



## EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – JANUARY 03, 2026

### NATIONAL

#### ➤ **SOAR programme**

- ✓ President of India Droupadi Murmu launched a series of initiatives under the Skilling for AI (Artificial Intelligence) Readiness (SOAR) programme, an integral component of the Skill India Mission (SIM), at an event organized by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) at the Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre (RBCC) in New Delhi.
- ✓ During the event, she launched the ‘#SkillTheNation Challenge’ under the Skilling for AI Readiness initiative and also virtually inaugurated the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) centre at Rairangpur in Odisha.
- ✓ As part of the programme, President Droupadi Murmu conferred AI certificates to students and Members of Parliament (MPs) who completed various AI learning modules under the SOAR initiative.
- ✓ Skill The Nation initiative is a nationwide AI skilling programme launched under SOAR by the MSDE to expand AI awareness, learning, and certification across India.

#### ➤ **MoSPI Launches New Logo and Mascot ‘Sankhyiki’ to Modernize Institutional Identity**

- ✓ Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) unveiled its new logo and mascot in New Delhi, Delhi, marking a step toward modernising its institutional identity, enhancing public outreach, and highlighting the vital role of official statistics in national development.

- ✓ The New logo modernises MoSPI's identity while reinforcing the role of official statistics in nation-building through the message "Data for Development".
  - ✓ The mascot "Sankhyiki" is a friendly, citizen-centric character representing MoSPI.
  - ✓ The Ashoka Chakra represents truth and good governance, Rupee symbol (₹) highlights the importance of statistics in economic planning and national growth. numerical elements (□), symbols (=, S, Σ), and an upward growth bar (↗) to represent modern data systems and progress driven by reliable, data-based insights.
  - ✓ Saffron, white, green, and deep blue signify growth, truth, sustainability, stability, and knowledge.
- **New Tax Structure for 'Sin Goods'**
- ✓ Ministry of Finance (MoF), notified a revised tax framework for 'sin goods' such as tobacco, pan masala and others, introducing an additional excise duty and a health cess to replace the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Compensation Cess, effective from February 1, 2026.
  - ✓ The move seeks to rationalize GST rates on sin goods while balancing government revenue and public health goals.
  - ✓ Pan masala, cigarettes, and other tobacco products continue to attract 40% GST, while biris remain taxed at 18%.
  - ✓ From 1 February 2026, tobacco products will have an extra excise duty, and pan masala will incur a Health and National Security Cess, in addition to the existing GST.
  - ✓ Additional excise duty is set at 91% for gutkha, 82% for chewing tobacco and jarda scented tobacco, 33% for hookah, and Rs. 2,050–Rs. 8,500 per 1,000 sticks for cigarettes based on length and filter.

## INTERNATIONAL

- **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism**
- ✓ The European Union (EU) has implemented the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) from January 1, 2026 imposing a carbon-linked levy on carbon-intensive imports such as steel, aluminium, cement, fertilisers, chemicals, glass, and power-related products.

- ✓ Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) is a carbon tax-like system imposed by the European Union (EU) on imported goods to account for the carbon emissions generated during their production.
  - ✓ A key objective of CBAM is to prevent carbon leakage, ensuring that companies do not shift production to countries with weaker environmental regulations to avoid climate costs.
  - ✓ CBAM aims to ensure fair competition by creating a level playing field for EU industries that already operate under the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS).
- **India and Bangladesh Start Joint Water Measurement as Ganges Water**
- ✓ India and Bangladesh have initiated joint water measurement on the Padma and Ganga rivers as the 30-year Ganges Water Sharing Treaty enters its final year.
  - ✓ The water measurement exercise is being conducted 3,500 feet upstream of the Hardinge Bridge on the Padma River in Bangladesh and at the Farakka point on the Ganga River in India.
  - ✓ The initiative aims to generate accurate, jointly verified river-flow data, which is critical for effective treaty implementation and for future negotiations between the two countries.
  - ✓ The Ganges Water Sharing Treaty, signed in 1996, governs the sharing of dry-season flows of the Ganga/Padma rivers and is scheduled to expire in December 2026, with renewal discussions already underway between India and Bangladesh.

## **STATE**

- **Assam Constitutes India's First 8th State Pay Commission**
- ✓ Assam became the first state in India to constitute its 8th State Pay Commission, marking a proactive step in government pay reforms.
  - ✓ The decision was announced by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, ahead of the expiry of the 7th State Pay Commission on January 1, 2026.
  - ✓ A Pay Commission is constituted to review and recommend revisions in salaries, allowances, service benefits, and pensions of government employees and pensioners.

- ✓ The 8th State Pay Commission will replace the existing 7th Pay Commission framework and recommend revised pay structures based on inflation, current economic conditions, and the fiscal capacity of the state.
- ✓ Former Assam Chief Secretary Subhas Das has been appointed as the Chairman of the 8th State Pay Commission.

