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Current Affairs Today – January 12, 2026

12 January 2026

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

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WHY IN NEWS

January 12 is National Youth Day — Swami Vivekananda’s 163rd birth anniversary. India is considering making ITSAR telecom security standards mandatory for smartphones. PSLV-C62 launched on January 12 carrying 16 satellites including OrbitAid’s AyulSAT, but experienced a third-stage anomaly and failed to reach intended orbit — all 16 satellites were lost. The Supreme Court flagged POCSO misuse in consensual adolescent cases. Ocean heat content reached record levels globally. India also received its first Taliban-designated diplomat — Mufti Noor Ahmad Noor — as Charge d’Affaires at Afghanistan’s New Delhi embassy.

NATIONAL YOUTH DAY — SWAMI VIVEKANANDA’S 163RD BIRTH ANNIVERSARY

National Youth Day is observed on January 12 every year, coinciding with the birth anniversary of **Swami Vivekananda** (1863–1902). The Government of India officially declared January 12 as National Youth Day in 1984.

Key facts about Swami Vivekananda:

Born: January 12, 1863 in Calcutta (now Kolkata) as **Narendranath Datta**

Spiritual teacher and disciple of **Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa**

Delivered the historic speech at the **Parliament of the World’s Religions**, Chicago, September 11, 1893 — beginning with “Sisters and Brothers of America”

Founded the **Ramakrishna Mission** on May 1, 1897 at Belur Math, Howrah

Founded the **Ramakrishna Math** (monastic order)

Key works: Jnana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Raja Yoga, Karma Yoga

Died: July 4, 1902, aged 39, at Belur Math

Philosophy: **Neo-Vedanta** — universalism of Hindu philosophy; harmony of all religions

National Youth Festival (NYF):

Held annually around January 12

Theme for 2026: Viksit Yuva, Viksit Bharat (Developed Youth, Developed India)

Organised by the **Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports**

Participation from all states, Union Territories, and youth organisations

Activities: cultural events, debates, yoga, adventure sports, exhibitions

India's Youth Statistics:

India's population under 35 years: approximately 65 crore (650 million) — largest youth cohort globally

Median age of India: approximately 28 years (one of the youngest major economies)

Youth unemployment rate (15–24 years, PLFS): approximately 16–17% as of latest available data

Youth literacy rate: over 90%

Scheme: **PM Yuva 2.0** — Ministry of Education's scheme for young writers and authors

INDIA-BANGLADESH RELATIONS — POST-HASINA TRANSITION

Background: In August 2024, Prime Minister **Sheikh Hasina** resigned and left Bangladesh following a student-led mass uprising (Anti-Discrimination Movement) over civil service quotas. She flew to India on August 5, 2024, and has been in India since. **Muhammad Yunus**, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate (2006) and founder of **Grameen Bank**, was appointed head of Bangladesh's **Chief Adviser-led interim government** in August 2024.

Key bilateral issues as of early 2026:

Sheikh Hasina's presence in India: Bangladesh's interim government has sought Hasina's extradition to face charges in multiple cases. India has not committed to extradition, citing no operative bilateral extradition treaty between the two countries.

Hindu minority protection: Attacks on Hindu temples, homes, and businesses were reported in Bangladesh during and after the August 2024 uprising. The interim government has faced criticism for inadequate protection of minorities. India has formally raised concerns through diplomatic channels.

Teesta River water-sharing: The long-pending Teesta water treaty (negotiated between governments but blocked since 2011 due to West Bengal's objection under PM Mamata Banerjee) remains unresolved. Bangladesh under Yunus has also engaged with China on an alternative Teesta river management project.

Land Ports and Trade: India-Bangladesh bilateral trade is approximately \$14 billion annually; India's exports to Bangladesh (~\$11 billion) far exceed imports (~\$2–3 billion). Land ports — including Petrapole-Benapole (the largest land port in South Asia) — remain open, though some disruption occurred during the political transition.

Power supply from Adani: The Adani Group supplies approximately 1,600 MW of electricity to Bangladesh from its Godda power plant in Jharkhand. Disputes over payment arrears (Bangladesh owed significant sums) and pricing were reported in late 2025.

