



UPSC & STATE PCS CURRENT AFFAIRS · UJIYARI.COM

WEEKLY ROUNDUP

Weekly Roundup — Week 3 (Jan 12–18, 2026)

18 January 2026

SUBJECTS COVERED

ECONOMY

SCIENCE & TECH

ENVIRONMENT

SECURITY & DEFENCE

IR

POLITY

SOCIAL ISSUES

REPORTS & SCHEMES

CURATED & WRITTEN BY**Bharat Choudhary**

UPSC Educator & Content Creator •

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

Free UPSC & State PCS Resources

ujiyari.com

Weekly Roundup — Week 3 (Jan 12–18, 2026)

Week 3 — January 12–18, 2026

[Economy](#)
[Science Tech](#)
[Environment](#)
[Security Defence](#)
[International Relations](#)
[Polity](#)
[Social Issues](#)
[Reports Schemes](#)

WEEK OVERVIEW

A milestone week for India’s institutional and strategic landscape. **India formally assumed the BRICS 2026 chairmanship**, hosting the world’s most watched emerging-economy bloc in a 10-nation format. The **78th Army Day in Jaipur** showcased India’s drone warfare doctrine and NCW capabilities. A **Vande Bharat Sleeper train** made its inaugural run. **Startup India** marked its 10th anniversary with 2 lakh+ startups and 3rd-largest global ranking. Meanwhile, the **PSLV-C62 failure analysis** raised concerns about ISRO’s Stage-3 propulsion reliability, and a critical minerals mission worth ₹34,300 crore launched to reduce import dependence.

ECONOMY & DEVELOPMENT

BRICS 2026 — India’s Chairmanship Begins

India formally assumed the **BRICS 2026 chairmanship** on January 1 (announced this week). Theme: **“Fostering Resilience and Innovation for Sustainable Development”** — built on 4 pillars: (1) Inclusive Growth, (2) Digital Transformation, (3) Sustainable Development, (4) Reformed Multilateralism.

Expanded format: BRICS now has **10 members** — original 5 (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) + Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, UAE (joined January 2024). India hosts the **18th BRICS Summit in 2026**.

India’s priorities as chair:

- Push for BRICS as a voice of the Global South (not anti-West)
- Advance **New Development Bank (NDB)** lending in local currencies
- Promote **UPI-based cross-border payment interoperability** within BRICS
- Chair the BRICS Science, Technology and Innovation Working Group

Advance discussions on **UN Security Council reform**

UPSC Angle — GS-2 / IR: BRICS evolution (BRIC → BRICS → BRICS+); NDB headquarters (Shanghai); India's multi-alignment strategy; reformed multilateralism; India's UNSC permanent membership aspiration.

National Critical Mineral Mission — ₹34,300 Crore Strategy

India launched the **National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM)** — a 6-year (2025–31) strategy with ₹34,300 crore outlay — to secure supply of 30 critical minerals essential for clean energy, defence, and electronics.

India's import vulnerability:

100% import-dependent: Lithium, cobalt, nickel, and 7 other minerals

China controls: ~60% of global rare earth processing; ~80% of cobalt refining

Key actions:

KABIL (Khanij Bidesh India Ltd) — JV of NALCO + HCL + MECL — signed ₹200 crore deal for **lithium blocks in Argentina** (Kachi and Mariana deposits)

Mineral Security Partnership (MSP): 14-nation group (India + US + EU + Japan + Australia) for supply chain resilience

Mines Amendment Act 2025: Declared 24 minerals as “strategic” — enabling Central government to retain mining rights

GSI 368 exploration projects launched for domestic mineral mapping

Recycling Incentive Scheme: ₹1,500 crore to recover lithium/cobalt from e-waste

UPSC Angle — GS-3 / Economy + Environment: Critical minerals and energy transition; China's mineral dominance; KABIL's mandate; Mineral Security Partnership; e-waste recycling policy.

MSME Sector — Convergence Report and Competitiveness

NITI Aayog's MSME Convergence Report identified **18 overlapping schemes** for MSMEs, recommending consolidation into an AI-powered single portal. A separate **MSME Competitiveness Report** outlined the path to formalisation.

