



UPSC & STATE PCS CURRENT AFFAIRS · UJIYARI.COM

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

Current Affairs Today – January 15, 2026

15 January 2026

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

UPSC Educator & Content Creator •

[linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)

Free UPSC & State PCS Resources

ujjari.com

Current Affairs Today — January 15, 2026

15 January 2026

WHY IN NEWS

India's 78th Army Day was celebrated in Jaipur — the theme “Year of Networking and Data Centricity” underscored the Army's digital transformation push. The day also brought a gharial population survey showing 3,037 individuals in the Ganga basin, NITI Aayog's Export Preparedness Index ranking Maharashtra first, and India officially heading into its BRICS Chairmanship year.

78TH ARMY DAY 2026 — JAIPUR

India celebrated its **78th Army Day** on January 15, 2026.

Venue: Mahal Road, Jaipur — the **first time** the Army Day Parade was held outside a cantonment in Jaipur, and only the **fourth time** the parade was held outside Delhi nationally

COAS: General **Upendra Dwivedi** presided over the parade and Investiture Ceremony at Sapta Shakti Auditorium, Jaipur Military Station

Theme: “*Year of Networking and Data Centricity*” — reflecting the Indian Army's push toward AI-driven warfare, digital integration, cyber resilience, and integrated battle management systems

Gallantry Awards at Investiture Ceremony:

10 Sena Medals (Gallantry) conferred

49 COAS Unit Citations awarded

60 COAS Certificates of Appreciation (including 26 for Operation Sindoor)

“Bravest of the Brave” Unit Award → 8 Assam Rifles

Posthumous Sena Medals to families of Subedar Major Pawan Kumar, Hawaldar Sunil Kumar, Lance Naik Dinesh Kumar, Lance Naik Subhash Kumar, and Lance Naik Pradeep Kumar

Weapons and systems displayed: BrahMos missile, Pinaka multi-barrel rocket launcher, main battle tanks, infantry combat vehicles, air defence platforms, unmanned aerial systems (UAVs), counter-drone equipment, robotic platforms, Shaktibaan system; aerial display by IAF jets and Army Aviation helicopters.

UPSC Angle: GS-3 Security & Defence — indigenisation, modernisation, AI-enabled warfare doctrine; GS-2 Defence Policy and Civil-Military relations.

GHARIAL POPULATION SURVEY — 3,037 IN GANGA BASIN

A comprehensive gharial survey across the **Ganga River basin** counted **3,037 gharials** (*Gavialis gangeticus*) inhabiting **13 surveyed rivers**.

IUCN status: Critically Endangered

WPA 1972: Schedule I (highest protection)

Gharial is a **fish-eating crocodilian** — a flagship and indicator species for riverine ecosystem health

Key habitat: National Chambal Sanctuary (Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan); Katarniaghat WS (UP); Ken River; Girwa River

Survey conducted across 13 rivers of the Ganga basin including Chambal, Ken, Son, Ghaghra, and Gandak

UPSC Angle: GS-3 Biodiversity — three crocodilian species in India: Mugger, Saltwater Crocodile, Gharial; Project Crocodile (1975); National Chambal Sanctuary.

NITI AAYOG EXPORT PREPAREDNESS INDEX (EPI) 2024

NITI Aayog released the **4th edition** of the **Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2024**.

Framework: 4 pillars — Export Infrastructure (20%), Business Ecosystem (40%), Policy & Governance (20%), Export Performance (20%); disaggregated into 13 sub-pillars and **70 indicators**.

Top performers:

Large States: Maharashtra (68.01 score) → Tamil Nadu → Gujarat → Uttar Pradesh → Andhra Pradesh

Small States/UTs: Uttarakhand, J&K, Nagaland, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu, Goa

National goal: USD 1 trillion in merchandise exports by 2030 (Viksit Bharat @2047).

INDIA ASSUMES BRICS CHAIRMANSHIP 2026

India officially took over **BRICS Chairmanship** for 2026 (from Brazil) as the host of the **18th BRICS Summit**.

EAM **S. Jaishankar** unveiled India's BRICS logo and theme on January 13, 2026

India's chairmanship theme structured around **four pillars:** Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation, Environmental Sustainability

This is India's chairmanship of **expanded BRICS** (BRICS+): 10 members — Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa + Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, UAE (added at Johannesburg Summit 2023)

17th BRICS Summit: Kazan, Russia (October 2024, under Russia's chairmanship)

UGC EQUITY REGULATIONS 2026

The **University Grants Commission (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2026** were notified on January 13, 2026.

Purpose: Eliminate caste-based discrimination in colleges/universities; covers SC, ST, OBC, minorities, women, PWD

Every Higher Education Institution (HEI) must establish an **Equal Opportunity Centre and Equity Committee**

Complaints acknowledged within **24 hours**; resolved within **15 working days**

Background: Follows 2019 PIL by Radhika Vemula (mother of Rohith Vemula) and Abeda Salim Tadvi (mother of Payal Tadvi) highlighting institutional caste discrimination

Note: The Supreme Court (CJ Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi) later stayed the regulations in January 2026, calling them prima facie “vague” and “easy to misuse”

INDIA'S BIOECONOMY: \$10 BILLION TO \$166 BILLION IN A DECADE

Union Minister **Dr. Jitendra Singh** (Ministry of Science & Technology) highlighted India's bioeconomy growth:

Bioeconomy grew **16-fold**: from ~**\$10 billion (2014)** to ~**\$166 billion (2024)**

Biotech startups surged from **50–70 (2014)** to over **11,000 (2026)**

Market segments: Bio-Industrial (47%), BioPharma (35%), Bio-Research & IT (9%), Bio-Agri (8%)

Target: **\$300 billion** bioeconomy in coming years (CAGR ~17–18%)

Context: Highlighted alongside BioE3 Policy (2024)

FOREST FIRE IN NANDA DEVI BIOSPHERE RESERVE

A forest fire in the **Nanda Devi Wildlife Forest Division**, Chamoli district, Uttarakhand (from January 9, 2026) prompted deployment of an **IAF Mi-17 V5 helicopter** from Joshimath for aerial firefighting.

Fire location: rocky terrain between **Alaknanda and Lakshman Ganga rivers**, Govindghat range, Nanda Devi National Park

Valley of Flowers National Park (UNESCO WHS; ~87 sq km; Chamoli) was confirmed safe (~7 km aerial distance)

Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve: UNESCO World Heritage Site (1988)

IOA LAUNCHES NOEDP; GAGAN NARANG AS NOA DIRECTOR

The **Indian Olympic Association (IOA)** launched the **National Olympic Education and Development Programme (NOEDP)** and reactivated the **National Olympic Academy (NOA)**.

Director, NOA: Olympic medallist **Gagan Narang** (2012 London Olympics — 10m air rifle, Bronze)

NOA President: IOA President **P.T. Usha**

NOEDP covers Olympic values education, athlete welfare, career transition, coach capacity building

Decision taken at IOA Executive Council and AGM in Ahmedabad (January 8–9)

CHADAR TREK POSTPONED — ZANSKAR RIVER, LADAKH

The iconic **Chadar Trek** on the frozen **Zaskar River**, Ladakh was postponed in January 2026 due to **weak ice formation** caused by above-normal winter temperatures — a climate change signal for Himalayan regions.

Persons in News

General Upendra Dwivedi — Chief of Army Staff; presided over 78th Army Day Parade in Jaipur. **Gagan Narang** — Olympic bronze medallist (2012 London, 10m air rifle); appointed Director of National Olympic Academy (NOA).

UPSC RELEVANCE

Army Day (January 15; 78th in 2026; Jaipur; General Upendra Dwivedi); Sena Medal (Gallantry award; conferred on Army Day/Republic Day); Gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*; Critically Endangered IUCN; Schedule I WPA; Project Crocodile 1975; National Chambal Sanctuary); EPI 2024 (4th edition; NITI Aayog; 4 pillars; 70 indicators; Maharashtra #1); BRICS 2026 (India chair; 18th Summit; 10 members; Johannesburg expansion 2023; 17th Summit Kazan 2024); UGC Equity Regulations 2026 (Rohith Vemula; Equal Opportunity Centre; 15 working days); BioE3 Policy (2024); India Bioeconomy (\$166B; 11,000 startups); Nanda Devi BR (UNESCO WHS 1988; Chamoli, Uttarakhand); Valley of Flowers NP (UNESCO WHS; Chamoli); IAF Mi-17 V5 (helicopter; utility/firefighting/rescue); Chadar Trek (Zaskar River; Ladakh; frozen river trek); IOA (Indian Olympic Association); NOA (National Olympic Academy; Gagan Narang); NOEDP