INDIA FOREX RESERVES UPDATE

India's foreign exchange reserves stood at approximately **\$625–640 billion** as of early January 2026, down from the all-time high of **\$704.885 billion** recorded on September 27, 2024. The decline reflects RBI interventions to support the rupee, which depreciated against the US dollar through late 2024 and 2025.

RBI's forex management:

RBI intervenes in the currency market to curb excess volatility (does not target a specific exchange rate level)

Forex reserves include: foreign currency assets (FCAs), gold, SDRs (Special Drawing Rights), and reserve tranche position with IMF

India's forex reserves provide approximately 10–11 months of import cover

PM SVANIDHI SCHEME — URBAN STREET VENDORS

The **PM SVANidhi (PM Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi)** scheme, launched June 1, 2020, crossed the milestone of **60 lakh (6 million) loan disbursements** in early 2026. The scheme provides collateral-free working capital loans to urban street vendors:

First loan: Rs 10,000

Second loan: Rs 20,000 (on timely repayment)

Third loan: Rs 50,000

Digital transactions incentivised with cashback

Nodal Ministry: **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA)**

ITSAR — INDIA CONSIDERS MANDATORY TELECOM SECURITY STANDARDS

The Union Government is considering making **Indian Telecom Security Assurance Requirements (ITSAR)** legally mandatory for smartphones:

ITSAR: A set of **83 security standards** developed by DoT — including source code disclosure, software controls, and user-permission restrictions

Current status: Voluntary compliance; government mulling mandatory enforcement

Industry pushback: Major smartphone brands (Apple ~5% market share; Samsung ~15%; Xiaomi ~19%; Google) resistant — especially to source code disclosure requirement

Why it matters: India is the world's 2nd largest smartphone market (~600 million smartphones); ITSAR aims to prevent backdoors, surveillance vulnerabilities, and data breaches in devices

Regulatory body: Telecom Engineering Centre (TEC) under DoT manages ITSAR

Policy context: Part of India's data sovereignty push; aligns with Digital Personal Data Protection Act 2023

UPSC Angle: GS-3 S&T — Cybersecurity governance; data localisation policy; smartphone supply chain security; Digital India security infrastructure; GS-2 — State sovereignty in technology regulation.

PSLV-C62 MISSION FAILURE — 16 SATELLITES LOST

ISRO's **PSLV-C62** launched on January 12, 2026, from Sriharikota carrying **16 satellites**, including DRDO's **Anvesha (EOS-N1)** reconnaissance satellite and **OrbitAid Aerospace's AyulSAT** (a 25 kg in-orbit refueling demonstrator). The mission experienced a **third-stage anomaly** — a disturbance during the solid-propellant PS3 burn — causing the rocket to deviate from its intended orbit. All 16 satellites were lost; none reached their designated orbits.

ISRO Chairman **Dr. V. Narayanan** confirmed the failure. A **Failure Analysis Committee (FAC)** chaired by former ISRO chief **K. Sivan** was constituted, reporting directly to the PMO. PSLV's return-to-flight was scheduled for late mid-2026.

OrbitAid Aerospace: Chennai-based startup; founder: Sakthikumar Ramachandran; AyulSAT was designed to demonstrate in-orbit propellant transfer

EOS-N1 / Anvesha: DRDO intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance satellite — loss impacts India's space-based ISR capabilities

PSLV: 4-stage alternating solid/liquid fuel rocket; workhorse of ISRO's launch programme; this was a rare failure

IN-SPACE: Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre — enables private space entities like OrbitAid

UPSC Angle: GS-3 S&T — ISRO's PSLV programme; private space sector (IN-SPACE framework); satellite failure analysis; space debris concerns; strategic implications of losing reconnaissance satellites.

