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# Current Affairs Today – January 18, 2026

18 January 2026

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## WHY IN NEWS

AM Green and NTPC signed a landmark green hydrogen supply deal at the Andhra Pradesh Global Investors Summit, the 6th ASEAN-India Digital Ministers' Meeting (ADGMIN) adopted a joint Digital Work Plan, and the Responsible Business for Inclusive Oceans Symposium opened in Chennai with focus on deep-sea mining governance.

## AP GLOBAL INVESTORS SUMMIT — AM GREEN AND NTPC GREEN HYDROGEN DEAL

At the **Andhra Pradesh Global Investors Summit (AP GIS) 2026** in Amaravati, **AM Green** (formerly AmpIn Energy Transition) signed a landmark agreement with **NTPC Green Energy Limited** to supply **1 million metric tonnes per annum (MMTPA)** of green hydrogen from its facility in **Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh**. The project, involving an electrolyser capacity of approximately **5 GW**, is one of the largest announced green hydrogen projects in India.

The Kakinada Green Hydrogen Hub is being positioned as an export-oriented facility, with green ammonia as the primary output — targeting European and East Asian markets that require green hydrogen derivatives for decarbonising shipping and fertiliser production.

### Key Facts:

**AM Green (Kakinada):** private green energy company; formerly operating as AmpIn; backed by global green finance

**NTPC Green Energy Limited:** a wholly-owned subsidiary of NTPC; focuses on renewables including green hydrogen

**Green Hydrogen:** produced through electrolysis of water using renewable electricity; emits zero carbon

India's **National Green Hydrogen Mission (NGHM):** launched January 2023; target — 5 MMTPA green hydrogen production by 2030; Rs 19,744 crore outlay

Kakinada port: deep-water port in Andhra Pradesh; strategic for LNG and green energy exports

**Green Ammonia:** NH<sub>3</sub> produced using green hydrogen; major export commodity for energy transition

### UPSC RELEVANCE

NGHM targets, green hydrogen production method (electrolysis), NTPC Green Energy.

### MAINS GS-3:

Green hydrogen policy; India's energy transition; export opportunities in clean energy.

## RB-IOS 2026 — RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS FOR INCLUSIVE OCEANS

The **Responsible Business for Inclusive Oceans Symposium (RB-IOS 2026)** opened in **Chennai** on January 18, 2026, organised by the **International Seabed Authority (ISA)** in partnership with India's **Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)**. The symposium focused on governance frameworks for deep-sea mining, equitable benefit-sharing from ocean resources, and integrating small island developing states into ocean economy decisions.

India holds **exploration licences** for polymetallic nodules and crusts in the Central Indian Ocean Basin (CIOB) and the Indian Ocean's hydrothermal vent fields, awarded by ISA.

### Key Facts:

**ISA (International Seabed Authority):** established under **UNCLOS (1982)**; headquartered in Kingston, Jamaica

ISA governs all mineral-related activities in the **Area** (seabed beyond national jurisdiction)

India's exploration areas: **CIOB (Central Indian Ocean Basin)** — polymetallic nodules (manganese, nickel, copper, cobalt); **Carlsberg Ridge** — polymetallic sulphides

India's nodule exploration contract: held by **National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT)** and India

**Deep Seabed Mining (DSM):** controversial; potential ecological damage to hydrothermal vent ecosystems

**Blue Economy:** India's blue economy strategy aims for \$1 trillion contribution by 2030

Ministry of Earth Sciences: oversees NIOT, National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), Centre for Marine Living Resources and Ecology (CMLRE)

### UPSC RELEVANCE

ISA, UNCLOS, CIOB, NIOT, polymetallic nodules.

### MAINS GS-2/GS-3:

International ocean governance; India's deep-sea mining interests; Blue Economy; equitable resource sharing.

## 6TH ASEAN-INDIA DIGITAL MINISTERS' MEETING (ADGMIN)

The **6th ASEAN-India Digital Ministers' Meeting (ADGMIN)** was held on **January 15–16, 2026, in Hanoi, Vietnam**, adopting the **ASEAN-India Digital Work Plan 2026** — a joint framework for cooperation in digital infrastructure, cybersecurity, digital payments interoperability, AI governance, and digital skills.

India's Union Minister for Electronics and IT (MeitY) represented India. Key deliverables include:

Interconnecting **UPI (Unified Payments Interface)** with payment systems of ASEAN member states

Joint cybersecurity incident response protocols

Digital public infrastructure (DPI) sharing — India's Aadhaar, DigiLocker, and ONDC frameworks as models

AI governance alignment — referencing India's NITI Aayog AI governance principles

### Key Facts:

**ASEAN members (10):** Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam

**ASEAN-India FTA (goods, 2010):** forms baseline; digital economy requires updated framework

**ASEAN-India Digital Fund:** proposed; India offered \$1M seed funding

**UPI international expansion:** already live in Singapore (PayNow link), UAE, France, Mauritius, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka

**ONDC (Open Network for Digital Commerce):** India's open protocol for e-commerce; DPI model

MeitY: Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology; oversees DPI, cybersecurity policy

### UPSC RELEVANCE

ASEAN members, UPI international links, MeitY.

