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Prelims Specific Facts (January 16-31)

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Prelims Specific Facts (January 16-31)

 **Down to Earth** Chapter 14 · 2 min read ·

Newly Mentioned Species, Flora & Fauna

Omarana Water Lily (*Nymphaea × omarana* Bisset)

- Vibrant pink, introduced, **invasive aquatic plant**
- Habitat: proliferates in freshwater wetlands; naturally suppressed by saline water
- Location: **Kuttanad region** (Malarikkal village), Kerala
- Ecological impact: decaying biomass emits **methane** (GHG); hinders aquatic navigation, blocks sunlight, requires high herbicide use before paddy sowing

Cowpea (*Vigna unguiculata*)

- Highly climate-resilient, drought- and shade-tolerant legume requiring no pre-soaking
- **Subspecies:** Domesticated varieties under *ssp. unguiculata*; wild subspecies include *dekindtiana*, *protracta*, *pubescens*, *stenophylla*, *tenuis*
- **History:** Domesticated in Africa (2500 BCE); reached Indian subcontinent (Daimabad, Maharashtra) between **1500-1200 BCE**
- Nutrition: 100g dried grain yields **25g of protein**

Weedy Rice (*Oryza sativa f. spontanea*)

- Noxious aquatic weed heavily infesting paddy fields of Kerala

Stingless Bees

- Oldest bee species; responsible for pollinating **over 80% of Amazonian flora**
- Recently became **world's first insects to gain legal rights** to exist, flourish, and live in pollution-free environment — via municipal declaration in **Satipo, Peruvian Amazon**

Common Cuckoo

- Transcontinental migratory bird (East Asia to Africa)
- Uses the **Jhalana region of the Aravalli range** as a critical habitat stopover to replenish energy before crossing the Thar and Arabian deserts

Desert-Adapted Fauna in Aravallis

- Royal snake, desert monitor lizard, fringe-toed lizard, Asiatic wildcat, and white-footed fox

National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries & Geographical Features

Aravalli Hills & Craton

- Over **2.5 billion-year-old** fold mountains spanning **700 km** across Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Delhi
- Acts as a massive “upland biological corridor” checking eastward drift of **Thar Desert sand** through **12 identified gaps**
- **Geological composition — four main rock terrains:**
 - ❶ **Bhilwara gneiss** — 3 billion years old
 - ❷ **Quartzites** — 1.8-2 billion years (mountain-building phase)
 - ❸ **Delhi rocks** — 1.1 billion years
 - ❹ **Post-Delhi magmatic rocks** — 850-750 million years
- Comprises the ancient **Aravalli Craton** and the **Bayana Basin** (part of the North Delhi Fold Belt)
- Recent research: Aravallis continue underground to Haridwar; form buried spine dividing **Ganga and Indus river basins**

Vembanad Kole Wetland Ecosystem

- Designated **Ramsar site** in Kerala
- Houses **Kuttanad region** — located **1-2 metres below sea level**
- Recognised as **Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System (GIAHS)** by FAO (2013) for unique below-sea-level paddy farming

Thanneermukkam Saltwater Barrage

- Located in northern Kuttanad
- Prevents saltwater intrusion into paddy fields from December to March
- Delayed operation exacerbates invasive weed growth (Omarana water lily)

Kukrail Reserve Forest

- Located in **Lucknow, UP**
- Proposed to host **India’s first urban night safari** — sparking forest diversion concerns

Key Findings from Reports & Indices

REPORT	KEY FINDING
Dynamic Ground Water Resources of India 2024 (CGWB)	736 of 6,553 assessment blocks (11%) classified as “over-exploited”
World Nuclear Industry Status Report 2025	7 Indian reactors in “suspended operation” or “long-term outage”
Asian Waterbird Census 2026	~9,000 birds, 131 species along 22-km Yamuna floodplains (Wazirabad-Okhla, Delhi)
Britain’s Climate Milestone (Met Office)	2025 = hottest and sunniest year on record; average mean temp 10.09°C



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