation, human disturbance

Key areas: Bijnor, Narora, Prayagraj (UP); Chambal River (MP/Rajasthan); Lower Ganga

Framework: Namami Gange Mission-II (Phase 2 of India’s flagship Ganga rejuvenation programme)

Approach: Long-term monitoring, community participation, reduction of human disturbance at nesting sites

NMCG: National Mission for Clean Ganga; under Ministry of Jal Shakti; implements Namami Gange programme (launched 2015; budget Rs 20,000 crore)

UPSC Angle: GS-3 Environment — Namami Gange Mission; sand mining impact on river ecology; migratory birds on Ganga; NMCG governance structure; Indian Skimmer as indicator species; biodiversity of Gangetic river system.

WINTER STORM EZRA — BOMB CYCLONE HITS USA

A powerful **bomb cyclone** named **Winter Storm Ezra** swept across the United States:

Bomb cyclone: Rapid cyclogenesis — when atmospheric pressure drops by **24 millibars or more in 24 hours**, intensifying the storm dramatically; also called “explosive cyclogenesis”

Impact: Over **58 million people** placed under winter storm warnings; blizzards, gale-force winds, widespread power outages

Direction: Moved eastward across the USA

Geographic note: Continental USA has diverse climatic zones making it susceptible to nor’easters and bomb cyclones in winter

India relevance: Extreme weather events; climate change connection; UPSC GS-1 climatology

UPSC Angle: GS-1 Physical Geography — Cyclone types (tropical vs extratropical; bomb cyclone); temperate cyclones; jet stream influence on winter storms; climate change and weather extremes; disaster management frameworks.

UPSC RELEVANCE

India 4th largest economy (USD 4.18 trillion; overtook Japan; 3rd Germany ahead; USD 7.3 trillion by 2030); MoD contracts Rs 4,666 crore (CQB Carbines 4.25 lakh; Bharat Forge 60%; HWT torpedoes 48; Kalvari class Project-75; WASS Italy); Kavach 4.0 (Bajwa-Ahmedabad 96 km; 17 stations; SIL-4; RDSO July 2024; Sankalp Fast); BSNL VoWiFi (Jan 1 2026; all telecom circles; IMS-based; free); Goa 3rd district Kushavati (Kushavati River; Sanguem/Dharbandora/Quepem/Canacona; HQ Quepem; Usgalimal petroglyphs; Chalukya); ISRO SSLV 3rd stage (Sriharikota; 108 seconds; 233 sensors; +90 kg payload; carbon-epoxy); Kaamya Karthikeyan (18; Mumbai; youngest Indian South Pole ski; 115 km; -30°C; 11 days; Seven Summits); Jal Seva Aankalan (MoJS; JJM portal; C R Patil; VWSC; Gram Sabha; eGramSwaraj; Jan 26 2026 deadline); NMCG 68th EC (Indian Skimmer *Rynchops albicollis*; Endangered; Namami Gange Mission-II; sandbar nesting; Rajeev Kumar Mital); ACC appointments (Lav Aggarwal DG DGFT 1996-batch AP; Rabindra Kumar Agarwal CMD FCI 1997-batch Kerala; FCI est. 1965 Food Corporation Act 1964); Bomb cyclone Ezra (58 million; 24 mb pressure drop/24 hrs; explosive cyclogenesis); Meera Syal DBE (British-Indian; King's New Year Honours 2026; MBE 1997; CBE 2015); Peru stingless bees (first insect legal rights; Rights of Nature; Amazon); Safeguard duty steel (12%→11.5%→11%; DGTR; 3 years; Dec 30 2025); SEBI AIF NISM (Series-III-C; Jan 1 2027; AIF assets Rs 15 lakh crore; CAGR 49%) **Mains GS-2:** Jal Jeevan Mission — accountability and monitoring mechanisms | FCI's role in food security architecture | Civil service appointments and ACC framework **Mains GS-3:** India's GDP milestone — structural transformation required to sustain 4th largest status | Kavach ATP system — train safety architecture and deployment challenges | Atmanirbhar Bharat in defence — domestic procurement framework | Namami Gange Mission-II — ecosystem restoration approach

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

INDIA'S ECONOMIC RANKINGS:

2025 GDP: USD 4.18 trillion (4th largest; overtook Japan)
 GDP target 2030: ~USD 7.3 trillion (projected 3rd largest economy)
 Real GDP growth: Q2 FY26: 8.2%; Q1 FY26: 7.8%; Q4 FY25: 7.4%
 Forex reserves (Nov 2025): USD 686.2 billion (11+ months import cover)
 CAD: 1.3% of GDP in Q2 FY26 (moderated from 2.2% in Q2 FY25)
 Net FDI (Apr–Sep 2025): USD 7.7 billion (+127.6% YoY)

MOD CQB CARBINE CONTRACT:

Contract value: Rs 2,770 crore (one of two Dec 2025 contracts)
 Quantity: Over 4.25 lakh carbines for Army + Navy
 Vendor: Bharat Forge Limited (60%) + PLR Systems Pvt. Ltd. (Adani Defence + Israel Weapon Industries JV) (40%)
 Delivery timeline: ~5 years
 Category: Compact, close combat weapon replacing older service rifles for special operations

KAVACH ATP SYSTEM:

Full name: Automatic Train Protection (ATP) system
 Developer: Research Designs and Standards Organisation (RDSO), Lucknow
 Safety standard: SIL-4 (Safety Integrity Level 4; highest)
 Kavach 4.0: Approved RDSO July 2024; commissioned Bajwa-Ahmedabad (Vadodara division, Western Railways) December 2025
 Deployed on: 2,200+ route km across India (as of Jan 2026)
 Technology: RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) + UHF (Ultra High Frequency) radio communication
 Functions: Prevents SPAD (Signal Passing at Danger); controls over-speeding; prevents head-on/rear-end collisions

SSLV (SMALL SATELLITE LAUNCH VEHICLE):

Stages: 3 (all solid fuel); vertical launch
 LEO payload: ~500 kg (enhanced 3rd stage adds ~90 kg)
 First development flight: SSLV-D1 (2022; partial failure); SSLV-D2 (February 2023; success)
 Purpose: Low-cost, quick-turnaround launches for small satellites (1–500 kg)
 Launch facility: Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh

GOA — KUSHAVATI DISTRICT:

River: Kushavati (ancient; flows through southern Goa; Chalukya dynasty historical significance)
 Talukas: Sanguem, Dharbandora, Quepem, Canacona
 HQ: Quepem
 Usgalimal Petroglyphs: Prehistoric rock engravings on laterite stone; Sanguem taluka; Kushavati River basin; among the oldest known Indian petroglyphs
 Goa statehood: 1987 (25th state); previously 2 districts (North Goa and South Goa)

PERU STINGLESS BEE RIGHTS:

Rights of Nature movement precedents: Ecuador — rights of Pachamama (Mother Nature) in constitution (2008); Whanganui River (New Zealand, 2017); Ganges and Yamuna rivers (India, 2017 HC — later stayed by Supreme Court)

Stingless bees: Family Meliponini; over 550 species; primary pollinators in tropical ecosystems; produce medicinal honey used by Amazonian Indigenous peoples

JAL SEVA AANKALAN:

Tool: Digital drinking water service assessment; hosted on JJM portal

Launched by: C R Patil (Minister of Jal Shakti); V. Somanna and Raj Bhushan Choudhary (MoS)

Assessment team: VWSC (Village Water & Sanitation Committee), Panchayat Secretary, water users

Reporting: Results to Gram Sabha; data on JJM Panchayat Dashboard + eGramSwaraj + Meri Panchayat App

Citizen feedback: 30 days before finalisation

Deadline: All HGJ Gram Panchayats by January 26, 2026

JJM: Jal Jeevan Mission; launched August 15, 2019; 100% tap water connection target

FCI — KEY DATA:

Established: 1965 under Food Corporation Act, 1964

Ministry: Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution

Role: Procurement, storage, transport, distribution of food grains under NFSA 2013

New CMD: Rabindra Kumar Agarwal (1997-batch Kerala IAS; ACC appointment Dec 2025)

DGFT: Director General of Foreign Trade; manages export-import policy, RoDTEP, FTAs; New DG: Lav Aggarwal (1996-batch AP IAS)

NMCG — INDIAN SKIMMER:

Species: Indian Skimmer (*Rynchops albigollis*); family Laridae; distinctive orange-red bill (lower mandible longer than upper)

Status: Endangered (IUCN); nests on sandbars and gravel banks

Threat: Sand mining, river regulation, boat disturbance at nesting sites

NMCG: Under Ministry of Jal Shakti; Namami Gange Programme (2015; Rs 20,000 crore); DG: Rajeev Kumar Mital

BOMB CYCLONE:

Definition: Rapid cyclogenesis — atmospheric pressure drops 24+ millibars in 24 hours

Scientific term: Explosive cyclogenesis

Winter Storm Ezra: Hit USA; 58+ million under warnings; blizzards, power outages

Note: Different from tropical cyclones — bomb cyclones are extratropical (mid-latitude); occur when cold Arctic air meets warm ocean air

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

Project-75 Kalvari class: 6 submarines (Kalvari, Khanderi, Karanj, Vela, Vagir, Vagsheer); French Scorpene design; built at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders, Mumbai; diesel-electric propulsion; 67.5 m length; displacement ~1,550 tonnes surfaced

HWT (Heavy Weight Torpedo): 533 mm; range ~50 km; targets submarines and surface ships; WASS (Italy) supplier

BSNL VoWiFi: Works on IMS (IP Multimedia Subsystem) protocol; handover between Wi-Fi and LTE is seamless; reduces network congestion on mobile towers

Magnus Carlsen: Won 6th World Rapid title + 9th World Blitz title (Doha, Dec 2025); completed Rapid-Blitz Double Crown 2025

Kaamya Karthikeyan Seven Summits: Everest (Asia), Aconcagua (S. America), Denali (N. America), Elbrus (Europe), Kilimanjaro (Africa), Vinson (Antarctica), Kosciuszko (Oceania)

Sources: PIB, AffairsCloud, GKToday

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