POCSO AND AGE OF CONSENT — SUPREME COURT OBSERVATIONS

The **Supreme Court** (State of UP vs Anurudh & Anr.) made significant observations on **POCSO Act misuse** in consensual adolescent relationships:

Issue: ~25% of **POCSO cases** involve **consensual relationships** between adolescents — not criminal exploitation

Age of consent in India: **18 years** under POCSO Act 2012, IPC, and BNS 2023

NFHS-4 data cited: ~39% of Indian girls had first sexual experience before age 18

Court's concern: Parents using POCSO to criminalize consensual teenage relationships; leads to over-criminalisation and misuse of the Act

Debate: Advocates argue for “**close-in-age exemptions**” (Romeo and Juliet laws) for relationships between 16–18 year olds; opponents worry about grooming risks

POCSO Act 2012: Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act; defines offences, establishes Special Courts, child-friendly procedures

UPSC Angle: GS-2 Social Justice — POCSO Act provisions; child protection vs. adolescent autonomy; Supreme Court’s evolving jurisprudence on social issues; Article 21 right to dignity; GS-4 Ethics — balancing protection vs. criminalisation.

OCEAN HEAT CONTENT 2025 — RECORD LEVELS

An international study published in the journal **Advances in Atmospheric Sciences** revealed record ocean warming:

Finding: World’s oceans absorbed approximately **23 zettajoules (ZJ)** of heat in 2024 — an unprecedented level

Scale: Equivalent to **37 years of global energy consumption**; 1 ZJ = 10^{21} joules

Surface warming: **~16% of ocean surface** experienced record-high water temperatures

Consequences: Accelerated sea-level rise (thermal expansion); intensified tropical cyclones; coral bleaching; disruption of marine food chains

Indian Ocean: Among the fastest-warming ocean basins; directly impacts Indian monsoon patterns and cyclone formation in Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea

IPCC context: Oceans absorb ~90% of excess heat from global warming — ocean heat content is the most reliable measure of climate change

UPSC Angle: GS-3 Environment — Ocean heat content and climate change; IPCC reports; Indian Ocean Dipole; monsoon-ocean connection; coral bleaching; sea level rise impact on India’s coastline.

HATTI TRIBE — BODA TYOHAR FESTIVAL

The **Hatti community** of **Sirmour district, Himachal Pradesh** celebrated their largest annual festival **Boda Tyohar**:

Attendance: Over **3 lakh people** from Hatti villages

Community: Hatti tribe; traditional inhabitants of trans-Giri and Sirmour areas of HP; Cabinet approved ST status in **September 2022**; legally conferred via gazette notification on **August 4, 2023**

Traditional governance: Council system called **khumbli** — democratic village assembly

Cultural practice: Historically known for **polyandrous marriages** (fraternal polyandry — brothers sharing a wife)

Livelihoods: Agriculture, animal husbandry; famous for traditional architecture and village fairs

Boda Tyohar: Community festival marking agricultural cycles; hundreds of thousands attend; cultural exchange, traditional dance, music

UPSC Angle: GS-1 Art & Culture — Tribal cultures of Himachal Pradesh; ST recognition process; traditional governance systems (khumbli); polyandry as a cultural practice in India; GS-2 — Tribal welfare policy; PESA Act.

BHAIRAV BATTALIONS — INDIAN ARMY'S NEW HIGH-TECH COMBAT UNITS

The **Indian Army** introduced **Bhairav Battalions** — compact, multi-domain high-technology combat units:

Concept: “Built to fight tonight” — rapid-response units capable of immediate deployment to sensitive border sectors

Composition: Multi-domain personnel integrating infantry, electronic warfare, drones, cyber capabilities, and special operations

First public display: Marched in the **Republic Day 2026** parade (January 26, 2026)

Significance: Reflects India's shift toward **integrated, technology-led warfare** rather than large traditional formations

Context: India's northern borders (China) require rapid response capability; Bhairav Battalions address gap in high-altitude, multi-domain combat readiness

UPSC Angle: GS-3 Security — Indian Army modernisation; integrated theatre commands; network-centric warfare; drone warfare doctrine; India-China border management; multi-domain operations concept.

AFGHANISTAN TALIBAN DIPLOMAT — INDIA'S AFGHAN EMBASSY

India received its first **Taliban-designated diplomat** in January 2026: **Mufti Noor Ahmad Noor** was appointed as **Charge d'Affaires** at Afghanistan's embassy in New Delhi.

Background:

The Taliban seized power in Kabul on **August 15, 2021**, following the US withdrawal from Afghanistan

India had evacuated its diplomats from Kabul and temporarily suspended embassy operations in August 2021 — India's embassy was subsequently managed by a skeleton staff under an *ad hoc* arrangement

India re-engaged with Taliban-administered Afghanistan through pragmatic channels — maintaining a **technical mission** in Kabul and keeping the Afghan embassy in Delhi operational under the previous government's appointees

The designation of a Taliban-appointed diplomat signals a **cautious normalisation** — India has not formally recognised the Taliban government (as no country has), but engages pragmatically given Afghanistan’s strategic importance

India’s Afghanistan strategic interests:

Afghanistan shares a border with Pakistan (not directly with India) but is critical to India’s access to Central Asia via the **Chabahar Port (Iran) → Zaranj-Delaram Highway** route

India has invested over **\$3 billion** in Afghan development (largest regional donor): Salma Dam, Afghan Parliament building, Salang Pass highway maintenance, schools, hospitals

India opposes Pakistani influence over Afghan territory being used as a base for anti-India terrorism (LeT, JeM)

UPSC Angle: GS-2 International Relations — India-Afghanistan relations; Taliban regime; India’s Central Asia connectivity (Chabahar-Zaranj corridor); Pakistan-Afghanistan-India triangle; India’s non-recognition policy vs pragmatic engagement.

NATIONAL TEXTILE MINISTERS’ CONFERENCE — GUWAHATI 2026

The **National Textile Ministers’ Conference 2026** was held in **Guwahati, Assam**, bringing together textiles ministers from all states and UTs under Union Textile Minister **Giriraj Singh**.

Theme: “*India’s Textiles: Weaving Growth, Heritage & Innovation*”

Key focus areas:

PM MITRA Parks (Pradhan Mantri Mega Integrated Textile Regions and Apparel Parks): 7 parks sanctioned across Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh — integrated value-chain textile hubs

PLI Scheme for Textiles: Rs 10,683 crore outlay; targets MMF (man-made fibre) and technical textiles

Technical Textiles: India’s fastest-growing textile segment; medical textiles, geotextiles, agro-textiles, defence textiles; National Technical Textiles Mission (NTTM) — Rs 1,480 crore

Handloom and GI products: Northeast India focus — Assam silk (Muga, Eri, Pat); Manipuri Handloom; GI-tagged textile heritage

India textile sector data:

India is the **2nd largest textile exporter** globally (after China)

Target: **\$100 billion** in textile exports by 2030 (from ~\$44 billion in 2024–25)

Employs approximately **45 million people** (2nd largest employer after agriculture)

Cotton: India is 2nd largest producer globally; largest export in natural fibres

UPSC Angle: GS-3 Economy — PM MITRA Parks; PLI for textiles; technical textiles mission; India's textile export target; GI tags for textiles; handloom sector and NE India.

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGE PEDIA
SWAMI VIVEKANANDA / NATIONAL YOUTH DAY:

National Youth Day: January 12 (Vivekananda's birthday); declared 1984 by Government of India

Birth name: Narendranath Datta; born January 12, 1863, Calcutta

Spiritual guru: Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa

Parliament of the World's Religions: Chicago, September 11, 1893; "Sisters and Brothers of America"

Ramakrishna Mission: founded May 1, 1897, Belur Math, Howrah

Philosophy: Neo-Vedanta; universalism; harmony of religions

Died: July 4, 1902, Belur Math (aged 39)

National Youth Festival: organised by Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports

INDIA'S YOUTH DEMOGRAPHICS:

Population under 35: ~65 crore (650 million)

Median age: ~28 years

Scheme: PM Yuva 2.0 (Ministry of Education — young writers program)

INDIA-BANGLADESH KEY DATA:

Sheikh Hasina: PM Bangladesh 2009–2024; fled to India August 5, 2024

Muhammad Yunus: Nobel Peace Prize 2006; Grameen Bank founder; Chief Adviser, Bangladesh (August 2024 onward)

India-Bangladesh bilateral trade: ~\$14 billion; India exports ~\$11 billion, imports ~\$2–3 billion

Petrapole-Benapole: largest land port in South Asia (West Bengal–Bangladesh border)