MSME sector data (Prelims):

Indicator	Data
Share of GDP	27–30%
Share of exports	45%
Workforce employed	62% (~28.13 crore workers)
Udyam Portal registrations	3.94 crore enterprises
MSME classification (post-2020)	Micro ≤Rs 1cr inv / ≤5cr TO; Small ≤10cr / ≤50cr; Medium ≤50cr / ≤250cr

Key schemes: MUDRA (Shishu/Kishore/Tarun), TReDS (trade receivables platform), CLCS-TUS (technology upgrade subsidy), CGTMSE (credit guarantee).

UPSC Angle — GS-3: MSME role in employment and exports; formalisation challenges; MUDRA vs. CGTMSE; TReDS mechanism; Atmanirbhar Bharat MSME focus.

PM Internship Scheme — Low Uptake Despite Large Budget

The **PM Internship Scheme** (top 500 Indian companies; 1 crore internships in 5 years) has utilised only ~4% of its ₹11,500+ crore FY26 budget. Stipend: ₹5,000/month + ₹6,000 one-time grant. Despite government mandate, companies cite poor candidate quality and low completion rates.

UPSC Angle — GS-2 / Social Issues: Youth unemployment (~16–17%); scheme design vs. implementation gap; private sector role in skill development; linkage to NEP 2020 internship components.

GeM Womaniya — 10 Lakh Women Sellers Milestone

The **GeM (Government e-Marketplace) Womaniya** initiative crossed **10 lakh women sellers** with ₹35,000 crore cumulative sales. GeM (launched 2016) mandates government procurement above ₹25,000 through the platform. Womaniya (launched 2020) waives seller registration fees for women and SHGs (~12 crore women members nationally).

UPSC Angle — GS-3 / Economy: GeM's role in procurement reform; women entrepreneurship; SHG-bank linkage; Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

National Quantum Mission — Milestones Update

India's **National Quantum Mission (NQM)** — ₹6,003 crore (2023–31) — reported progress: IISc Bengaluru and TIFR Mumbai are leading the **indigenous quantum computer development** roadmap: 50-qubit by 2028 → 1,000-qubit by 2031. QKD (Quantum Key Distribution) pilot networks are operational.

Milestone	Target Year
50-qubit quantum computer	2028
1,000-qubit quantum computer	2031
Satellite-based QKD	2027
Quantum cryptography deployment	2029

UPSC Angle — GS-3 / S&T: NQM mandate; quantum supremacy vs. quantum advantage; implications for cryptography (breaking RSA) and defence communications; India vs. US/China quantum race.

PSLV-C62 Failure — Stage 3 Anomaly

The **PSLV-C62** mission (16 satellites including DRDO’s EOS-N1/Anvesha) failed due to a **Stage-3 roll-rate disturbance** — the same stage that failed in May 2025 (PSLV-C61). This is India’s **2nd consecutive PSLV Stage-3 failure**.

Technical analysis:

Suborbital trajectory achieved: ~-3,800 km × 390 km (could not reach circular orbit)

Stage 3 uses a **solid propulsion motor** (PSOM-XL) — failure likely in nozzle steering or motor casing

ISRO formed a **Failure Analysis Committee**; PSLV-C63 placed on hold

Impact: 16 satellites lost (government + commercial co-passengers). ISRO’s commercial launch credibility at risk — **NewSpace India Limited (NSIL)** has committed launch slots to international customers.

UPSC Angle — GS-3 / S&T: ISRO’s PSLV architecture (4 stages: solid-liquid-solid-liquid); NSIL’s commercial role; India’s space economy (\$8 billion target by 2033); implications for SSLV as backup.

Japan’s Deep-Sea Rare Earth Mining

Japan’s research vessel **Chikyu** conducted world’s first **experimental deep-sea rare earth extraction** at ~6,000 m depth in the Pacific. Deposits of ~16 million tonnes contain dysprosium (730 years of global supply) and yttrium (780 years). Relevant to India because: reduces China’s rare earth monopoly; Japan is a Quad partner; India-Japan critical mineral cooperation under MSP.

