UPSC Daily Current Affairs| One Liners 20-01-2026

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History, Art and Culture

Zehanpora Stupas – Kashmir's Buddhist Past

Archaeological excavations at Zehanpora, Baramulla (North Kashmir) have revealed a man-made plateau with stupas, chaityas, and viharas dating to the Kushan era (1st–3rd century CE).

• **Historical Significance**
- Ancient Kashmir is confirmed to have been a *major center of Buddhism in India*.
- The discovery supports the historical records of *Kalhana's Rajatarangini and Hiuen Tsang's writings.*
- The site is connected to *Emperor Kanishka's reign*, when Mahayana Buddhism flourished.

• **Key Historical Facts**
- The *4th Buddhist Council at Kundalvana under Kanishka* led to the split between Hinayana and Mahayana.
- Kashmir was a key route for Buddhism's spread to Central Asia and China.
- The site's architecture reflects *Gandhara influence with Greco-Buddhist stone and stucco figures.*

• **Regional Significance**
- Kashmir was a major center of learning that drew scholars from China and Central Asia.
- Its *composite culture, or Kashmiriyat,* was shaped by religious diversity.
- The region reflects strong *pan-Indian and pan-Asian connections.*

Polity & Governance

PRAGATI

A Decade of Cooperative, Outcome-Driven Governance.

• **PRAGATI** –Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation.
• It is a digital platform for fast-tracking projects, schemes, and grievance redressal through direct, real-time review by the Prime Minister, in partnership with States and Union Ministries.
• **Launched in –** 2015, by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
• It brings together 3 modern technologies such as *digital data management, video conferencing, and geo-spatial technology.*
• **Key takeaways**
- PRAGATI has significantly accelerated India's development by fast-tracking projects worth more than Rs.85 lakh crore.
- Under PRAGATI, 382 major national projects have been systematically reviewed and closely monitored.
- Out of 3,187 identified issues, 2,958 have already been resolved, significantly reducing delays and cost overruns.
- The platform ensures real-time coordination between the Centre and States under direct Prime Ministerial supervision, strengthening accountability.

Economy

KYC for Crypto Customers

• **Guidelines issued by –** Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) under Union Finance Ministry.
• **Mandatory KYC measures**
- Selfie with liveness detection.
- Recording of geographical coordinates (latitude, longitude) of onboarding location with date/timestamp.
- Verification of bank account by 'penny-drop' method.
- Mandatory Permanent Account Number (PAN).
- IP (Internet Protocol) address of the customer.

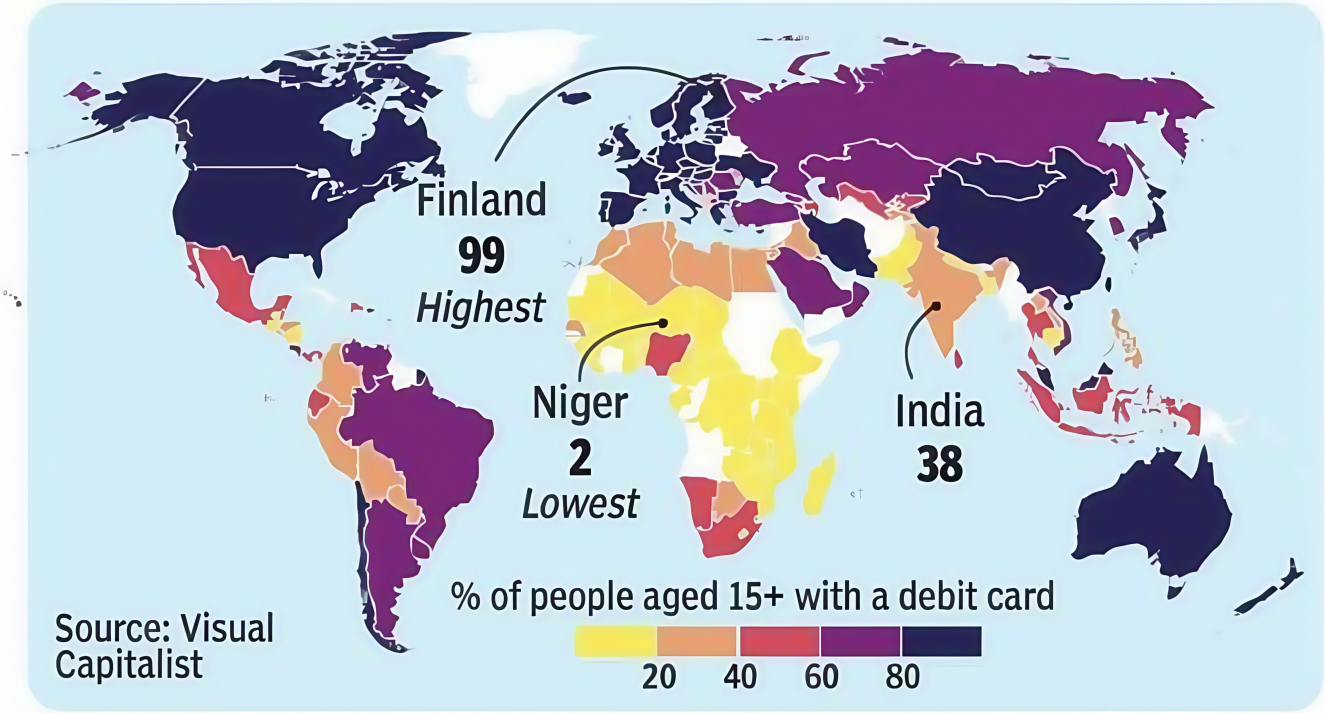
• **Objective –** To update Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Combating Financing of Terror (CFT) guidelines for Virtual Digital Assets (cryptocurrency).

