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# Current Affairs Today – January 7, 2026

7 January 2026

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

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## WHY IN NEWS

The Indian Army formally unveiled the ‘Bhairav’ drone force with over 1 lakh operatives across 15 battalions, signalling a major doctrinal shift toward autonomous warfare. Simultaneously, a new reed snake species was discovered in Mizoram, CSIR-NPL inaugurated Asia’s first National Environmental Standard Laboratory, and Tamil Nadu signed an MoU with UN Women for gender-responsive governance.

## INDIAN ARMY ‘BHAIRAV’ MODERN WARFARE FORCE — 1 LAKH DRONE OPERATIVES

The Indian Army unveiled the ‘**Bhairav**’ force — a dedicated drone warfare unit:

**Operatives:** Over **1 lakh** drone operatives trained and inducted

**Battalions:** **15 battalions** raised; **25 more** planned for future expansion

**First public appearance:** Army Day Parade, Jaipur, January 15, 2026

**Capability:** Counter-drone, surveillance, logistics drones, and offensive UAV operations

**Context:** Part of Army’s “Year of Networking and Data Centricity” 2026 initiative; Bhairav (a fierce form of Lord Shiva) symbolises the force’s offensive doctrine

**UPSC Angle:** GS-3 Security & Defence — India’s drone warfare doctrine; NCW (Network-Centric Warfare); force modernisation; Make in India in defence.

## SURYASTRA ROCKET LAUNCHER — RS 293 CRORE CONTRACT

The Indian Army signed an **Emergency Procurement** contract for the **Suryastra** precision-guided rocket system:

**Contract value:** Rs 293 crore with **NIBE Limited**

**Technology partner:** Israel’s **Elbit Systems** (co-development)

**Range:** 150–300 km

**Circular Error Probable (CEP):** Less than 5 meters (high precision)

**Significance:** Enhances long-range precision strike capability; useful for both the Western (Pakistan) and Northern (China) fronts

**UPSC Angle:** GS-3 Defence — Emergency Procurement provisions; India-Israel defence cooperation; precision-guided munitions; Make in India vs import.

## CALAMARIA MIZORAMENSIS — NEW REED SNAKE IN MIZORAM

Scientists at **Mizoram University** discovered a new species of reed snake:

**Scientific name:** *Calamaria mizoramensis*

**Published in:** *Zootaxa* (peer-reviewed zoological journal)

**Characteristics:** Non-venomous; nocturnal and semi-fossorial (lives partly underground); dark brown to blackish colouring with faint stripes; yellow underside

**Elevation:** Inhabits humid forested hills at **670–1,295 metres**

**Global count:** Brings global *Calamaria* genus total to **70 species**

**Mizoram biodiversity:** Brings state's herpetofauna total to **169 species** (reptiles + amphibians)

**UPSC Angle:** GS-3 Biodiversity — species discovery; Mizoram biodiversity; herpetofauna; role of regional universities in scientific research.

## CSIR-NPL WORLD-CLASS LABORATORIES INAUGURATED

Dr. Jitendra Singh (Minister for Science & Technology) inaugurated two world-class labs at **CSIR-NPL (National Physical Laboratory)**, New Delhi on January 5, 2026:

**National Environmental Standard Laboratory (NESL):** Asia's first and the world's second such facility — provides primary reference standards for air quality monitors, enabling calibration of India's entire pollution monitoring network

**National Primary Standard Facility for Solar Cell Calibration:** World's fifth such facility — enables precise calibration of solar PV cells and panels, critical for India's 500 GW renewable energy target

**CSIR-NPL role:** India's apex measurement standards laboratory; custodian of Indian national standards (Mass, Length, Time, Temperature, Electrical units)

**Collaboration:** NESL developed with Germany (PTB — Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt)

**UPSC Angle:** GS-3 S&T — CSIR institutions; metrological standards; air quality monitoring; solar energy infrastructure.

## NUTRIENT-BASED SUBSIDY (NBS) RATES — RABI 2025-26

The Government of India approved **NBS rates** for Rabi 2025-26 (October 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026):

**Total budget allocation:** Rs **37,952.29 crore** (Rs 736 crore higher than Kharif 2025)

**DAP subsidy:** Raised to Rs **29,805/MT** (from Rs 21,911/MT)

**Domestic P&K fertilizer production:** Increased **50% since 2014**

**Purpose:** Ensure affordable fertilizers for farmers; reduce import dependence; incentivise domestic manufacturing

**UPSC Angle:** GS-3 Agriculture/Economy — NBS scheme mechanism; fertiliser subsidy vs MSP; PM PRANAM scheme for reducing fertiliser use; urea pricing.

## ONGC-MOL ETHANE SHIPPING JVS AT GIFT CITY

**ONGC** and Japan's **MOL (Mitsui OSK Lines)** established two joint ventures for ethane shipping:

**JV names:** Bharat Ethane One IFSC Private Limited and Bharat Ethane Two IFSC Private Limited

**Registered at:** GIFT City, Gandhinagar, Gujarat (IFSC — International Financial Services Centre)

**Ownership:** 50:50 between ONGC and MOL

**Vessels:** Very Large Ethane Carriers (VLECs) — one vessel per JV — transporting ethane from **USA** to India

**Destination use:** OPaL (ONGC Petro Additions Limited, Dahej, Gujarat) — uses ethane as feedstock for petrochemical production

**Policy alignment:** Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047 (India's long-term maritime sector roadmap)

**MOL (Mitsui OSK Lines):** Japan's largest shipping company; one of the world's top 3 shipping conglomerates by fleet size

**UPSC Angle:** GS-3 Economy — GIFT City IFSC; petrochemical industry; India-Japan strategic economic ties; Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047; ethane as petrochemical feedstock; VLEC shipping technology.

## DNYANGANGA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY — PART OF MELGHAT TR

**Dnyanganga Wildlife Sanctuary** in the news:

**Location:** Buldhana district, Maharashtra; near Dnyanganga River

**Area:** ~205 sq km

**Significance:** Forms part of **Melghat Tiger Reserve** buffer zone

**Landscape:** Western Ghats-adjacent; contains two lakes; tiger corridor

**UPSC Angle:** GS-3 Biodiversity — Maharashtra wildlife; Melghat TR (Maharashtra's first TR; 1974); Project Tiger.

## TAMIL NADU–UN WOMEN MOU

Tamil Nadu CM **M.K. Stalin** signed an MoU with **UN Women** in Chennai:

**Focus:** Gender-responsive governance; implementation of gender-based budgeting

**Significance:** Tamil Nadu selected as **India's first state** for UNICEF Innovation Initiative

**Previous achievement:** TN has strong track record on women-centric governance (SHG movement, noon meal scheme, Kalaigiar Magalir Urimai Thittam)

**UPSC Angle:** GS-2 Social Issues — Gender-responsive budgeting; UN Women mandate; SDG 5 (Gender Equality); TN governance model.

## ONGC-NSTFDC MOU FOR 144 EMRS SCHOOLS

ONGC signed an MoU with NSTFDC (**National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation**) under the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA)**:

**Date:** January 5, 2026 | **Location:** New Delhi

**CSR commitment:** Rs 28 crore

**Coverage:** 144 **Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS)** across 11 states and UTs

**Areas supported:** Digital learning infrastructure, career mentorship programmes, teacher capacity building, health facilities, entrepreneurship development

**EMRS scheme:** Launched **FY 1997-98** to provide quality education to ST students in tribal areas; based on Navodaya Vidyalaya model; target: at least one EMRS per block with 50% or more ST population and at least 20,000 tribal persons; fully funded by Central Government

**NSTFDC:** National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation; under MoTA; provides concessional loans and financial assistance to STs for income-generating activities

**UPSC Angle:** GS-2 Social Issues — Tribal welfare; EMRS scheme; CSR under Companies Act 2013 (Section 135); Scheduled Tribe welfare policies; Article 46 (DPSP — promotion of educational and economic interests of SC/ST).

## INDIA RATINGS PROJECTS 6.9% GDP GROWTH FOR FY2026-27

**India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra)** projected India's GDP growth:

**FY2026-27 projection:** 6.9% — lower than FY26 estimate of 7.4%

**Private Final Consumption Expenditure (PFCE)** growth for FY27: 7.6% **Y-o-Y**

**PFCE share in GDP (Q2 FY26):** 55.9% (largest demand-side component)

**Downside risks cited:**

El Niño weather pattern (mid-2026) — threat to agriculture and kharif output

Weak private investment recovery

Sluggish global trade conditions

Base-year revision for GDP and CPI (may affect growth optics)

**Inflation outlook:** Benign for Q4 FY26 and FY27 (food inflation expected to ease)

**India Ratings (Ind-Ra):** Indian credit rating agency; established 1995; subsidiary of Fitch Ratings; headquartered in Mumbai; rates bonds, banks, corporates

**UPSC Angle:** GS-3 Economy — GDP growth projections; private consumption as growth engine; El Niño economic impact; India’s credit rating landscape (CRISIL, ICRA, CARE, India Ratings + Moody’s, S&P, Fitch globally).

## SWADES — DRDO’S FIELD SEAWATER DESALINATION SYSTEM

**DRDO’s Defence Lab Jodhpur** (DLRL) developed **SWaDeS (Saline Water Desalination System)** for field military use:

**Technology:** Reverse Osmosis (RO) — converts saline seawater (35,000 mg/L TDS) to drinking water (<500 mg/L TDS per WHO standards)

**CBRN Module:** Specially designed to operate even in **Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear (CBRN)** contaminated zones — the first such system for Indian armed forces

**Variants:**

Manual operation: 10–12 personnel required; 600 litres/hour output

Engine-operated: 20–25 personnel; higher capacity; self-contained power

**Application:** Coastal operations (amphibious landings), island territories, arid coastal regions; critical for **Andaman & Nicobar** and **Lakshadweep** operations

**Strategic significance:** Reduces military dependence on water logistics chains; enables sustained island and coastal warfare operations

**UPSC Angle:** GS-3 Defence/S&T — DRDO indigenisation; CBRN preparedness; India’s Andaman & Nicobar Command (tri-service); water security in military operations.

## VISHNUGAD-PIPALKOTI HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT — ALAKNANDA RIVER

The **Vishnugad-Pipalkoti Hydroelectric Project** on the **Alaknanda River**, Uttarakhand:

**Capacity:** 444 MW (run-of-river project)

**Developer:** THDC India Limited (THDCIL) — a CPSU under Ministry of Power

**Location:** Chamoli district, Uttarakhand; on the Alaknanda River (tributary of Ganga)

**Construction delays:** Project faced multiple setbacks due to geological challenges (tunnelling through unstable Himalayan geology) and environmental concerns

**Environmentalist view:** Run-of-river projects have lower ecological impact than storage dams but still affect minimum ecological flow in rivers

### Alaknanda River facts:

Originates at **Satopanth glacier** (near Badrinath, Uttarakhand)

Joins Bhagirathi at **Devprayag** to form the Ganga

Five Prayags (river confluences) on Alaknanda: Vishnu Prayag (Dhauliganga), Nanda Prayag (Nandakini), Karna Prayag (Pindar), Rudra Prayag (Mandakini), Deva Prayag (Bhagirathi)

**UPSC Angle:** GS-3 Environment/Economy — Himalayan river hydrology; run-of-river vs storage dams; THDCIL mandate; Ganga river system; Prayags as geographic landmarks.

## JALLIKATTU — TAMIL NADU TRADITIONAL BULL-TAMING SPORT

**Jallikattu** (also called *Sallikkattu*) in the news following Tamil Nadu government's annual regulatory orders:

**What it is:** Traditional Tamil bull-taming sport held during **Pongal festival** (mid-January); young men attempt to hug the bull's hump and ride or stop it

**Location:** Primarily practised in Madurai, Pudukkottai, Salem, Dindigul districts of Tamil Nadu

### Legal history:

2014: Supreme Court **banned Jallikattu** — classified bulls as performing animals under Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act 1960

2017: **Massive protests** in Marina Beach, Chennai — sustained for 15+ days; eventually Tamil Nadu promulgated an Ordinance allowing Jallikattu

2017: **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Tamil Nadu Amendment) Act** passed — exempted Jallikattu, bullock cart races from PCA Act

2023: Supreme Court 5-judge bench **upheld Tamil Nadu's 2017 amendment** — ruled states have power to legislate on cultural practices; Jallikattu has a long cultural history predating central PCA Act

**Breeds involved:** Kangayam, Pulikulam, Umbalachery, Bargur — indigenous draught breeds; Jallikattu serves a conservation function by ensuring economic value of these breeds

**UPSC Angle:** GS-1 Cultural Heritage; GS-2 Polity — Centre-State legislative conflict; animal rights vs cultural rights; Article 48 (DPSP — preservation of cow breeds); 7th Schedule; Supreme Court federalism judgments.

## PERSONS IN NEWS

**Suresh Kalmadi** — Former Union Minister of State for Railways; former **IOA President (1996–2012)**; Chairman, **2010 Commonwealth Games**; passed away January 6, 2026, aged 81. Controversially associated with the CWG scam.

**Manoj Kothari** — Former World Billiards Champion; won **IBSF World titles in 1990 and 1997** (doubles); received **Major Dhyan Chand Award (2005)**; served as national coach 2011 onwards; passed away aged 67.

### UPSC RELEVANCE

Bhairav drone force (1 lakh operatives; 15 battalions; Army Day Jaipur 2026; Rudra Brigades); Suryastra (Rs 293 crore; NIBE Ltd; Elbit Systems PULS technology; 150-300 km; CEP <5m; BEML 6x6 truck); *Calamaria mizoramensis* (reed snake; Mizoram University; 70 global *Calamaria* spp; 169 Mizoram herpetofauna; Zootaxa); CSIR-NPL (NESL — Asia's 1st/world's 2nd; Solar Cell Calibration — world's 5th; Germany PTB; 0.35% calibration uncertainty); NBS Rabi 2025-26 (Rs 37,952 crore; DAP Rs 29,805/MT; N Rs 43.02/kg; P Rs 47.96/kg); ONGC-MOL JVs (Bharat Ethane One & Two IFSC; MOL = Mitsui OSK Lines Japan; VLECs; OPaL Dahej; Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047); Dnyanganga WS (Buldhana, Maharashtra; 205 sq km; Melghat TR buffer); TN-UN Women MoU (gender-responsive governance; SDG 5; UNICEF Innovation Initiative — TN India's first); EMRS (Eklavya Model Residential Schools; est. FY 1997-98; 144 EMRS; ONGC-NSTFDC Rs 28 crore; Article 46 DPSP); India Ratings FY27 GDP 6.9% (PFCE 55.9% share; El Nino risk; Ind-Ra = Fitch subsidiary); SWaDeS (DRDO Jodhpur; RO desalination; 35,000 mg/L → <500 mg/L; CBRN module); Vishnugad-Pipalkoti HEP (444 MW; Alaknanda River; Chamoli; THDCIL; five Prayags); Jallikattu (PCA Act 1960; SC ban 2014; TN amendment 2017; SC upheld 2023; Kangayam/Pulikulam breeds); Major Dhyan Chand Award (Manoj Kothari 2005)

### MAINS GS-3:

India's drone warfare doctrine — significance of Bhairav force; India's precision-strike capability (Suryastra context); CSIR-NPL's role in India's measurement infrastructure; NBS scheme — does fertiliser subsidy reform increase domestic production? | Himalayan hydrology and run-of-river hydro projects — ecological balance and energy needs

### MAINS GS-2:

Tamil Nadu's gender-responsive governance model; India's partnerships with UN agencies for SDG implementation | Jallikattu — Centre-State conflict, animal rights vs cultural practices, 7th Schedule

**★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA**
**INDIAN ARMY BHAIRAV DRONE FORCE:**

Operatives: 1 lakh+ drone operatives inducted  
 Battalions: 15 raised; 25 more planned  
 First appearance: Army Day Parade, Jaipur, January 15, 2026  
 Named after: Bhairav (fierce form of Lord Shiva)  
 Part of: “Year of Networking and Data Centricity” 2026

**SURYASTRA ROCKET LAUNCHER:**

Contract: Rs 293 crore, Emergency Procurement  
 Contractor: NIBE Limited (India)  
 Technology partner: Elbit Systems (Israel)  
 Range: 150–300 km  
 CEP: < 5 meters (precision strike)

**CALAMARIA MIZORAMENSIS:**

Family: Colubridae; Genus: Calamaria (reed snakes)  
 Discovered by: Mizoram University researchers  
 Published in: Zootaxa (international zoological journal)  
 Non-venomous; semi-fossorial; nocturnal  
 Elevation: 670–1,295 m; humid forested hills  
 Global Calamaria count: 70 species (after discovery)  
 Mizoram herpetofauna: 169 species total

**CSIR-NPL LABORATORIES (INAUGURATED JAN 5, 2026):**

NESL (National Environmental Standard Laboratory): Asia’s 1st, world’s 2nd; collaborator: Germany PTB; calibrates air quality monitors  
 National Primary Standard Facility for Solar Cell Calibration: world’s 5th; critical for India’s 500 GW solar target  
 CSIR-NPL: custodian of India’s national measurement standards (Mass, Length, Temperature, Electrical); est. 1947, New Delhi

**NBS (NUTRIENT-BASED SUBSIDY) SCHEME:**

Coverage: P&K fertilizers (DAP, MOP, SSP, NPK complexes); NOT urea (separately controlled)  
 Rabi 2025-26 allocation: Rs 37,952.29 crore  
 DAP subsidy: Rs 29,805/MT  
 Domestic P&K production growth: 50% since 2014