### MAINS GS-2:

India-ASEAN digital cooperation; digital diplomacy; UPI internationalisation; DPI as soft power tool.

## GEM WOMANIYA INITIATIVE — WOMEN SELLERS ON GOVERNMENT MARKETPLACE

The **Government e-Marketplace (GeM)** reported that its **Womaniya initiative** had crossed **10 lakh registered women sellers** as of January 18, 2026, with cumulative sales from women-owned businesses exceeding **Rs 35,000 crore** since the programme's launch.

GeM Womaniya was launched in 2020 to encourage women entrepreneurs, self-help groups (SHGs), and women-led MSMEs to sell directly to government buyers — central ministries, state governments, and PSUs — through the GeM portal, bypassing intermediaries.

### Key Facts:

**GeM portal:** launched 2016; mandatory for central government procurement above Rs 25,000

**GeM Womaniya:** launched 2020; zero registration fee for women sellers; dedicated buyer support

**SHGs (Self-Help Groups):** ~12 crore women members across India; primary rural beneficiary group

Nodal ministry: **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**

GeM total GMV (Gross Merchandise Value): over Rs 4 lakh crore cumulatively (as of early 2026)

**DAstA:** Dedicated Artisan Support on GeM — for weavers, craftspersons (linked to Womaniya)

### UPSC RELEVANCE

GeM launch year, Womaniya, nodal ministry, mandatory procurement threshold.

### MAINS GS-2/GS-3:

Women economic empowerment; public procurement reforms; SHG-government interface.

## NITI AAYOG MSME COMPETITIVENESS REPORT

NITI Aayog released a report titled “**Accelerating MSME Competitiveness for Atmanirbhar Bharat**” on January 18, 2026, identifying key challenges and recommending policy interventions for India’s Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise sector.

Key recommendations:

Formalisation through GST and UDYAM registration incentives

Technology upgrade subsidies (via CLCS-TUS — Credit Linked Capital Subsidy for Technology Upgradation)

**Cluster development** model for shared infrastructure and services

Export facilitation through Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (ECGC) risk coverage expansion

Access to finance: simplify the **MUDRA** scheme and expand **TReDS** (Trade Receivables Discounting System) to smaller MSMEs

**Key Facts:**

MSMEs in India: ~6.3 crore enterprises; employ ~11 crore people; contribute ~30% of GDP and ~50% of exports

**UDYAM registration:** online portal for MSME registration (since 2020); replaces Udyog Aadhaar

MSME classification (revised 2020): Micro (investment  $\leq 1$  cr, turnover  $\leq 5$  cr), Small ( $\leq 10$  cr,  $\leq 50$  cr), Medium ( $\leq 50$  cr,  $\leq 250$  cr)

**MUDRA:** Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency; loans under Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (Shishu/Kishore/Tarun)

**TReDS:** digital platform for invoice financing of MSME receivables; RBI regulated

Ministry: **Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises**

### UPSC RELEVANCE

MSME classification thresholds (post-2020), MUDRA tiers, UDYAM, TReDS.

### MAINS GS-3:

MSME challenges; technology upgradation; credit access; export promotion.

## INDIA-ISRAEL FISHERIES COOPERATION MOU

India and Israel signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** on fisheries and aquaculture cooperation on January 18, 2026, in New Delhi. The MoU covers joint research in aquaculture technology, exchange of expertise in water-efficient fish farming, and cooperation in developing India's marine fisheries sector.

Israel is a global leader in **recirculating aquaculture systems (RAS)** and **precision irrigation and farming technologies** — applicable to both land-based fish farming and freshwater aquaculture. India is the **second-largest fish producer** globally (after China) with annual production of approximately 16 million tonnes.

### Key Facts:

India's fisheries and aquaculture: ~16 million tonnes/year; employs ~28 million people

India is world's 2nd largest aquaculture producer after China

**PM Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY)**: flagship scheme; Rs 20,050 crore (2020-25); 2nd phase extended

Israel's RAS technology: land-based recirculating systems with near-zero water usage — relevant for India's water-scarce areas

India's marine fish production: Bay of Bengal, Arabian Sea; top states: Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala

Nodal ministry: **Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying**

### UPSC RELEVANCE

India fish production rank, PMMSY, nodal ministry.