Debit Card Ownership

What's behind India's low debit card ownership?

In many advanced economies, 9 out of 10 people (aged 15 and above) own a debit card. India's ownership (38%) is similar to those of low-income countries. This could be because of higher adoption of UPI, and a shift toward credit cards

Debit card ownership by country



Agriculture

Dairy Sector Development

• **MoU between –** Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and National Dairy Development Board (NDDB).
• **Key focus areas –** Dairy production, processing, and value addition, with a strong emphasis on empowering its primary stakeholders - millions of dairy farmers across the country.
• **Objectives –**
- To enhance collaboration in multidisciplinary research, innovation, and capacity building across the entire dairy sector.
- To facilitate the effective translation of research outcomes into practical, field-level solutions, thereby enhancing productivity, profitability, and sustainability across the dairy sector.

Environment

Major Groundwater Contamination in A.P

• **Source of report –** CGWB Annual Ground Water Quality Report, 2025.
• **Key contaminants –** Seawater intrusion (coastal aquifers), high electrical conductivity (EC), fluoride, uranium, residual sodium carbonate, nitrate, iron, chromium, cobalt, manganese, nickel, zinc, arsenic, selenium, cadmium, lead.
• **Key findings**
- **Uranium –** Elevated concentrations (>30 ppb) in 16 villages of Sri SathyaSai district and 3 in Tirupati district.
- **Arsenic –** 5 hotspots (>10 ppb).
- **Fluoride –** Above 1.50 mg/l, especially in hard rock aquifers.
- **Residual Sodium Carbonate –** Beyond permissible limits in 26.87% ofsamples.
• **Impact –** Extensive pollution detected in line with BIS norms.
• **Mitigating factor –** Monsoon showed some improvement in water quality, particularly for EC and fluoride.

Orobanche Aegyptiaca (Threat to Mustard Crop)

A parasitic weed that has inflicted damage in major mustard-growing areas of Rajasthan and Haryana.
• **Category** – Holoparasite, does not photosynthesize and is completely dependent on host-provided nutrition.
• **Mechanism** – Connects to the host's roots, drains essential resources, resulting in stunted development and plant wilting.
• **Seed Longevity** – One shoot produces 40–45 flowers; the resulting seeds persist in soil for as long as 20 years.

NIRANTAR

• **NIRANTAR –** National Institute for Research & Application of Natural Resources to Transform, Adapt and Build Resilience.
• A platform of institutions under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).
• **Objective –** To strengthen coordination and collaboration among MoEFCC Institutions.

Security

Bhairav Battalions

The Indian Army's newly raised Bhairav Battalions, designed for Special Forces tasks and modern warfare.
• **Nature –** High-speed, offensive units capable of Special Forces tasks at multiple levels.
• **Current Status –** 15 battalions raised, deployed along borders; plans for 25 in total.
• **Purpose**
- To bridge gap between Para Special Forces and regular infantry.
- To conduct special operations from tactical to operational depth.
- To be a part of force restructuring in line with new technologies and evolving operational requirements.
• **Modern Warfare Focus –** To create a pool of over one lakh drone operatives across the force.

Science

ICEGATE–LPMS Integration

• **ICEGATE–LPMS –** Integration of the Indian Customs Electronic Gateway–Land Port Management System.
• **Inaugurated by –** Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs (CBIC), at the Integrated Check Post (ICP), at Agartala, Tripura.
• **Focus on –** Critical customs data elements, including Bill of Entry, Shipping Bill, Out of Charge (OOC), and Let Export Order (LEO), along with event-based updates tracking cargo movement, from slot booking to gate-in and gate-out.
• **Objective –** To enable real-time, bidirectional exchange of data between ICEGATE and the Land Port Management System, creating a seamless digital ecosystem at land ports.
• **Significance –** It is a practical embodiment of Coordinated Border Management, promoting harmonised functioning among multiple border agencies through shared data, common risk assessment, and synchronized decision-making.

SHANKAR IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering