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Current Affairs Today – January 5, 2026

5 January 2026

SUBJECTS COVERED**POLITY****ECONOMY****SCIENCE & TECH****SOCIAL ISSUES****ENVIRONMENT****IR****HISTORY & CULTURE****SECURITY & DEFENCE****CURATED & WRITTEN BY****Bharat Choudhary**

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WHY IN NEWS

Telangana abolished its two-child norm for Panchayat Raj elections, joining a national trend as fertility rates fall well below replacement levels. The Indian Pharmacopoeia 2026 (10th edition) was released as the first globally to include blood component monographs. Prime Minister Modi inaugurated the Grand International Exposition of Sacred Piprahwa Relics of Bhagwan Buddha at Rai Pithora Cultural Complex, New Delhi. India's live events market received its first formal regulatory body under MIB.

TELANGANA ABOLISHES TWO-CHILD NORM FOR PANCHAYAT RAJ ELECTIONS

The Telangana Legislative Assembly unanimously passed the **Telangana Panchayat Raj (Amendment) Bill, 2026**, removing the restriction barring individuals with more than two children from contesting Panchayat Raj elections.

Two-child norm origin: The restriction was introduced in **1994** during a period of population growth concern

Reason for abolition: Telangana's rural total fertility rate (TFR) has declined to **1.7 children per woman** — well below the replacement level of 2.1

Minister: State Panchayat Raj Minister **Anasuya Seethakka** explained the rationale

A second amendment bill also renamed the village 'Jaintirumalapur' (Wanaparthy mandal) to 'Jayanna Tirumalapur'

UPSC Angle: GS-2 Social Issues/Polity — Population policy evolution; Panchayati Raj disqualification grounds; India's demographic transition; state-level population legislation.

INDIAN PHARMACOPOEIA 2026 — 10TH EDITION RELEASED

Union Minister **J.P. Nadda** (Health) released the **10th edition of the Indian Pharmacopoeia (IP 2026)**:

New monographs: 121 new monographs added; total monographs now: **3,340**

Historic first: IP 2026 is the **first Indian Pharmacopoeia** to include **20 monographs for blood components** — a significant milestone for India's transfusion medicine standards

First edition: Indian Pharmacopoeia was first published in **1955**

Published by: Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC) under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare

Purpose: Sets quality standards for drugs manufactured/sold in India; mandatory under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940

UPSC Angle: GS-2 Health — Drug regulatory framework; Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission; Drugs and Cosmetics Act 1940; India's pharmaceutical sector (3rd largest by volume globally).

I&B MINISTRY ESTABLISHES LIVE EVENTS DEVELOPMENT CELL (LEDC)

The **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB)**, directed by Minister **Ashwini Vaishnaw**, established the **Live Events Development Cell (LEDC)** (set up July 2025; publicly announced January 2026):

Market size: India's organised live events sector: **₹20,861 crore in 2024**

Growth: Projected **18% CAGR**; India to become one of global live entertainment leaders by 2030

Employment: 10 million+ jobs; single large events generate 15,000+ direct/indirect jobs

Function: Single-window mechanism for central/state government coordination, industry, and music rights societies

Tier 2/3 growth: Visakhapatnam (+490%), Vadodara (+230%), Shillong (+213%), Guwahati (+188%)

UPSC Angle: GS-3 Economy — Creative economy; cultural industries; employment generation; India's service sector growth.

MAS SCHEME — MARKET ACCESS SUPPORT FOR EXPORTERS

The government launched the **Market Access Support (MAS) Scheme** worth **₹4,531 crore** (FY26–FY31):

Part of the larger **₹25,060 crore Export Promotion Mission (EPM)**

Supports MSMEs and first-time exporters in international trade fairs, exhibitions, and Buyer-Seller Meets (BSMs)

Caps: ₹5 crore per BSM event; ₹10 crore for Reverse BSMs

Mandatory: Minimum 35% MSME participation in events supported under the scheme

UPSC Angle: GS-3 Economy — Export promotion policy; MSME internationalisation; India's export targets (USD 2 trillion by 2030); DPIIT and commerce ministry roles.