DEFENCE & SECURITY

78th Army Day — Jaipur Parade

The **78th Army Day** was held in **Jaipur** — the **4th time** the parade moved outside Delhi; **1st time in Jaipur**. Chief of Army Staff: **General Upendra Dwivedi**. Theme: “**Year of Networking and Data Centricity 2026.**”

Weapons displayed: BrahMos supersonic missile, Pinaka MLRS, Main Battle Tanks (Arjun), UAV swarms, Counter-Drone Systems, Robotic Mules, **Shaktimaan Electronic Warfare System**.

Awards: 10 Sena Medals (Gallantry), 49 COAS Unit Citations, 8 Assam Rifles “Bravest of the Brave” awards, 60 COAS Certificates of Merit.

Bhairav Battalions — multi-domain compact combat units — also displayed, integrating drone, cyber, and EW capabilities into a single unit-level package.

UPSC Angle — GS-3 / Security: Army Day significance (Jan 15 = transfer of command from British to Indian General, 1949); Electronic Warfare in modern conflict; Integrated Theatre Commands preparation.

DRDO MPATGM — Man-Portable Anti-Tank Missile

DRDO’s **MPATGM (Man-Portable Anti-Tank Guided Missile)** — India’s 3rd-generation ATGM — cleared key tests. Features: **fire-and-forget** guidance, **top-attack mode** (hits weak top armour of tanks), IR imaging seeker. Production partners: **BDL (Bharat Dynamics Ltd) + BEL (Bharat Electronics Ltd)**.

Replaces aging Milan missiles (French); reduces import dependence in infantry anti-armour capability.

UPSC Angle — GS-3 / Security: Indigenisation of guided missiles; DAP 2020 positive indigenisation list; DRDO’s missile development ecosystem; BDL’s role in defence manufacturing.

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

Lokpal — 12th Anniversary (Jan 16, 2026)

The **Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013** came into force on **January 16, 2014** — completing 12 years. Lokpal is India’s apex anti-corruption ombudsman at the Centre.

Key Prelims facts:

Feature	Detail
Type	Statutory body (NOT constitutional)
Composition	Chairperson + 8 Members
Member mix	50% judicial, 50% SC/ST/OBC/minorities/women
Appointment	By President on recommendation of Selection Committee
Selection Committee	PM (Chair) + LoP (Lok Sabha) + Speaker LS + CJI + eminent jurist
Jurisdiction	PM, Ministers, MPs, Group A–D officials, PSUs, NGOs receiving govt funds
First Lokpal	Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose (March 2019)
Tenure	5 years or 70 years of age, whichever earlier

Limitation: No suo motu cognisance power; complaints must come from citizens. PM's jurisdiction limited (foreign affairs, security decisions excluded).

UPSC Angle — GS-2 / Polity: Lokpal vs. Lokayukta; 2nd ARC recommendation on anti-corruption; comparison with CVC (Central Vigilance Commission); CBI's supervisory authority.

CVC — New Vigilance Commissioner Appointed

Praveen Vashista (IPS, Bihar cadre, 1991 batch) was sworn in as Vigilance Commissioner. **CVC (Central Vigilance Commission) Act, 2003** structure: 1 Central Vigilance Commissioner + 2 Vigilance Commissioners. Appointment by President on recommendation of a committee (PM + Home Minister + LoP). Tenure: 4 years or 65 years of age. Jurisdiction: All India Services, Group A officers, PSUs, banks, RBI, SEBI.

UGC Equity Regulations 2026 — And the Stay

UGC (Prevention of Caste Discrimination) Regulations 2026 mandated Equal Opportunity Centres and Equity Committees in all HEIs with 24-hour acknowledgement + 15-day resolution for complaints. However, the **Supreme Court stayed the regulations on January 29, 2026**, citing procedural concerns about consultation process.

UPSC Angle — GS-2: UGC's regulatory role; caste discrimination in higher education; Article 15(4) — special provisions for backward classes; institutional accountability vs. autonomy.

ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY

Gharial Survey — 3,037 in Ganga Basin

India's annual gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*) population survey found **3,037 individuals across 13 rivers** in the Ganga basin — an improvement from near-extinction levels (<200 in the 1970s). Despite recovery, the gharial remains **IUCN Critically Endangered**.

Key habitat: National Chambal Sanctuary (Rajasthan-MP-UP tri-junction) — India's premier gharial stronghold. Also found in: Girwa River (UP), Son, Ramganga, Ken.

Schedule I species under WPA 1972 — highest protection. Threats: sand mining, fishing nets, river flow reduction.

UPSC Angle — GS-3 / Environment: Gharial vs. mugger crocodile vs. saltwater crocodile distribution; National Chambal Sanctuary (also houses river dolphin); Project Crocodile (1975); ex-situ breeding at Kukrail Reptile Centre, Lucknow.

Sangai Deer — Critical Population Decline

The **Sangai deer (*Rucervus eldii eldii*)** — Manipur's state animal — declined from 90 individuals (2006) to **~64 (2023)**, with a breeding population of only **~7.5 individuals**. A new census was scheduled for February 20–27, 2026.

Unique ecology: Found only in **Keibul Lamjao National Park** — the **world's only floating national park** — in **Loktak Lake** (Manipur's largest lake; Ramsar site). The deer live on **phumdis** (floating biomass islands) that are shrinking due to altered water levels from **Ithai Barrage (1983)**.

UPSC Angle — GS-3 / Environment: Floating NP; phumdi ecology; Ithai Barrage's ecological impact; Loktak Lake (Ramsar site); Manipur biodiversity; Schedule I species conservation.

Kaziranga Elevated Wildlife Corridor

The **86-km elevated highway corridor** through Kaziranga Tiger Reserve (Assam) — ₹6,950 crore project — received 18 contractor bids. Of the 86 km, **34.5 km will be elevated** on NH-715 (Kaliabor–Numaligarh) to allow wildlife passage underneath during monsoon migration.

A Wildlife Institute of India (WII) study found **63 large animals killed annually** on this highway. NBWL imposed **34 conditions** including speed limits, traffic restrictions, and underpass landscaping. Implementing agency: **NHIDCL (National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd)** under MoRTH.

UPSC Angle — GS-3 / Environment: Kaziranga Tiger Reserve (Assam; UNESCO WH; one-horned rhino, tigers, elephants); NBWL clearance process; linear infrastructure vs. wildlife corridors; EIA for highways through protected areas.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

India-Maldives Diplomatic Reset

India-Maldives relations stabilised following the 2024 tensions: **Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCP)** — India’s largest grant project in Maldives (\$500 million) — continues construction. India extended a **\$50 million currency swap** agreement. Maldivian tourism recovered, with Indian tourists returning as top visitors.

Key context: 2024 tensions arose from President Mohamed Muizzu’s “India Out” campaign and invitation of Chinese survey ships. However, economic reality (India is Maldives’ lifeline for food, fuel, medicines) prevented full diplomatic rupture.

UPSC Angle — GS-2 / IR: India-Maldives special relationship; GMCP significance; India’s neighbourhood first policy; China’s growing presence in Indian Ocean; SAARC dynamics.

India-France Strategic Dialogue (38th)

India’s NSA **Ajit Doval** and French counterpart **Emmanuel Bonne** held the **38th India-France Strategic Dialogue** (January 13). Focus areas: defence industrial cooperation (Rafale marine jets, submarine technology), civil nuclear (Jaitapur Nuclear Power Plant negotiations), space collaboration (ISRO-CNES), and Indo-Pacific maritime security.

UPSC Angle — GS-2 / IR: India-France strategic partnership (1998 — oldest strategic partner); Jaitapur JNPP; Rafale jets; France’s Indo-Pacific strategy; India’s multi-alignment.

