

UPSC Daily Current Affairs| One Liners 18-02-2026

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Geography

Thwaites Glacier - A Climate Tipping Point

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Location & size - A massive glacier in West Antarctica, roughly the size of a large country.

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Nickname - Often called the “Doomsday Glacier” due to its potential impact on global sea levels.

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Geography - Sits on land that slopes downward inland, dipping below sea level—making it vulnerable to warm ocean water flowing underneath.

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Role of ice shelf - Acts like a brace that slows the glacier’s movement.

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As it thins or breaks, the glacier accelerates and loses more ice.

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Current changes - Thwaites is thinning, retreating, and already contributing to sea-level rise.

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Potential impact - If it collapses entirely, it could raise global sea levels by about 0.5 meters.

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Wider risk - It holds back other glaciers in the West Antarctic Ice Sheet.

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Its weakening could trigger faster ice loss elsewhere.

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Global consequences - Higher sea levels will worsen coastal flooding, erosion, and storm surges—threatening cities, ports, and low-lying islands worldwide.

Social Issues

New Aadhaar App

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It is a next-generation mobile application.

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Objective - To provide Aadhaar Number Holders (ANH) with a secure, convenient and privacy-first way to carry, share, show and verify their digital identity.

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Available in - Both android and Apple IOS platforms.

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Advanced functionalities -

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Face verification for proof of presence.

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Biometric lock/unlock in a single click.

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Viewing of authentication history.

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QR-based contact card for easy sharing of contact details.

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Hotel check-ins through *Offline Verification Seeking Entity's (OVSE) QR code* scanning.

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It facilitates, age gating, hospital admissions for visitors and attendants, event entries, verification of gig workers and service partners among many such use cases.

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Developing offline verification ecosystem.

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“One Family - One App” concept - It allows management of up to 5 Aadhaar profiles on a single device.

International Relations and Issues

Hedging in International Relations

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Position - It falls between balancing (resisting a stronger power) and bandwagoning (aligning with it).

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Nature - Not clearly defined, but generally understood as a mix of

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Selective engagement

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Limited resistance

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Partial deference

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Objective - Allows a state to cooperate economically with a potentially adversarial power while simultaneously preparing for possible diplomatic or military confrontation.

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Effect - Helps avoid direct conflict in the short term while keeping options open for the future.

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In short, hedging is a dual-track strategy—working with a rival where beneficial, but quietly building strength to counter them if needed.

Economy

Labour Force & Workforce Trends (Jan 2026)

- **Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) -**
 - **Overall LFPR (15+ years)** - 55.9% in Jan 2026, nearly unchanged from 56.1% in Dec 2025.
 - **Female LFPR (15+ years)** - Steady at 35.1%, same as Nov 2025.
- **Workforce Participation Rate (WPR)** - After rising steadily from Jun-Dec 2025, WPR dipped slightly to 53.1% in Jan 2026.
- **Urban Workforce Participation -**
 - Male - Stable at 70.5%.
 - Female - Stable at 23.0%.
 - No significant month-to-month change.
- **Unemployment (UR) -**
 - Male unemployment in rural areas remained unchanged.
 - Minor declines attributed to winter slowdown and post-harvest slack.

Agriculture

Pesticides Management Bill, 2025

Ministry of Agriculture released the draft Pesticides Management Bill, 2025, seeking public comments on the legislation.

- **Objectives -**
 - To replace the Insecticides Act, 1968 and Rules, 1971 with updated, farmer-centric legislation.
 - To support both farmers' ease of living and industry's ease of doing business.
- **Reforms -**
 - Greater transparency & traceability in pesticide services.
 - Use of digital methods & technology to streamline processes.
 - Stricter controls on spurious pesticides via higher penalties.
- **Key Features -**
 - Mandatory accreditation of testing labs to ensure quality.
 - Compounding of offences with penalties defined by State authorities.