MAINS GS-3:

Army's digital transformation — what does “Year of Networking and Data Centricity” mean for India's defence modernisation? | Gharial conservation and Project Crocodile — is river ecosystem health improving? | India's bioeconomy growth — can it sustain 17% CAGR?

MAINS GS-2:

UGC Equity Regulations and institutional mechanisms against caste discrimination in universities | India's BRICS chairmanship — strategic objectives and the challenge of leading an expanded, diverse grouping

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

78TH ARMY DAY 2026:

Date: January 15, 2026 (Army Day celebrated annually on Jan 15)

Venue: Mahal Road, Jaipur (first parade outside cantonment in Jaipur; 4th outside Delhi nationally)

COAS: General Upendra Dwivedi

Theme: “Year of Networking and Data Centricity”

Awards: 10 Sena Medals (Gallantry); 49 COAS Unit Citations; 60 COAS Certificates of Appreciation; “Bravest of the Brave” → 8 Assam Rifles

GHARIAL:

Scientific name: *Gavialis gangeticus*

IUCN: Critically Endangered

WPA 1972: Schedule I

2026 survey: 3,037 in 13 rivers of Ganga basin

Key habitats: National Chambal Sanctuary (MP-UP-Rajasthan), Katarniaghat WS (UP), Ken River, Girwa River

Conservation: Project Crocodile (1975); National Chambal Sanctuary established 1978

Distinctive feature: Long, narrow snout (fish-eater); bulbous nose on males (ghara)

THREE CROCODILIANS OF INDIA:

Mugger Crocodile (*Crocodylus palustris*): Freshwater; IUCN Vulnerable; Schedule I

Saltwater Crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*): Coastal/estuarine; Schedule I; Sundarbans, Bhitarkanika

Gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*): River-dwelling; IUCN Critically Endangered; Schedule I

EXPORT PREPAREDNESS INDEX (EPI) 2024:

Issuing body: NITI Aayog

Edition: 4th (first released August 2020)

Framework: 4 pillars × 13 sub-pillars × 70 indicators

Pillars: Export Infrastructure (20%), Business Ecosystem (40%), Policy & Governance (20%), Export Performance (20%)

Large States top 5: Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, UP, Andhra Pradesh

National target: USD 1 trillion merchandise exports by 2030

BRICS 2026:

India assumes chairmanship: January 1, 2026 (from Brazil)

Summit: 18th BRICS Summit (to be hosted by India)

Chairmanship pillars: Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation, Environmental Sustainability

BRICS+ members (10): Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa + Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, UAE

Expansion: Johannesburg Summit 2023 (15th Summit, South Africa’s chairmanship)

17th BRICS Summit: Kazan, Russia (October 2024)

UGC EQUITY REGULATIONS 2026:

Notified: January 13, 2026

Key mechanisms: Equal Opportunity Centre (in every HEI), Equity Committee

Complaint timeline: Acknowledge 24 hours; resolve 15 working days

Background: Rohith Vemula (Hyderabad Central University, 2016) and Payal Tadvi (T.N. Topiwala National Medical College, 2019) cases

SC stay: January 29, 2026 (CJ Surya Kant bench — “vague” and “easy to misuse”)

INDIA BIOECONOMY:

Growth: \$10 billion (2014) → \$166 billion (2024/2026) — 16-fold

Biotech startups: 50-70 (2014) → 11,000+ (2026)

Target: \$300 billion

BioE3 Policy (2024): Biotechnology for Economy, Environment, Employment

Sources: PIB, Indian Army, NITI Aayog, The Hindu, Indian Express

CURATED & WRITTEN BY

Bharat Choudhary

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

 [linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)

Published on ujyari.com · Free UPSC & State PCS Current Affairs