SOCIAL ISSUES & INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

Startup India — 10 Years (Jan 16, 2016–2026)

Startup India launched on January 16, 2016, by PM Narendra Modi. At 10 years:

2 lakh+ DPIIT-recognised startups (world’s 3rd largest ecosystem after US and China)

111 unicorns (startups valued ≥\$1 billion)

50% of startups from Tier-II and Tier-III cities

Fund of Funds: ₹10,000 crore via SIDBI — invests in SEBI-registered AIFs (Alternative Investment Funds)

MAARG portal – government mentorship network

Top sectors: Fintech, Edtech, Agritech, Defence Tech, Space Tech

Gaps: Deep-tech (semiconductor, quantum, biotech) funding still dominated by foreign VCs; regulatory sandbox for fintech underutilised.

UPSC Angle – GS-3 / Economy: DIPP → DPIIT renaming (2019); Startup India vs. Make in India; Atal Innovation Mission; comparison with China's startup ecosystem; unicorn definition.

National Tribal Health Observatory (Bharat THO)

Bharat Tribal Health Observatory launched via MoU between **ICMR-RMRC Bhubaneswar** and **Ministry of Tribal Affairs**. Goal: empower 1 lakh tribal healthcare workers; focus on malaria, leprosy, TB – diseases disproportionately affecting tribal populations. India has **10.4 crore Scheduled Tribe population** (8.6% of total; Census 2011).

UPSC Angle – GS-2 / Social Issues: Tribal health indicators (NFHS-5); Article 46 (DPSP – promotion of educational/economic interests of SC/ST); Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs); ICMR's role.

Vande Bharat Sleeper Train – First Run

India's **first Vande Bharat Sleeper train** was flagged off on **January 17, 2026** from **Malda Town station, West Bengal** by PM Modi. Route: **Howrah–Guwahati (Kamakhya)**. Manufactured at **ICF (Integral Coach Factory), Chennai**.

Fares: 3AC – ₹2,300 | 2AC – ₹3,000 | 1AC – ₹3,600. Time saving vs. existing trains: ~2.5 hours. Features: automatic doors, bio-vacuum toilets, CCTV, passenger information system.

UPSC Angle – GS-3 / Economy: Indian Railways modernisation; Vande Bharat Chair Car (launched 2019) vs. Sleeper variant; ICF's manufacturing capacity; Northeast connectivity push.

India-ASEAN Digital Partnership (6th ADGMIN)

The **6th ASEAN-India Digital Ministers' Meeting (ADGMIN)** in Hanoi, Vietnam (Jan 15–16) adopted the **ASEAN-India Digital Work Plan 2026**:

UPI interoperability with ASEAN payment systems (already live in Singapore, UAE, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, France)

Cybersecurity protocols sharing

DPI (Digital Public Infrastructure) export model – India's stack (UPI, Aadhaar, DigiLocker, CoWIN) as a template

AI governance alignment – joint principles for responsible AI

ASEAN-India Digital Fund proposed

UPSC Angle — GS-2 / IR: ASEAN-India relations; India's DPI as soft power; UPI internationalisation; Digital Silk Road (China's alternative); G20 DPI framework (India's 2023 presidency contribution).

★ FACTS CORNER — WEEK 3 KNOWLEDGEPEDIA (JAN 12–18, 2026)
BRICS 2026:

Chair: India (from Brazil); Theme: Fostering Resilience and Innovation for Sustainable Development

Members: 10 (original 5 + Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, UAE — joined Jan 2024)

18th BRICS Summit: India, 2026; NDB HQ: Shanghai; NDB founding capital: \$100 billion

CRITICAL MINERALS:

NCMM outlay: Rs 34,300 crore (2025–31); India 100% import-dependent on Li, Co, Ni + 7 others

KABIL: NALCO + HCL + MECL JV; Argentina lithium deal Rs 200 crore (Kachi + Mariana deposits)

Mineral Security Partnership: 14 nations; Mines Amendment Act 2025: 24 strategic minerals

Recycling Incentive Scheme: Rs 1,500 crore

SPACE:

PSLV-C62: Stage 3 roll-rate anomaly; 16 satellites lost (EOS-N1 Anvesha + 15 co-passengers); 2nd consecutive PSLV Stage-3 failure (1st: May 2025 PSLV-C61)

PSLV stages: Solid (S-139) → Liquid (Vikas) → Solid (PSOM-XL) → Liquid (PS4)