India-Bangladesh extradition treaty: not in force (no operative treaty)

Teesta treaty: proposed but blocked since 2011 (West Bengal objection)

Adani Godda plant: ~1,600 MW supplied to Bangladesh from Jharkhand

INDIA FOREX RESERVES:

All-time high: \$704.885 billion (September 27, 2024)

Early January 2026: approximately \$625–640 billion

Forex reserve components: Foreign Currency Assets (FCAs) + Gold + SDRs + Reserve Tranche (IMF)

Import cover: approximately 10–11 months

PM SVANIDHI:

Launch: June 1, 2020 (COVID relief for street vendors)

Ministry: Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA)

Loan structure: Rs 10,000 (1st) → Rs 20,000 (2nd) → Rs 50,000 (3rd)

Target beneficiaries: urban street vendors (hawkers, thela/rickshaw vendors)

ITSAR / TELECOM SECURITY:

ITSAR: Indian Telecom Security Assurance Requirements; 83 standards; DoT/TEC

Key requirements: Source code disclosure, software controls, permission restrictions

India smartphone market: ~600 million users; 2nd largest globally

Key players: Apple (5%), Samsung (15%), Xiaomi (19%), Vivo, OPPO

TEC: Telecom Engineering Centre; technical arm of DoT; manages standards

DPDP Act 2023: Digital Personal Data Protection Act; governs personal data handling

PSLV-C62 MISSION FAILURE:

Launch date: January 12, 2026 | Launch site: Sriharikota

Payload: 16 satellites including DRDO Anvesha (EOS-N1) + OrbitAid AyulSAT

Failure: Third-stage (PS3 solid propellant) anomaly; deviated from orbit; all satellites lost

ISRO Chairman: Dr. V. Narayanan confirmed failure

Failure Analysis Committee: chaired by former ISRO chief K. Sivan; reports to PMO

PSLV: 4-stage alternating solid/liquid; India's most reliable launch vehicle (rare failure)

IN-SPaCe: Indian National Space Promotion & Authorisation Centre; enables private space entities

POCSO ACT KEY DATA:

POCSO Act 2012: Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act

Age of consent: 18 years (POCSO 2012 + IPC + BNS 2023)

SC observation: ~25% of POCSO cases = consensual adolescent relationships (State of UP vs Anurudh)

Special Courts: POCSO mandates designated special courts for speedy trial

Amendments: 2019 amendment — death penalty for aggravated penetrative sexual assault

OCEAN HEAT CONTENT:

2024 figure: ~23 zettajoules (1 ZJ = 10^{21} J); record level

37 years equivalent: scale of total global energy consumption

16% of ocean surface: record warm temperatures

Oceans absorb: ~90% of excess heat from global warming

Indian Ocean: fastest-warming; impacts Bay of Bengal cyclones + Indian monsoon (IOD)

HATTI TRIBE:

Location: Sirmour district + trans-Giri, Himachal Pradesh

ST status: Cabinet approval September 2022; gazette notification August 4, 2023 (legal conferral)

Governance: Khumbli (village council/assembly system)

Cultural note: Fraternal polyandry — brothers sharing a wife (practice declining)

Boda Tyohar: Annual community festival; 3+ lakh attendance

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

BIMSTEC: Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation — includes India and Bangladesh

Ganga Waters Treaty (1996): India-Bangladesh treaty on Farakka Barrage water sharing (30-year treaty; renewed in 2026)

India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline: Noonmati (Assam) to Parbatipur (Bangladesh); 131.5 km; first cross-border energy pipeline in South Asia; inaugurated March 18, 2023

Bhairav Battalions: Indian Army's compact multi-domain combat units; "built to fight tonight"; first shown at Republic Day 2026 parade; integrate infantry, drones, EW, cyber, special ops

Taliban Charge d'Affaires to India: Mufti Noor Ahmad Noor appointed; first Taliban-designated diplomat accredited to India's Afghan embassy (January 2026)

Textile Ministers' Conference: National conference at Guwahati; theme “Weaving Growth, Heritage & Innovation”; India aims to reach \$100 billion textile exports by 2030

Sources: MEA, PIB, Ramakrishna Mission, AffairsCloud

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