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WEEKLY ROUNDUP

Weekly Roundup — Week 2 (Jan 5–11, 2026)

11 January 2026

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

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WEEK OVERVIEW

A landmark week for India's strategic and economic positioning — India officially surpassed Japan to become the **world's 4th largest economy** by nominal GDP, while the **Bhairav Drone Force** (1 lakh operatives) signalled a doctrinal shift in Army warfare. Science featured prominently: JNCASR resolved the 57-year-old **Mpemba Effect** mystery, a new snake species was found in Mizoram's forests, and the **Indian Pharmacopoeia 2026** became the world's first to include blood component standards. Diplomatically, India hosted the **18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas** in Bhubaneswar and displayed the Piprahwa Buddhist relics for the first time in 127 years, while the India-Pakistan nuclear CBM exchange quietly completed its 35th consecutive year.

ECONOMY & DEVELOPMENT

India Becomes World's 4th Largest Economy

India's nominal GDP reached approximately **₹4.18 trillion (USD)** in 2025–26, formally surpassing Japan (which contracted to ~\$4.09 trillion due to yen depreciation). India is now ranked: US (1st), China (2nd), Germany (3rd), India (4th). On a **Purchasing Power Parity** basis, India has been 3rd globally since 2011.

Key context for UPSC:

India's per capita income remains ~\$2,800–3,000 (lower-middle income by World Bank classification), far below Japan's ~\$35,000 — ranking reflects total output, not living standards

Real Q2 FY26 growth rate: 8.2%; India is the fastest-growing major economy

Viksit Bharat 2047 target: \$30 trillion GDP + \$20,000+ per capita by Independence centenary

India also became the world's largest rice producer: 150.18 MT, surpassing China

Japan's declining population (125 million vs. India's 1.44 billion) is a structural driver of its relative decline

UPSC Angle — GS-3: Per capita vs. aggregate GDP distinction; India's middle-income trap challenge; demographic dividend vs. Japan's aging society.

Telangana Abolishes Two-Child Norm for Local Body Elections

The **Telangana Panchayat Raj Amendment Bill 2026** (passed unanimously) removed the two-child norm as a disqualification criterion for contesting local body elections. Telangana joins **Rajasthan (2022)** and **Andhra Pradesh (2024)** in this reversal.

Why the reversal?

Telangana's **TFR (Total Fertility Rate):** 1.7 (rural), 1.5 (urban) — well below replacement level of 2.1
National TFR has dropped to **2.0** (NFHS-5, 2021) — below replacement nationally

The norm was punishing smaller families in states that had already achieved demographic transition

Constitutional basis: Article 243F (73rd Amendment, 1992) empowers states to set qualifications/disqualifications for panchayat elections. SC upheld the norm in **Javed v. State of Haryana (2003)** but demographic reality has overtaken the policy rationale.

UPSC Angle — GS-2: 73rd Amendment, Article 243F; declining fertility and demographic implications; population policy evolution; NFHS data interpretation.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Indian Pharmacopoeia 2026 — World First for Blood Component Standards

The **10th edition of the Indian Pharmacopoeia (IP 2026)** was released by the **Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC)**, Ghaziabad. With **3,340 monographs** (121 new additions), IP 2026 became the **world's first national pharmacopoeia** to include standards for 20 blood components — including whole blood, packed red blood cells (PRBC), fresh frozen plasma (FFP), platelets, cryoprecipitate, and human albumin.

Parameter	IP 2026 Data
Total monographs	3,340
New additions	121
Blood components standardised	20 (global first)
Publisher	IPC, Ghaziabad (est. 1956)
Legal authority	Drugs & Cosmetics Act, 1940

UPSC Angle — GS-3 / S&T: Drugs & Cosmetics Act 1940; pharmacopoeia as a regulatory tool; India’s pharmaceutical regulatory framework; blood safety standards.

Mpemba Effect — JNCASR Solves 57-Year Mystery

Scientists at **JNCASR (Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research), Bengaluru** developed the first rigorous computational simulation confirming that **hot water can freeze faster than cold water** under specific thermodynamic conditions — formally resolving the “Mpemba Effect” debate after 57 years.

Background: Named after Tanzanian student **Erasto Mpemba** (1969), who noticed hot ice-cream mix froze faster. Mechanistic explanation eluded physicists for decades. JNCASR’s work links the phenomenon to **entropy dynamics** and molecular kinetic energy distributions.

UPSC Angle — GS-3 / S&T: JNCASR (autonomous institute under DST); India’s role in fundamental science research; thermodynamic principles.

