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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

Current Affairs Today – January 20, 2026

20 January 2026

SUBJECTS COVERED

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ENVIRONMENT

ECONOMY

POLITY

SCIENCE & TECH

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WHY IN NEWS

January 20, 2026 featured landmark developments in India–UAE relations, environmental governance, marine biodiversity conservation, and blue economy policy — including a dolphin survey launch, India’s first open-sea fish farming project, and new Environmental Protection Fund rules under the Jan Vishwas Act, 2023.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

India–UAE Strategic Partnership — Trade Target USD 200 Billion by 2032

India and UAE pledged to double bilateral trade to **USD 200 billion by 2032** (from current levels of ~USD 85 billion), with a series of landmark deals announced:

USD 3 billion LNG deal: ADNOC Gas (Abu Dhabi National Oil Company Gas) will supply Liquefied Natural Gas to Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) for 10 years

UAE participation in Dholera SIR: UAE investors to participate in the Dholera Special Investment Region — India’s greenfield smart city in Gujarat

Strategic Defence Partnership: Letter of intent signed, covering defence manufacturing and procurement cooperation

“House of India” in Abu Dhabi: A cultural and commercial centre to facilitate India-UAE people-to-people ties and trade

Background: India–UAE bilateral trade reached ~USD 84.5 billion in 2023-24. The UAE is India’s second-largest export destination and third-largest trading partner. The India–UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), signed February 2022 (effective May 2022), was India’s fastest-concluded FTA.

Gaza Peace Board — India Invited

The Trump administration invited approximately 60 nations — including India — to join a proposed **Gaza Peace Board**, an international body to oversee ceasefire implementation and post-conflict reconstruction in Gaza. The board would be chaired by the US with veto powers under a draft charter. Other invitees include Egypt, Jordan, Türkiye, Canada, and Argentina.

Exercise DOSTI 17 — Trilateral Coast Guard Exercise

The 17th edition of **Exercise DOSTI** — India, Sri Lanka, and Maldives’ trilateral coast guard exercise — was conducted January 17–19 in Male, Maldives. It focused on maritime cooperation, VBSS (Visit Board Search and Seizure) drills, and marine pollution response.

Background: DOSTI (Hindi for “friendship”) is a biennial exercise initiated in 1991 between India and Maldives; Sri Lanka joined in 2012.

ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY

Second Nationwide Dolphin Survey — Launched in Bijnor, UP

Union Minister Bhupender Yadav launched India’s **second nationwide riverine dolphin survey** in Bijnor, Uttar Pradesh, led by the **Wildlife Institute of India (WII)**.

The previous survey (2021–23) recorded approximately **6,327 riverine dolphins** across India. The current survey will provide updated population, distribution, and threat data.

Gangetic River Dolphin (*Platanista gangetica*):

India’s **National Aquatic Animal** (declared in 2009)

IUCN Status: **Endangered**

Schedule I, Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 (highest protection)

Habitat: Ganga, Brahmaputra, Chambal, Ghaghra, Son, Kosi rivers

Virtually blind — navigates entirely by echolocation

Indicator species: Their presence indicates river health

Threats: Illegal fishing (bycatch), dam construction (fragmenting habitat), pollution, sand mining

Environmental Protection Fund Rules — Jan Vishwas Act, 2023

The government notified detailed rules under the **Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2023** specifying that penalties from environmental law violations will be channelled into an **Environmental Protection Fund** for pollution control, ecological restoration, monitoring, research, and capacity building.

Jan Vishwas Act, 2023: Decriminalised 183 provisions across 42 laws, converting criminal penalties (jail terms) to monetary penalties for minor environmental and other regulatory violations — reducing the compliance burden on businesses and individuals.

Greenhouse Gas Emission Intensity (GEI) Target Rules, 2025

New **GEI Target Amendment Rules, 2025** were notified, setting sector-specific targets for reducing greenhouse gas emission intensity across industrial sectors. These regulations are part of India's **Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS)** — a domestic carbon market under the Energy Conservation Act, 2001 (amended 2022).

ECONOMY & DEVELOPMENT

Export Promotion Mission (EPM) — NIRYAT DISHA and NIRYAT PRO TSAHAN

The government announced an **Export Promotion Mission (EPM)** with associated schemes:

NIRYAT DISHA: Export promotion guidance and facilitation framework

NIRYAT PRO TSAHAN: Export credit interest subvention scheme implemented through RBI — reduces borrowing costs for exporters

World Bank — USD 286 Million for West Bengal Healthcare

The World Bank approved a **USD 286 million loan** for West Bengal's Health System Reform Program. The loan has a 16.5-year tenure with a 3-year grace period and aims to benefit approximately **90 million people** in the state.

MSME Technology Centres — Himachal Pradesh

Two new MSME Technology Centres were approved in **Pandoga and Parwanoo, Himachal Pradesh** at a cost of ₹10 crore each. They will focus on engineering, plastics, and automation sectors.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

India's First Open-Sea Marine Fish Farming Project — Andaman Sea

India's first **open-sea marine fish farming project** was launched in the Andaman Sea near **Sri Vijaya Puram (formerly Port Blair), Andaman and Nicobar Islands**. Partners: Ministry of Earth Sciences, National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), and the UT Administration. The project focuses on marine finfish cultivation and seaweed farming.

Significance: India's EEZ (Exclusive Economic Zone) of ~2.37 million sq. km offers enormous untapped potential for mariculture — ocean-based aquaculture outside the coastal zone.

