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Current Affairs - 11 January 2026

PESTICIDES MANAGEMENT BILL, 2025

- India's pesticide regulation is currently governed by the **Insecticides Act, 1968** and its accompanying rules, framed over five decades ago.
- This framework was designed at a time when chemical pest control was central to agricultural productivity, with limited awareness of environmental and health externalities. Over time, concerns have emerged regarding:
 - Rising incidents of **spurious and substandard pesticides**
 - **Human health impacts**, including farmer exposure and poisoning
 - **Environmental damage**, especially contamination of soil and water bodies
 - Weak enforcement and outdated regulatory mechanisms
- Draft Bills were introduced in 2008, 2018, and 2020, but none could be enacted into law.

Overview of the Pesticides Management Bill, 2025

- The Pesticides Management Bill, 2025, is the latest attempt to overhaul India's pesticide governance framework.
- It aims to regulate the manufacture, import, export, storage, sale, distribution, and use of pesticides in the country. Key stated objectives of the Bill include:
 - Minimising risks to human beings, animals, and the environment
 - Ensuring safe and effective use of pesticides
 - Promoting transparency, traceability, and accountability
 - Improving service delivery to farmers and enhancing ease of living
- The Bill proposes to repeal the Insecticides Act, 1968.

Role of State Governments

- Under the proposed Bill, State governments have limited regulatory powers. They may:
 - Temporarily prohibit the sale, distribution, or use of a pesticide or a specific batch
 - Impose such a prohibition for a maximum period of one year
- However, any such notification must be reviewed by the Registration Committee, and States do not have independent long-term prohibition or punitive powers.



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- This aspect has attracted criticism from experts and civil society groups.

Key Gaps and Concerns in the 2025 Draft

- Despite being labelled as a revised version, the 2025 draft introduces limited substantive changes compared to the 2020 draft. Major concerns include:
 - **Weakened legislative language:** The Bill states it will “strive to minimise risk” instead of committing to “minimise risk”.
 - **Absence of criminal liability provisions:** There are no clear provisions fixing criminal liability on manufacturers or distributors in cases of misuse, poisoning, or environmental damage.
 - **Limited State enforcement powers:** States cannot permanently ban hazardous pesticides.
 - **No price regulation mechanism:** The Bill does not address high pesticide pricing or farmer affordability.
 - **Weak grievance redressal framework:** Clear compensation and liability mechanisms for affected farmers are missing.
- Experts argue that without strong enforcement and accountability, regulatory effectiveness may remain limited.

Consultation Process and Way Forward

- The government has invited public comments and stakeholder feedback on the draft Bill until February 2, 2026.
- This consultation phase is crucial given the Bill’s long legislative history and the persistent concerns raised by farmer groups, public health experts, and environmental organisations.
- The Bill also aligns with broader policy goals such as:
 - Encouraging biological and traditional pest control methods
 - Reducing dependence on hazardous chemical pesticides
 - Strengthening farmer confidence through regulatory transparency

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U.S. CLIMATE EXIT: WHAT IT MEANS FOR GLOBAL ACTION

U.S. President Donald Trump has signed a memorandum withdrawing the United States from 66 international organisations, including key climate bodies such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

The move marks a sharp retreat from multilateral cooperation, weakens global climate governance, and raises concerns about funding gaps, leadership vacuums, and reduced coordination on climate science and policy.

Impact on Climate Finance After U.S. Exit

- **Reduced Influence Over Global Climate Funds** - By leaving the FCCC, the U.S. loses its say in shaping climate finance institutions such as the Green Climate Fund and the Global Environment Facility, which are overseen by the COP.
- **Easier Withdrawal from Funding Commitments** - Non-membership makes it politically simpler for U.S. administrations to justify withholding or cutting contributions to multilateral climate finance mechanisms.
- **Higher Costs for U.S. Businesses** - The exit signals policy uncertainty, increasing risk premiums for U.S. firms and investors that operate in a world moving toward stricter climate rules and regulations.
- **Greater Trade and Investment Exposure** - U.S. exporters may face tougher climate-linked trade measures abroad, such as carbon border taxes, with fewer diplomatic tools to negotiate exemptions.
- **Weaker Bargaining Power in Linked Negotiations** - As climate cooperation is increasingly tied to energy, critical minerals, and development finance, partners may hesitate to strike deals with the U.S. amid doubts about the durability of its commitments.

Role of the IPCC

- **Assessing Climate Science** - The IPCC reviews and synthesises global scientific research on climate change, its impacts, and possible response strategies, providing a common evidence base for policymakers worldwide.



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- **Shaping Global Climate Negotiations** - Its reports serve as shared scientific references that underpin international climate talks, targets, and policy decisions.
- **Impact of U.S. Withdrawal** - If the U.S. exits the IPCC, its influence over the scientific framing of climate debates will weaken, as it may stop formally nominating experts to author teams.
- **Reduced Institutional Representation** - Without government nominations, the pipeline for U.S.-based scientists to serve as IPCC authors could narrow, despite the country's strong climate research capacity.
- **Continued, but Limited, Participation** - U.S. scientists could still contribute as expert reviewers or be nominated through non-government observer organisations, but with less formal backing and visibility.