Environment

Chhari-Dhandh Wetland - Ramsar Site Recognition

- **Declared as** - A Ramsar site on January 31, 2026, Gujarat's 5th Ramsar Site and the 1st in Kachchh.
- **Location & Ecosystem** - Spread over 22,700 hectares, it lies at the confluence of desert, grassland, and wetland landscapes, supporting diverse flora and fauna.
- **Birdlife** -
 - Hosts ~283 bird species, including 11 globally threatened and 9 Near Threatened species.
 - Attracts thousands of migratory birds annually, notably the Grey Hypocolius.
 - Surveys recorded over 50,000 waterbirds, including 40,000 cranes at one site.
- **Tourism & Research** - Major destination for birdwatchers and ornithologists; 80% of visitors are foreign tourists from 52 countries.
- **Conservation history** -
 - Declared as Gujarat's 1st Conservation Reserve in 2008.
 - Sustained measures include habitat protection, ecological monitoring, and community participation.
- **Global Importance** -
 - Key stopover along the Central Asian Flyway, linking Central Asia with the Indian subcontinent.
 - Provides vital feeding and resting grounds for migratory birds from Central Asia, Iran, and Siberia.

NHAI 'Bee Corridors'

- **First-of-its-kind initiative** - Pollinator corridors along National Highways to support honeybees and wild pollinators.
- **Shift in approach** - From ornamental to ecological plantations with continuous stretches of bee-friendly vegetation.
- **Design** -
 - Mix of trees, shrubs, herbs, grasses.
 - Nectar- and pollen-rich species (Neem, Karanj, Mahua, Palash, Bottle Brush, Jamun, Siris).
 - Staggered flowering for year-round bloom.
 - Inclusion of wild elements (flowering weeds, dead wood, hollow trunks).
- **Implementation** -
 - Corridors developed based on agro-climatic suitability.
 - Clusters of flowering trees every 500 m-1 km (matching bee foraging distance).
 - At least 3 corridors planned in 2026-27.
 - 40 lakh trees to be planted, with 60% under Bee Corridor initiative.
- **Objective** - To enhance pollinator conservation, boost agriculture & horticulture productivity, and strengthen ecological balance.

Security

Trilateral Naval Exercise in Andaman Sea

- **Conducted between** - Indian Navy, along with Japan and Indonesia.
- **Objective** - To enhance joint operational readiness, improve interoperability, and strengthen maritime cooperation for a safe and stable region.
- **Command** - Indian Navy formally took command of Combined Task Force (CTF) 154 under the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF).

Combined Task Force (CTF) 154

- **Established in** - May 2023.
- **Objectives** - To enhancing maritime security through multinational training programs across the Middle East and the wider region.

- To build partner nations' operational capabilities to address common threats, including illegal trafficking, piracy, and irregular migration.

- **Exercise** - It conducts Regular Maritime Security Enhancement Training (MSET) events, exercises such as *Compass Rose and Northern/Southern Readiness*.

- **Operates alongside CMF's other task forces** -

- CTF 150 (Maritime Security),
- CTF 151 (Counter-Piracy),
- CTF 152 (Maritime Security in Arabian Gulf) and
- CTF 153 (Maritime Security in Red Sea).

Exercise Vajra Ghaat - Key Highlights

- **Conducted at** - Pokhran Field Firing Range, Jaisalmer under the Southern Command, led by the White Tiger Division.

- **Focus on** - Validation of refined Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (TTPs) to boost battlefield survivability and operational effectiveness in desert warfare.

- **Key Highlights**

- K9 Vajra self-propelled artillery gun system demonstrated speed, precision, and lethality in high-intensity fire missions.

- Integration of advanced surveillance and technology-driven target acquisition enabled real-time engagement of simulated enemy positions.

- **Preparedness** - It reaffirmed the Army's ability to conduct integrated combat operations in desert sectors by combining

- Heavy artillery firepower

- Modern sensors

- Communication networks

- Battlefield management systems

- **Outcome** - Strengthened combat posture in the western sector, highlighting synergy between traditional combat arms and emerging technologies.



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