NIRYAT PRO TSAHAN SUB-SCHEME — EXPORT PROMOTION MISSION

The government launched the **Niryat Protsahan (Export Promotion) sub-scheme** worth **₹7,295 crore** (FY26–FY31) under the larger **₹25,060 crore Export Promotion Mission (EPM)**:

INTERVENTION 1 — INTEREST SUBVENTION (₹5,181 CRORE)

Provides **2.75% interest subvention** on export credit for MSMEs and eligible exporters

Reduces cost of credit for exporters competing in price-sensitive global markets

Administered by: **DGFT (Directorate General of Foreign Trade)** under the Ministry of Commerce & Industry

INTERVENTION 2 — COLLATERAL SUPPORT (₹2,114 CRORE)

Provides **collateral-free credit guarantees** through **CGTMSE (Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises)**

Maximum coverage: **85% for Micro/Small enterprises, 65% for Medium enterprises**

Annual cap: **₹10 crore per exporter** per year

Removes the collateral barrier that prevents small exporters from accessing working capital

How it differs from MAS Scheme: MAS (₹4,531 crore) funds trade fair participation and market access; Niryat Protsahan addresses the **financing constraint** — making credit cheaper and accessible for the export cycle itself.

UPSC Angle: GS-3 Economy — Export Promotion Mission (EPM); MSME export financing; CGTMSE guarantee mechanism; DGFT role; India's export target (USD 2 trillion by 2030); interest subvention as trade policy tool; WTO compliance concerns with export subsidies.

IITM GLOBAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION — IIT MADRAS

Union Minister **Dr. S. Jaishankar** (MEA) launched the **IITM Global Research Foundation** at IIT Madras, Chennai:

Purpose: Coordinating international research collaboration for IIT Madras

MoUs signed: USA (3), UK (1), Germany (3), Dubai-UAE (3), Asia-Pacific (3), India-for-Global (6)

Initial locations: USA, Dubai, Malaysia, Germany

Significance: IIT Madras's global research network expansion; connects India's premier technical institution with global academic and industry partners

UPSC Angle: GS-2 IR/Education — India's higher education internationalisation; soft power through scientific collaboration; IIT-diaspora links; NEP 2020 internationalisation goals.

ADB LOAN FOR MUSI RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT, HYDERABAD

Asian Development Bank (ADB) approved a **₹4,100 crore (USD 500 million)** loan for the Musi Riverfront Development Project in Hyderabad:

Project scope: Covers **21 km** of the total **55 km** Musi Riverfront in Phase I

SPV: Musi Riverfront Development Corporation Limited (Telangana government)

Works begin: After March 31, 2026

Significance: Urban river rehabilitation; flood management; green spaces; heritage conservation along the Musi River which flows through historic Hyderabad

UPSC Angle: GS-3 Environment/Economy — Urban river restoration; ADB lending to India; smart city projects; river city alliance; Musi River historical significance (Charminar, Nizam era).

PRASAR BHARATI — THADOU LANGUAGE BROADCAST RESTORATION

Prasar Bharati is moving to restore live **Thadou language** radio broadcasts through **All India Radio (AIR/Akashvani)** in Imphal, Manipur:

Current status: Live Thadou programmes stopped after Thadou staff left Imphal valley following ethnic clashes that began **May 2023**; only recorded Thadou songs are broadcast (5:00–5:30 PM daily)

Demand: Thadou Inpi Manipur (tribal representative body) formally requested restoration

Thadou community: Officially recognised Scheduled Tribe under the **1956 Presidential Order**; community's independent tribal status was reaffirmed at a Guwahati convention (November 2024)

UPSC Angle: GS-2 Polity/Social Issues — Prasar Bharati mandate; AIR/Akashvani minority language broadcasts; Manipur ethnic crisis; ST recognition process under the 1950/1956 Presidential Orders.

COSMO-SKYMED SATELLITE — SPACEX FALCON 9 LAUNCH

SpaceX **Falcon 9** launched the **COSMO-SkyMed Second Generation (CSG-3)** satellite:

Launch site: Vandenberg Space Force Base, California

Operator: Italian Space Agency (ASI) and Italian Ministry of Defence

Third satellite in the Second-Generation series

Orbit: 620 km altitude, sun-synchronous orbit

Weight: ~2,205 kg

Significance: First SpaceX mission of 2026; first global orbital rocket launch of 2026; X-band SAR (Synthetic Aperture Radar) satellite for dual civilian-military use

UPSC Angle: GS-3 S&T — SAR satellites; commercial launch market; SpaceX’s Falcon 9 reusability; sun-synchronous orbit applications; Italy-India space collaboration.

JHARKHAND HIGH COURT — NEW CHIEF JUSTICE

Justice Mahesh Sharadchandra Sonak appointed as Chief Justice of Jharkhand High Court (effective **January 8, 2026**):

Transferred from Bombay High Court

Enrolled as advocate in October 1988; 36+ years of legal experience

Scheduled retirement: **November 27, 2026**

UPSC Angle: GS-2 Polity — High Court Chief Justice appointment process (Article 217); collegium system; transfer of judges.