Calamaria mizoramensis — New Snake Species from Northeast India

A new reed snake species, ***Calamaria mizoramensis***, was discovered in Mizoram’s humid subtropical forests at 670–1,295 m elevation, raising the state’s documented **herpetofauna to 169 species**.

Northeast India sits at the intersection of **three biogeographic regions** — Himalayan, Indo-Burma, and Indo-Malayan — making it one of the world’s most important biodiversity hotspots. Mizoram alone has discovered multiple new species in recent years.

UPSC Angle — GS-3 / Environment: Biodiversity hotspots; Northeast India’s endemic species; Convention on Biological Diversity; herpetofauna significance.

DEFENCE & SECURITY

Bhairav Drone Force — India's Largest Military Drone Programme

The Indian Army unveiled the **Bhairav Drone Force** at the **Army Day parade in Jaipur (January 15 region)** — comprising over **1 lakh (100,000) trained drone operatives** organised into **15 dedicated battalions** (25 more planned). This is India's largest single military drone capacity announcement.

Key features:

Named after **Bhairav** (fierce manifestation of Shiva) — signalling offensive, deterrent doctrine shift
Operatives trained in ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance), loitering munitions, and swarm coordination

Complements India's **Emergency Procurement of Suryastra precision rockets**: ₹293 crore contract; 150–300 km range; CEP (Circular Error Probability) <5 metres; developed with Israeli Elbit Systems via NIBE Ltd

UPSC Angle — GS-3 / Security: Drone warfare doctrine; India's military modernisation; Emergency Procurement procedures; civil-military integration; Defence Acquisition Procedure 2020.

Indian Army: “Year of Networking and Data Centricity” (2026)

The Army declared 2026 as its **Year of Networking and Data Centricity**, accelerating the deployment of:

TCS (Tactical Communication System) — secure battlefield communications

BMS (Battlefield Management System) — real-time situational awareness for field commanders

ATIN (Army Tactical Indra Network) — tactical data links

These are prerequisites for India's **Integrated Theatre Commands** (Western, Northern, Maritime, Air Defence) — a structural reform to replace single-service commands with joint commands for faster decision-making.

Defence budget 2025–26: **₹6.22 lakh crore**; 75% of capital expenditure reserved for domestic manufacturers under the **positive indigenisation lists**.

UPSC Angle — GS-3 / Security: Integrated Theatre Commands; Network-Centric Warfare; Defence budget allocation; indigenisation policy.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

35th India-Pakistan Nuclear CBM Exchange

On **January 1, 2026**, India and Pakistan completed their **35th consecutive annual exchange** of nuclear installation lists — a Confidence Building Measure (CBM) under the **Agreement on the Prohibition of Attack against Nuclear Installations** (signed December 31, 1988; in force January 1, 1991).

Key points for Prelims:

Lists are exchanged **every year on January 1**

No verification mechanism; no enforcement authority

Persisted through: Kargil War (1999), Parliament attack crisis (2001–02), Pulwama-Balakot (2019), and post-August 2019 diplomatic downgrade

Represents the floor of institutional India-Pakistan diplomatic interaction

UPSC Angle — GS-2 / IR: India-Pakistan CBMs; nuclear doctrine comparison; Shimla Agreement; diplomatic channels during crises.

Piprahwa Buddhist Relics — 127-Year Reunion Exhibition

The “**The Light and the Lotus**” exhibition at the Rai Pithora Cultural Complex, New Delhi displayed the **Piprahwa relics** — believed to be the **mortal remains of the Buddha** — for the first time in 127 years, alongside 80+ artefacts.

Background: The relics were discovered in **1898 by William Claxton Peppe** at Piprahwa, **Siddharthnagar district, Uttar Pradesh** — the site of ancient Kapilavastu. An inscription confirmed they belonged to the Shakya clan (Buddha’s family). The British Raj distributed relics across India and Southeast Asia; this exhibition reunited a portion.

India’s Buddhist soft power: Connects India with Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Nepal, and Bhutan — states where Buddhist heritage influences domestic politics.

UPSC Angle — GS-1 / History-Culture: Buddhist heritage sites; Kapilavastu identification (multiple sites); India’s soft power diplomacy; UNESCO World Heritage connections.