Delhi Safe City Project 2026

Delhi government announced deployment of **10,000 AI cameras** with face recognition and distress detection technology across the capital. Part of the broader Smart City + Safe City integration.

Automatic Weather Stations — Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Pune

MoS Dr. Jitendra Singh announced deployment of **200 Automatic Weather Stations (AWS)** — 50 each in Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, and Pune — enhancing hyperlocal weather forecasting. India now operates ~1,000 AWS nationwide.

GOVERNANCE & APPOINTMENTS

Praveen Vashista — Vigilance Commissioner, CVC

Praveen Vashista was appointed as Vigilance Commissioner at the **Central Vigilance Commission (CVC)**. An IPS officer (1991 batch), he has a 4-year tenure or until age 65, whichever is earlier.

CVC Background: An independent statutory body (CVC Act, 2003) for superintendence of vigilance administration in central government. The Chief Vigilance Commissioner (CVC head) is appointed by the President on recommendation of a committee comprising PM, Home Minister, and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha.

Vande Bharat Sleeper Train — Howrah–Guwahati

PM Modi flagged off India's **first Vande Bharat Sleeper Train** on the **Howrah–Guwahati** route, extending overnight travel on the Vande Bharat platform. The sleeper variant bridges the gap between the existing Vande Bharat chair-car day trains and conventional overnight sleeper expresses.

PERSONS IN NEWS

Praveen Vashista — Appointed Vigilance Commissioner, CVC (IPS, 1991 batch)

Shaea Muhssin Mohammed Al-Zindani — Appointed new Prime Minister of Yemen, replacing Salem bin Braik

UPSC RELEVANCE

India–UAE CEPA (February 2022); ADNOC Gas–HPCL LNG deal (\$3 billion, 10 years); Gangetic Dolphin (National Aquatic Animal, Endangered, Schedule I WPA); WII leading dolphin survey; Exercise DOSTI 17 (India-Sri Lanka-Maldives, Male); Jan Vishwas Act 2023 (183 provisions, 42 laws decriminalised); Vande Bharat Sleeper (Howrah-Guwahati); CVC Act 2003

MAINS GS-2:

India–UAE bilateral relations trajectory; Gaza Peace Board and India’s West Asia strategy; CVC structure and independence

MAINS GS-3:

Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS); GEI targets for industrial decarbonisation; open-sea mariculture in India’s EEZ; Export Promotion Mission architecture; World Bank healthcare loan as an instrument of health system reform

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGE PEDIA
INDIA–UAE RELATIONS:

Bilateral trade (2023-24): ~USD 84.5 billion

Target: USD 200 billion by 2032

CEPA: Signed February 18, 2022; effective May 1, 2022 — India's fastest FTA; India's first CEPA in 4+ years

UAE rank in India's trade: 2nd largest export destination; 3rd largest trade partner

LNG deal: ADNOC Gas → HPCL; USD 3 billion; 10 years

Dholera SIR: Greenfield smart city, Gujarat; industrial township; DMIC node

House of India: Cultural-commercial centre in Abu Dhabi

GANGETIC RIVER DOLPHIN:

National Aquatic Animal of India (declared 2009)

Scientific name: *Platanista gangetica*

IUCN: Endangered | Schedule I WPA 1972

2021-23 survey count: ~6,327 individuals

Distribution: Ganga, Brahmaputra, Chambal, Ghaghra, Son, Kosi systems

Feature: Virtually blind; navigates by echolocation (biosonar)

Threats: Bycatch, dam construction, sand mining, water pollution

Project Dolphin: Launched PM Modi (World Environment Day 2020) modelled on Project Tiger

JAN VISHWAS (AMENDMENT OF PROVISIONS) ACT, 2023:

Provisions decriminalised: 183 across 42 central laws

Approach: Criminal penalties (jail) → Monetary penalties for minor offences

Laws covered: Environment, agriculture, trade, labour, food safety

Environmental Protection Fund: Penalty money → pollution control, restoration, research

CARBON CREDIT TRADING SCHEME (CCTS):

Legal basis: Energy Conservation (Amendment) Act, 2022

GEI targets: Sector-specific intensity reduction targets (not absolute caps)

Regulator: Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) under MoPNG

Market: Carbon credits tradeable on power exchanges

EXERCISE DOSTI:

Participants: India, Sri Lanka, Maldives (trilateral)

Founded: 1991 (India-Maldives bilateral); Sri Lanka joined 2012

Frequency: Biennial

17th edition: January 2026, Male, Maldives

Focus: Maritime security, VBSS drills, pollution response

CVC (CENTRAL VIGILANCE COMMISSION):

Legal basis: CVC Act, 2003 (given statutory backing)

Established: 1964 (originally executive, made statutory in 2003)

Appointment: President's recommendation; Committee: PM + Home Minister + LoP (Lok Sabha)

Supervision: Superintendence over CBI (referral cases) and Vigilance Officers in central government

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

NIOT (National Institute of Ocean Technology): Under Ministry of Earth Sciences; develops ocean tech

India's EEZ: ~2.37 million sq. km (7th largest globally)

WII (Wildlife Institute of India): Autonomous institute under MoEFCC; conducts national surveys of tigers, elephants, dolphins

BSNL-Viasat: Ka-band + L-band SatCom integration for Indian Navy

AWS (Automatic Weather Stations): India target 1,000+ for hyperlocal forecasting (IMD)

Sources: Insights on India, AffairsCloud, PIB

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