WORLD BRAILLE DAY — JANUARY 4

World Braille Day was observed on **January 4, 2026** (its 8th observance since UN recognition in 2019):

Marks birth anniversary of **Louis Braille**, born **January 4, 1809**, in Coupvray, France

Braille system invented **1824** (at age 15); published **1829**

Uses a grid of **six raised dots** (64 possible combinations)

National Federation of the Blind theme: “More Braille More Empowerment”

First World Braille Day: **January 4, 2019** (UN designation)

UPSC Angle: GS-2 Social Issues — Disability rights; UNCRPD (Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities); Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016; accessible communication standards.

ICGS SAMUDRA PRATAP — INDIA’S FIRST INDIGENOUS POLLUTION CONTROL VESSEL

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh commissioned **ICGS Samudra Pratap** — India’s **first indigenously designed and built Pollution Control Vessel (PCV)** — at **Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL)** on January 5, 2026:

VESSEL SPECIFICATIONS

Displacement: 4,170 tonnes

Length: 114.5 metres

Speed: 22+ knots

Indigenous content: Over 60%

Builder: Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL)

Operator: Indian Coast Guard (ICG), under Ministry of Defence

POLLUTION RESPONSE CAPABILITIES

Side-sweeping arms: Collect oil spills from either side of the vessel while moving

Floating booms: Contain oil slicks to prevent spreading

Skimmers: Recover floating oil from the sea surface

Dispersant spray: Chemical treatment for oil dispersal in open ocean

Purpose: Rapid response to oil spills from tanker accidents, pipeline leaks, and port incidents along India's 7,516 km coastline

SIGNIFICANCE

India's coastline handles approximately **1,400+ MT of cargo annually** across 13 major ports; oil spill risk is significant

First time two women officers have been posted on an ICG vessel — symbolic milestone for women's integration in the Coast Guard

India now has a dedicated, indigenous asset for marine pollution response; previously dependent on improvised vessel capabilities

UPSC Angle: GS-3 Environment + Security — Indian Coast Guard modernisation; oil spill response; marine pollution (MARPOL Convention — IMO); Goa Shipyard Limited; Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP); 60% indigenous content under Atmanirbhar Bharat defence; GS-1 — women in defence forces.

A.K. BALASUBRAHMANIAN — NEW AERB CHAIRMAN

A.K. Balasubrahmanian, a Distinguished Scientist, took charge as **Chairman of the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB)** effective **January 1, 2026**:

Predecessor: Dr. D.K. Shukla

Term: 3 years

Background: Over **4 decades of experience** in nuclear power plant design, development, and safety; mechanical engineer with specialisation in nuclear engineering

AERB: India's nuclear safety regulator; established **1983** under the Atomic Energy Act 1962; reports to Atomic Energy Commission (AEC); Chairman of AEC = Prime Minister of India

Functions: Grants licenses to nuclear facilities; sets safety standards; inspects nuclear installations; emergency preparedness oversight

Jurisdiction: All atomic energy-related activities under the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE)

UPSC Angle: GS-3 S&T — Atomic Energy Act 1962; AERB’s regulatory role; nuclear safety governance; DAE structure; India’s nuclear power capacity (7,480 MW installed; target 22,480 MW by 2031-32); IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) relationship.

PIPAHWA RELICS EXPOSITION — “THE LIGHT AND THE LOTUS”

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the **Grand International Exposition of Sacred Piprahwa Relics of Bhagwan Buddha** — titled “**The Light and the Lotus: Relics of the Awakened One**” — at the **Rai Pithora Cultural Complex, New Delhi** (January 5, 2026):

THE RELICS AND THEIR DISCOVERY

Original discovery: 1898, during excavation at **Piprahwa** in Siddharthnagar district, Uttar Pradesh — a site archaeologically linked to ancient **Kapilavastu**, where the Buddha spent his early years before renunciation

Archaeological significance: Considered among the earliest direct physical evidence associated with Bhagwan Buddha; the inscribed relic casket reads “here are the relics of the Awakened One of the Sakya clan”

Separation period: The relics were held in two different repositories — the **National Museum (New Delhi)** and the **Indian Museum (Kolkata)** — for over **125 years** after their discovery

Cultural Minister: Gajendra Singh Shekhawat

BROADER CONTEXT AND POLICY SIGNIFICANCE

The exposition marks the **symbolic homecoming** of the relics — reunifying them after their long institutional separation

Connected to India’s **Buddhist soft power diplomacy**: relics have been lent to Sri Lanka, Thailand, Mongolia, and other Buddhist nations as acts of cultural diplomacy

Government efforts to prevent **international auction of sacred relics** (several auctions of Indian Buddhist antiquities at Christie’s and Sotheby’s have been blocked in recent years)

Pali language was recently granted **Classical Language status** — recognising it as the primary scriptural language of Theravada Buddhism

The government has announced modernisation of **Buddhist pilgrimage circuits** (Bodhi Gaya, Sarnath, Vaishali, Shravasti, Kushinagar, Piprahwa) under PRASAD and related schemes

UPSC Angle: GS-1 History & Culture — Piprahwa excavation (1898); Kapilavastu; Buddhist relics and their political-cultural significance; GS-2 IR — Buddhist soft power diplomacy; loan of relics as diplomatic tool; GS-2 Governance — protection of antiquities under ASI (Archaeological Survey of India); Antiquities and Art Treasures Act 1972; Classical Language criteria.

UPSC RELEVANCE

ICGS Samudra Pratap (India's first indigenous PCV; 4,170 tonnes; 114.5m; 22+ knots; Goa Shipyard; 60%+ indigenous; Rajnath Singh; January 5 2026; ICG; first two women officers); A.K.

Balasubrahmanian (AERB Chairman; January 1 2026; Distinguished Scientist; 3-year term; AERB 1983; Atomic Energy Act 1962; DAE); Telangana Panchayat Raj Amendment 2026 (two-child norm abolition; TFR 1.7); Indian Pharmacopoeia 2026 10th edition (JP Nadda; 3,340 monographs; 121 new; first blood component monographs globally; first edition 1955; IPC); LEDC — Live Events Development Cell (MIB; Ashwini Vaishnav; ₹20,861 crore market; 18% CAGR; 10 million jobs); MAS Scheme (₹4,531 crore; FY26-31; EPM ₹25,060 crore; 35% MSME mandatory); Niryat Protsahan sub-scheme (₹7,295 crore; DGFT; Interest Subvention ₹5,181 crore at 2.75%; Collateral Support ₹2,114 crore via CGTMSE; 85% Micro/Small, 65% Medium; ₹10 crore/exporter/year); IITM Global Research Foundation (Jaishankar; IIT Madras; USA/Germany/UAE MoUs); ADB Musi Riverfront loan (₹4,100 crore / USD 500 million; 21 km Phase I; Telangana SPV); Thadou language/AIR (ST under 1956 Presidential Order; Manipur ethnic crisis May 2023); COSMO-SkyMed CSG-3 (Italian Space Agency; SpaceX Falcon 9; 620 km sun-synchronous; X-band SAR); Justice M.S. Sonak (CJ Jharkhand HC; January 8, 2026); World Braille Day (January 4; Louis Braille born 1809; Braille system 1824; first WBD 2019); Piprahwa Relics Exposition (PM Modi; Rai Pithora Cultural Complex New Delhi; Jan 5 2026; "The Light and the Lotus"; discovered 1898; Kapilavastu; 125+ years; National Museum + Indian Museum; Classical Language Pali; Culture Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat)

MAINS GS-2:

India's demographic transition — should the two-child norm exist at all? | Drug regulation and the Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission | Prasar Bharati's role in minority language preservation

MAINS GS-3:

India's creative economy — live events, cultural industries, and employment | MSME export ecosystem and the Export Promotion Mission

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA
TELANGANA TWO-CHILD NORM:

Abolition: Telangana Panchayat Raj Amendment Bill 2026 (unanimous; January 2026)

Norm introduced: 1994

Telangana rural TFR: 1.7 (below replacement level of 2.1)

Minister: Anasuya Seethakka (Panchayat Raj)

Similar abolitions: Rajasthan (2022), Andhra Pradesh (2024)

INDIAN PHARMACOPOEIA 2026:

Edition: 10th edition

New monographs: 121; Total: 3,340

Blood component monographs: 20 — first globally

Released by: Health Minister J.P. Nadda

Published by: Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC), Ministry of Health

First IP edition: 1955

Legal basis: Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940

LIVE EVENTS DEVELOPMENT CELL (LEDC):

Ministry: Information and Broadcasting (MIB); Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw

India live events market: ₹20,861 crore (2024); projected 18% CAGR

Employment: 10 million+ jobs; large events: 15,000+ jobs each

Top Tier 2/3 growth: Visakhapatnam +490%, Vadodara +230%

MARKET ACCESS SUPPORT (MAS) SCHEME:

Outlay: ₹4,531 crore (FY26–FY31)

Part of: Export Promotion Mission (EPM) — ₹25,060 crore total

Mandatory MSME share: 35% at supported events

Administered by: DPIIT / Ministry of Commerce

NIRYAT PROTSAHAN SUB-SCHEME (EXPORT FINANCING):

Outlay: ₹7,295 crore (FY26–FY31); part of EPM (₹25,060 crore total)

Administered by: DGFT (Directorate General of Foreign Trade), Ministry of Commerce & Industry

Intervention 1 — Interest Subvention: ₹5,181 crore; 2.75% subvention on export credit

Intervention 2 — Collateral Support: ₹2,114 crore via CGTMSE guarantees

Coverage: 85% for Micro/Small enterprises; 65% for Medium enterprises

Annual cap: ₹10 crore per exporter per year

CGTMSE: Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises; under SIDBI + MoMSME

ADB MUSI RIVERFRONT:

Loan: ₹4,100 crore (USD 500 million)

Phase I: 21 km of 55 km total

SPV: Musi Riverfront Development Corporation Limited (Telangana)

ADB: Asian Development Bank; HQ Manila; India is largest borrower

COSMO-SKYMED CSG-3:

Operator: Italian Space Agency (ASI) + Italian Ministry of Defence
 Launch: SpaceX Falcon 9, Vandenberg SFB, California
 Orbit: Sun-synchronous, 620 km altitude
 Type: X-band SAR (Synthetic Aperture Radar) — can image through clouds and at night

ICGS SAMUDRA PRATAP — POLLUTION CONTROL VESSEL:

Type: India's first indigenously designed and built Pollution Control Vessel (PCV)
 Commissioned: January 5, 2026 by Rajnath Singh at Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL)
 Displacement: 4,170 tonnes; Length: 114.5 m; Speed: 22+ knots; Indigenous content: 60%+
 Operator: Indian Coast Guard (ICG), under Ministry of Defence
 Capabilities: Side-sweeping arms, floating booms, skimmers, dispersant spray system
 Milestone: First ICG vessel with two women officers posted
 India's coastline: 7,516 km; 13 major ports handle ~1,400+ MT cargo annually
 MARPOL Convention: International Convention for Prevention of Pollution from Ships (IMO); India is a signatory

AERB — A.K. BALASUBRAHMANIAN:

New AERB Chairman: A.K. Balasubrahmanian (Distinguished Scientist); effective January 1, 2026; 3-year term
 AERB: Atomic Energy Regulatory Board; established 1983 under Atomic Energy Act 1962
 Parent body: Department of Atomic Energy (DAE); AEC Chairman = Prime Minister of India
 Functions: Licenses nuclear facilities; sets safety standards; inspects installations; emergency preparedness
 India nuclear capacity: 7,480 MW installed (22 reactors); target 22,480 MW by 2031-32
 IAEA: International Atomic Energy Agency; UN body; India's nuclear safeguards governed by IAEA Additional Protocol

PIPRAHWA RELICS EXPOSITION — “THE LIGHT AND THE LOTUS”:

Event: Grand International Exposition of Sacred Piprahwa Relics of Bhagwan Buddha
 Full title: “The Light and the Lotus: Relics of the Awakened One”
 Inaugurated by: PM Narendra Modi; January 5, 2026; Rai Pithora Cultural Complex, New Delhi
 Culture Minister: Gajendra Singh Shekhawat
 Discovery of relics: 1898 (Piprahwa excavation); Siddharthnagar district, Uttar Pradesh
 Ancient site: Piprahwa — archaeologically linked to Kapilavastu (Buddha's early life)
 Relic casket inscription: “Here are the relics of the Awakened One of the Sakya clan”
 Previous repositories: National Museum (New Delhi) + Indian Museum (Kolkata) — separated for 125+ years
 Related: Pali granted Classical Language status; PRASAD scheme for Buddhist pilgrimage circuits
 ASI (Archaeological Survey of India): Under MoC; responsible for excavation and protection of monuments
 Antiquities and Art Treasures Act 1972: Regulates ownership/export of antiquities (objects >100 years old)

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

India's pharmaceutical market: 3rd largest globally by volume; ~14% of global generics by volume
 Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC): established 1956 (autonomous under MoHFW); publishes IP and National Formulary of India
 Drugs and Cosmetics Act 1940: primary law governing manufacture, sale, and import of drugs in India

Thadou community: ~400,000+ speakers; Tibeto-Burman language group; concentrated in Manipur, Nagaland, Assam

ADB India: India has been ADB's largest sovereign borrower since 2019

World Braille Day: UN General Assembly Resolution 73/162 (November 2018) designated January 4 as WBD; first observance 2019

Sources: AffairsCloud, PIB, Ministry of Health, Ministry of I&B

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