**ONGC-MOL JVS:**

JV names: Bharat Ethane One IFSC Private Ltd, Bharat Ethane Two IFSC Private Ltd  
 Registered: GIFT City, Gandhinagar, Gujarat (IFSC jurisdiction)  
 Ownership: 50:50 ONGC + MOL (Mitsui OSK Lines, Japan — not Hungary’s MOL Group)  
 Vessels: VLECs (Very Large Ethane Carriers) — one vessel per JV  
 Route: USA → India (ethane feedstock for OPaL)

OPaL: ONGC Petro Additions Limited, Dahej, Gujarat; uses ethane as cracker feedstock

Policy: Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047

#### **MELGHAT TIGER RESERVE:**

Location: Amravati district, Maharashtra (Satpura hills)

First TR of Maharashtra (1974); one of India's first 9 TRs under Project Tiger (1973)

Area: ~1,677 sq km (core + buffer)

Dnyanganga WS: part of buffer zone; 205 sq km; Buldhana district

#### **MAJOR DHYAN CHAND AWARD:**

India's highest sports award for lifetime achievement in sports

Given to: Manoj Kothari (Billiards) — 2005

Other notable awardees: Bhim Singh (Wrestling), Aparna Ghosh (Basketball)

#### **EMRS (EKLAVYA MODEL RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS):**

Launched: FY 1997-98

Model: Based on Navodaya Vidyalaya; fully Central Government funded

Eligibility: Blocks with 50%+ ST population and 20,000+ tribal persons get one EMRS

ONGC-NSTFDC MoU: Rs 28 crore; 144 EMRS; 11 states/UTs (signed Jan 5, 2026)

NSTFDC: National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation; under MoTA

Constitutional basis: Article 46 (DPSP); Fifth and Sixth Schedules (tribal area governance)

#### **INDIA RATINGS (IND-RA) FY27 GDP PROJECTION:**

Projected FY27 GDP growth: 6.9% (FY26 estimate: 7.4%)

PFCE growth FY27: 7.6% Y-o-Y; PFCE share in GDP (Q2 FY26): 55.9%

Risks: El Nino (mid-2026), weak private investment, sluggish global trade, GDP base-year revision

India Ratings: subsidiary of Fitch Ratings; est. 1995; Mumbai; Indian CRA

Indian CRAs: CRISIL (S&P affiliate), ICRA (Moody's affiliate), CARE Ratings, India Ratings (Fitch), Brickwork, Acuite

#### **SWADES (DRDO SEAWATER DESALINATION SYSTEM):**

Developer: Defence Lab Jodhpur (DLRL), DRDO

Technology: Reverse Osmosis (RO); converts 35,000 mg/L saline water to <500 mg/L

Special feature: CBRN (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear) module — first such for Indian forces

Variants: Manual (10-12 personnel; 600 L/hr) and Engine-operated

Application: Coastal ops, Andaman & Nicobar, Lakshadweep island territories

#### **VISHNUGAD-PIPALKOTI HEP:**

Capacity: 444 MW (run-of-river)

River: Alaknanda River

Location: Chamoli district, Uttarakhand

Developer: THDCIL (THDC India Limited); Ministry of Power

Alaknanda origin: Satopanth glacier (near Badrinath)

Five Prayags on Alaknanda: Vishnu Prayag (Dhauliganga), Nanda Prayag (Nandakini), Karna Prayag (Pindar), Rudra Prayag (Mandakini), Deva Prayag (Bhagirathi = Ganga formed)

**JALLIKATTU – LEGAL TIMELINE:**

2014: Supreme Court banned Jallikattu (bulls = performing animals under PCA Act 1960)

2017: Marina Beach protests (15+ days); TN Ordinance + Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (TN Amendment) Act 2017

2023: SC 5-judge bench upheld TN amendment — states can legislate on cultural practices

Breeds: Kangayam, Pulikulam, Umbalachery, Bargur (indigenous draught breeds)

Celebrated during: Pongal (mid-January); Madurai, Pudukkottai, Salem, Dindigul

**OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:**

GIFT City IFSC: India's first International Financial Services Centre; established under SEZ Act; regulated by IFSCA (International Financial Services Centres Authority)

India-Israel defence cooperation: covers fighter jets (Barak), drones (Heron, Searcher), artillery (Soltam), rocket systems; India's largest missile/artillery procurement partner

Tejas LCA 25th Anniversary: Maiden flight January 4, 2001 by Wing Commander Rajiv Kothiyal; HAL order for 97 Mk-1A jets (Rs 62,370 crore)

Sources: AffairsCloud, PIB, Indian Army, CSIR-NPL

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