18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention 2026

The **18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) Convention** was held in **Bhubaneswar, Odisha** (January 8–10, 2026) — the first time Odisha hosted. Theme: “**Diaspora’s Contribution to Viksit Bharat.**”

Metric	Data
Indian diaspora globally	~3.2 crore (32 million)
Remittances 2024	~\$125 billion (world's largest recipient)
Remittances as % of GDP	~3%
Chief Guest	Christine Kangaloo, President of Trinidad & Tobago
Date significance	January 9 = Gandhi's return from South Africa (1915)

UPSC Angle — GS-2 / IR + Social Issues: Diaspora policy; remittances and development finance; PBD mandate (held every 2 years; PBD Day = January 9); Ministry of External Affairs' role.

India-Bhutan: Wangchhu Hydropower Partnership

Adani Group commenced work on the **570 MW Wangchhu Hydropower Project** on the Wangchhu River, **Chukha district, Bhutan** — under a 51% DGPC (Druk Green Power Corporation) + 49% Adani private investment model.

This signals a shift from purely government-to-government hydropower projects to **private sector involvement** in India-Bhutan energy cooperation.

Bhutan hydropower facts (Prelims): Total installed capacity (~2,400 MW); existing projects: Tala (1,020 MW), Chukha (336 MW), Mangdechhu (720 MW); 10,000 MW target. Hydropower accounts for **25–30% of Bhutan's GDP**.

UPSC Angle — GS-2 / IR: India-Bhutan special relationship; hydropower as economic diplomacy; private vs. government participation; Bhutan's economic dependence on India.

India-Sri Lanka: Bilateral Reset Under AKD

Anura Kumar Dissanayake (AKD), elected President of Sri Lanka on September 21, 2024 (NPP majority in November 2024), represents a new chapter in India-Sri Lanka relations with emphasis on **economic recovery over geopolitical alignment**.

India's role in Sri Lanka's 2022 crisis: \$4 billion LoC (fastest humanitarian response); India restructured loans before China in the IMF-led debt restructuring. IMF's **Extended Fund Facility:** \$2.9 billion (March 2023).

Pending issues: 13th Amendment (devolution to provincial councils — India's long-standing ask); Katchatheevu cession (1974 Agreement); Trincomalee oil tank farm development; ETCA (Economic and Technology Cooperation Agreement) negotiations.

UPSC Angle — GS-2 / IR: India's neighbourhood first policy; debt trap diplomacy counter-narrative; 13th Amendment's history (1987 Indo-Sri Lanka Accord); Tamil minority rights.

ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY

H5N1 Avian Influenza Outbreak — Kuttanad, Kerala

An **H5N1 (Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza) H5N1** outbreak in **Kuttanad, Alappuzha district, Kerala** — India's lowest-lying agricultural region (below sea level) — led to culling of approximately **55,000 ducks**, including indigenous Chara and Chembally breeds.

Response mechanism: National Livestock Disease Control Programme (NLDC) compensation at **75% of market value**. Kuttanad's dense duck population and wetland ecosystem make it particularly vulnerable to waterfowl-spread HPAI.

UPSC Angle — GS-3 / Environment + S&T: One Health framework; HPAI H5N1 zoonotic risk; Prevention and Control of Infectious and Contagious Diseases in Animals Act 2009; Kuttanad's unique agricultural geography.

White-bellied Heron vs. Kalai-II Hydropower Dam

The proposed **Kalai-II Hydropower Project (1,200 MW)** on the **Lohit River, Anjaw district, Arunachal Pradesh** (by THDCIL) faces opposition because the project area overlaps critical habitat of the **White-bellied Heron (*Ardea insignis*)** — one of the world's rarest birds, with **fewer than 60 individuals globally**.

India's population: ~10–12 individuals, found only in **Namdapha Tiger Reserve** and **Kamlang Wildlife Sanctuary**, Arunachal Pradesh. NBWL (National Board for Wildlife) clearance is pending; EIA review ongoing.

UPSC Angle — GS-3 / Environment: IUCN Critical status; NBWL clearance procedure; hydropower environmental assessment; Western Arunachal Pradesh's biodiversity significance; Wildlife Protection Act 1972 Schedule-I species.

India's Renewable Energy Transition: Milestones and Gaps

India reached **210 GW installed renewable energy capacity** (Solar: 100 GW, Wind: 48 GW, Others: ~62 GW), ranking **4th globally** in total RE capacity. The **500 GW non-fossil fuel target by 2030** requires ~50 GW addition per year.

Key challenges:

Challenge	Status
Grid-scale storage	Target 50 GWh by 2027; currently far short
DISCOM financial health	~₹4.5 lakh crore accumulated losses
Green hydrogen	125 GW dedicated RE by 2030 target (NGHM)
Transmission infrastructure	Green Energy Corridors Phase I & II underway

PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana: 40 GW rooftop solar by 2030; 1 crore households target.