### MAINS GS-3:

Blue economy; fisheries sector; India-Israel bilateral; water-efficient aquaculture.

## PIRAMAL FINANCE — IFC AND ADB BLENDED FINANCE

**Piramal Finance**, a non-banking financial company (NBFC), secured **blended finance** from the **International Finance Corporation (IFC)** and **Asian Development Bank (ADB)**, totalling approximately **\$200 million**, to expand lending to affordable housing and small business borrowers in tier-2 and tier-3 Indian cities.

Blended finance combines concessional (below-market-rate) development finance with commercial capital to crowd in private lending into sectors that commercial banks typically under-serve.

**Key Facts:**

**IFC:** investment arm of the **World Bank Group**; finances private sector in developing countries

**ADB:** regional multilateral development bank; headquarters in Manila, Philippines; India is one of largest borrowers

**Blended finance:** combines grant/concessional loans (public) + commercial investment (private) to reduce risk and mobilise capital for development goals

**NBFC regulation:** by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI); scale-based regulation (SBR) framework

**Affordable Housing Finance:** priority sector for India; PMAY (Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana) targets 2 crore urban houses

Piramal Finance: NBFC subsidiary of Piramal Enterprises; focuses on housing finance and SME loans

**UPSC RELEVANCE**

IFC (World Bank arm), ADB headquarters, blended finance definition.

**MAINS GS-3:**

Development finance; housing sector; NBFC regulation; blended finance mechanisms.

## ★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGE PEDIA

### GREEN HYDROGEN — KEY DATA:

Production method: electrolysis of water using renewable electricity  
 National Green Hydrogen Mission (NGHM): launched January 4, 2023  
 NGHM target: 5 MMTPA by 2030; Rs 19,744 crore outlay  
 AM Green Kakinada project: 1 MMTPA; ~5 GW electrolyser; partnership with NTPC Green Energy  
 Green Ammonia: green H<sub>2</sub> + nitrogen (Haber-Bosch using renewables) — key export product

### ISA AND DEEP-SEA MINING:

ISA headquarters: Kingston, Jamaica  
 Legal basis: UNCLOS 1982 (Part XI on the Area)  
 India's exploration licence: CIOB (polymetallic nodules) + Carlsberg Ridge (sulphides)  
 Indian operator: National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), under MoES  
 RB-IO5 2026 host city: Chennai; co-organiser: Ministry of Earth Sciences

### 6TH ADGMIN — KEY FACTS:

Meeting: 6th ASEAN-India Digital Ministers (ADGMIN), Hanoi, January 15–16, 2026  
 Key deliverable: ASEAN-India Digital Work Plan 2026 — DPI sharing, UPI interoperability, AI governance, cybersecurity  
 UPI international links (as of 2026): Singapore (PayNow), UAE, France, Mauritius, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka  
 ASEAN members: 10 (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam)

### GEM WOMANIYA:

GeM launched: 2016; mandatory procurement threshold: Rs 25,000  
 Womaniya launched: 2020; zero registration fee  
 Milestone: 10 lakh women sellers; Rs 35,000 crore cumulative sales  
 Ministry: Commerce and Industry

### MSME CLASSIFICATION (POST-2020):

Micro: Investment ≤ Rs 1 crore; Turnover ≤ Rs 5 crore  
 Small: Investment ≤ Rs 10 crore; Turnover ≤ Rs 50 crore  
 Medium: Investment ≤ Rs 50 crore; Turnover ≤ Rs 250 crore  
 Total MSMEs: ~6.3 crore; employment: ~11 crore; GDP contribution: ~30%; export share: ~50%  
 UDYAM: online registration portal (since 2020)

### FISHERIES — KEY NUMBERS:

India: 2nd largest fish producer globally (~16 million tonnes/year)  
 Employs: ~28 million people  
 PMMSY: Rs 20,050 crore; launched 2020  
 Ministry: Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying

### IFC AND ADB:

IFC: private sector arm of World Bank Group; HQ Washington DC

ADB: multilateral development bank; HQ Manila, Philippines; founded 1966

Blended finance: concessional + commercial capital to crowd-in private investment

**OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:**

NTPC Green Energy Ltd: wholly-owned subsidiary of NTPC for renewables + green hydrogen

TReDS: Trade Receivables Discounting System (RBI regulated; for MSME invoice financing)

MUDRA tiers: Shishu (up to Rs 50,000), Kishore (Rs 50K–5L), Tarun (Rs 5L–10L)

CLCS-TUS: Credit Linked Capital Subsidy for Technology Upgradation Scheme (for MSMEs)

ONDC: Open Network for Digital Commerce; India's DPI for open e-commerce protocol

Sources: PIB, The Hindu, Indian Express

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