QUANTUM:

NQM budget: Rs 6,003 crore (2023–31); lead institutions: IISc + TIFR

Targets: 50-qubit (2028), 1,000-qubit (2031), satellite QKD (2027)

ARMY DAY (JAN 15):

78th Army Day; 4th outside Delhi; 1st in Jaipur; COAS Gen Upendra Dwivedi

Jan 15 significance: British Field Marshal Cariappa became first Indian COAS (1949)

Shaktibaan: Electronic Warfare system; MPATGM: 3rd-gen ATGM, fire-and-forget, top-attack; BDL+BEL

POLITY:

Lokpal: Statutory body; Act 2013; in force Jan 16, 2014; Chairperson + 8 members; 50% judicial; First Lokpal: Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose (2019)

CVC: CVC Act 2003; 1 CVC + 2 VCs; appointment committee: PM + Home Min + LoP; tenure 4 yrs/65 yrs

UGC Equity Regulations 2026: SC stayed Jan 29, 2026

TRANSPORT:

Vande Bharat Sleeper: 1st; Jan 17, 2026; Malda Town flag-off; Howrah–Guwahati route; ICF Chennai; 3AC Rs 2,300 / 2AC Rs 3,000 / 1AC Rs 3,600

Kaziranga corridor: 86 km total; 34.5 km elevated; NH-715; 63 animals killed annually (WII); NHIDCL; Rs 6,950 crore

ENVIRONMENT:

Gharial: 3,037 in 13 Ganga rivers; IUCN Critical; Schedule I; National Chambal Sanctuary key habitat

Sangai deer: Rucervus eldii eldii; Manipur state animal; Keibul Lamjao NP (world's only floating NP); Loktak Lake (Ramsar); <64 individuals; phumdis; Ithai Barrage (1983) main threat

Dugong: Dugong dugon; IUCN Vulnerable; CITES Appendix I; WPA Schedule I; Gulf of Mannar Dugong Conservation Reserve (2013, world's first); seagrass habitat

ECONOMY:

MSME: 27–30% GDP, 45% exports, 28.13 cr workers; Udyam: 3.94 crore registered; 18 overlapping schemes

GeM Womaniya: 10 lakh women sellers; Rs 35,000 crore sales; GeM launched 2016

Startup India: Jan 16, 2016; 2 lakh+ startups; 111 unicorns; 3rd globally (US, China, India)

PM Internship Scheme: Rs 11,500 crore FY26; only 4% utilised; Rs 5,000/month + Rs 6,000 grant

INTERNATIONAL:

ADGMIN 6th: Hanoi; ASEAN-India Digital Work Plan 2026; UPI live in Singapore, UAE, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, France

India-France: 38th Strategic Dialogue; NSA Ajit Doval + Emmanuel Bonne; Jaitapur nuclear plant

BRICS India theme 4 pillars: Inclusive Growth, Digital Transformation, Sustainable Development, Reformed Multilateralism

TRIBAL:

Medaram Jatara: Asia's largest tribal festival; biennial; Mulugu, Telangana; Eturnagaram WLS; Jan 28+; Koya Adivasi priests; no idol worship

Bharat THO: ICMR-RMRC Bhubaneswar + Ministry of Tribal Affairs; 1 lakh tribal health workers target

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

Ponduru Khadi GI Tag: Srikakulam, AP; Valuga fish jawbone cotton cleaning; 100–120 thread count (finest handspun); KVIC registration

NITI Export Preparedness Index 2024: 4th edition; Maharashtra #1 (68.01); 4 pillars, 70 indicators; \$1T export target 2030

India Bioeconomy: \$10B (2014) → \$166B (2026); 11,000+ startups; \$300B target; BioE3 Policy

GAIL Mumbai-Nagpur Pipeline: 694 km; 96% alongside Samruddhi Mahamarg; GatiShakti integrated corridor

Japan Chikyuu vessel: deep-sea rare earth mining at 6,000m; 16M tonnes; 730+ years dysprosium supply

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

CURATED & WRITTEN BY

Bharat Choudhary

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

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

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