UPSC Angle — GS-3 / Environment + Economy: NDC targets; UNFCCC commitments; DISCOM reform (RDSS scheme); Green Hydrogen Mission; India's energy security challenges.

★ FACTS CORNER — WEEK 2 KNOWLEDGEPEDIA (JAN 5–11, 2026)
ECONOMY:

India nominal GDP: ~\$4.18 trillion (FY26); 4th globally (surpassed Japan ~\$4.09T)
 India PPP rank: 3rd globally (since 2011)
 Viksit Bharat 2047 target: \$30 trillion GDP + \$20,000+ per capita
 India largest rice producer: 150.18 MT (surpassed China)
 Telangana TFR: 1.7 rural, 1.5 urban; India national TFR: 2.0 (NFHS-5)
 Article 243F: 73rd Amendment — panchayat election qualifications
 SC ruling: *Javed v. State of Haryana* (2003) — upheld two-child norm

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY:

Indian Pharmacopoeia 2026: 10th edition; 3,340 monographs; 121 new; world-first blood component standards (20 components); IPC Ghaziabad; Drugs & Cosmetics Act 1940
 JNCASR, Bengaluru: resolved Mpemba Effect — entropy dynamics simulation; named after Erasto Mpemba (Tanzania, 1969)
 Calamaria mizoramensis: reed snake; Mizoram; 670–1,295m; 169th herpetofauna species

DEFENCE:

Bhairav Drone Force: 1,00,000+ operatives; 15 battalions; Army Day Jaipur 2026
 Suryastra: ₹293 crore; 150–300 km range; CEP <5m; Elbit Systems (Israel) via NIBE Ltd
 Army 2026 theme: “Year of Networking and Data Centricity”
 NCW components: TCS + BMS + ATIN; enable Integrated Theatre Commands
 Defence budget 2025–26: ₹6.22 lakh crore; 75% capital for domestic manufacturers

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS:

India-Pakistan Nuclear CBM: Agreement signed Dec 31, 1988; exchange since Jan 1, 1991; 35th year in 2026
 Piprahwa relics: discovered 1898 by W.C. Peppe; Siddharthnagar, UP (ancient Kapilavastu); Buddha’s Shakya clan remains
 Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2026: 18th convention; Bhubaneswar; theme: Diaspora’s Contribution to Viksit Bharat; Chief Guest: Christine Kangaloo (President, Trinidad & Tobago); Jan 9 = Gandhi’s return from SA (1915)
 Indian diaspora: 3.2 crore; remittances 2024: ~\$125 billion (~3% of GDP); world’s largest recipient
 Wangchhu Hydropower: 570 MW; Chukha district, Bhutan; DGPC 51% + Adani 49%; Wangchu River
 Bhutan existing hydro: Tala (1,020 MW) + Chukha (336 MW) + Mangdechhu (720 MW); hydropower = 25–30% of Bhutan GDP
 AKD elected: Sep 21, 2024; India’s \$4B LoC to Sri Lanka; IMF EFF \$2.9B (Mar 2023); 13th Amendment (1987 Accord); Katchatheevu ceded 1974

ENVIRONMENT:

H5N1 Kuttanad: ~55,000 ducks culled; Alappuzha district; NLDC compensation 75% market value
 White-bellied Heron: *Ardea insignis*; IUCN Critical; <60 globally; India ~10–12 in Namdapha TR + Kamlang WLS; Kalai-II 1,200 MW on Lohit River, Anjaw, AP; THDCIL project
 India RE installed: 210 GW (Solar 100 GW, Wind 48 GW); 4th globally; 500 GW non-fossil by 2030
 DISCOM accumulated losses: ~₹4.5 lakh crore; grid storage target: 50 GWh by 2027
 PM Surya Ghar: 40 GW rooftop solar; 1 crore households target

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

IPC (Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission) established: 1956; located in Ghaziabad, UP

JNCASR: autonomous institute under DST; Bengaluru

THDCIL: Tehri Hydro Development Corporation India Ltd — executes Kalai-II

Bhutan's total hydropower target: 10,000 MW (long-term)

World Hindi Day: January 10 (birth anniversary of Sohanlal Dwivedi? No — commemorates 1st World Hindi Conference, Nagpur, 1975)

DRDO scramjet test: 12+ minutes endurance (also occurred this week — Jan 11)

Sources: PIB, The Hindu, Indian Express, DD News

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