Global Repercussions of the U.S. Exit

- **Erosion of Shared Responsibility** - When a wealthy, high-emitting country withdraws from climate institutions, it weakens the norm that all major emitters must follow common rules, reducing trust in multilateral action.
 - **Hardening Positions of Developing Countries** - Many poorer countries already feel rich nations under-deliver on promises. The U.S. exit may reinforce this belief, making them less willing to accept new obligations.
 - **Encouraging Climate Inaction Elsewhere** - The move can give political cover to other hesitant governments to slow down, delay, or dilute their own climate commitments.
 - **Complicating Climate Finance Negotiations** - As climate finance targets rise from \$100 billion to far higher levels, U.S. disengagement undermines confidence in burden-sharing and collective funding efforts.
 - **Undermining New Funding Goals** - With a \$300 billion annual climate finance goal agreed for 2035, the absence of a major historical emitter weakens the credibility of global deals to mobilise these resources.
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EXERCISE SANJHA SHAKTI



The Indian Army recently conducted exercise 'Sanjha Shakti', a joint Military–Civil Fusion exercise, at the Diggi Hills Range under the aegis of the Maharashtra, Gujarat and Goa Area of the Southern Command.

- It is a **joint Military Civil Fusion (MCF) exercise**.
- It was conducted at the **Diggi Range, Khadki Military Station**, under the aegis of the **Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Goa Area of the Southern Command of the Indian Army**.
- The exercise focused on **strengthening coordination between the armed forces and civilian agencies** to deal with complex security challenges and emergency situations.
- The drill brought together **personnel from the Indian Army and key civilian agencies**, including the **Maharashtra Police, Force One, and fire and emergency services**.
- The joint exercise tested interoperability, communication protocols, decision-making processes, and rapid response mechanisms through **realistic, mission-oriented scenarios**.
- The exercise validated seamless coordination between civil and military stakeholders, particularly in situations involving **disaster response and public safety**.

WHAT IS THE BOEING E-4B NIGHTWATCH?



panic.

Amid the high geopolitical tensions, Boeing E-4B Nightwatch, better known as the US military's "Doomsday Plane," made a rare appearance in Los Angeles, sparking



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- The Boeing E-4B Nightwatch, widely known as the “**Doomsday Plane**”, is the most **secretive aircraft in the US military’s arsenal**.
 - It serves as the **National Airborne Operations Center** and functions as a **flying command post**.
 - It is **designed to keep the US government operational during extreme scenarios** such as nuclear war, catastrophic attacks on US soil, or the destruction of ground-based command centres.
 - Its mission is to **ensure the US government can continue to function even if “doomsday” arrives**.
 - It is a **core component of the military’s Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications system**, often referred to as NC3, which **enables senior leaders to authorize and manage nuclear forces** under all conditions.
 - **Features:**
 - It is built on a **heavily modified Boeing 747-200**
 - The aircraft is **hardened against electromagnetic pulse effects, shielded against nuclear and thermal radiation**, and equipped with multiple layers of **secure communications**.
 - The aircraft can **remain airborne for extended periods using in-flight refuelling**, allowing national leadership to operate independently of ground infrastructure.
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ARALAM BUTTERFLY SANCTUARY



- **Location:** It is located in the **state of Kerala**.
 - It shares boundaries with the Brahmagiri Wildlife Sanctuary in Karnataka, the Kottiyoor Wildlife Sanctuary, and the North Wayanad forest division.
 - **Vegetation:** It consists of **evergreen and semi-evergreen forests**.
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- **Rivers:** The **Cheenkanni River**, originating from the Brahmagiri ranges, flows through the dense forests of Aralam.
- The region is known for large-scale **butterfly migration and mud-puddling** and is also a special habitat of **Slender loris**.
- **Fauna:** It is home to many **species of butterflies**, accounting for more than 80 percent of all butterflies in Kerala. Some of these are unique to this region, while others are endangered.
 - Every January or February, the sanctuary holds a Butterfly Migration Study, which celebrates this seasonal movement and deepens our understanding of these pollinators.
 - In addition to butterflies, Aralam is home to several animals, including elephants, giant squirrels, leopards, and a variety of birds.

NARCO-COORDINATION CENTRE



- The **Narco-Coordination Centre (NCORD)** mechanism was established in 2016 for better coordination between States and **Ministry of Home Affairs**.
- It has been further strengthened through a **four-tier system**.
- **Purpose:** To enhance **coordination between the States**, the Ministry of Home Affairs and concerned stakeholders in addressing the **challenge of the drug menace** in a holistic manner.
- It is designed to **facilitate better communication**, cooperation, and intelligence sharing among law enforcement and drug control agencies.
- **Structure of Narco-Coordination Centre (NCORD):**
 - **Apex Level NCORD Committee**, headed by Union Home Secretary;
 - **Executive Level NCORD Committee**, headed by Special Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs;



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- State Level NCORD Committees, headed by Chief Secretaries; and
- District Level NCORD Committees – headed by District Magistrates
- **Initiatives linked to NCORD:**
 - The **NCORD portal** has been launched as an effective mechanism for information exchange between various institutions/agencies.
 - A toll-free helpline called **MANAS (Madak Padarth Nishedh Asuchna Kendra)** with the number 1933 has been launched.

VEHICLE-TO-VEHICLE COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY



- It is defined as a **direct communication method** that allows vehicles to exchange information with one another.
- It enhances driver awareness of their surroundings **through wireless technologies**.
- It allows **vehicles to communicate directly** with each other **without the need for a network**.
- The initiative aims to **strengthen road safety and reduce accidents** across the country.
- **Functioning:** The system will function **through a device similar to a SIM card**, which will be installed in vehicles.
- **Features of Vehicle-To-Vehicle Communication Technology:**
 - Vehicles will receive **real-time alerts** when **another vehicle comes too close** from any direction.
 - Each vehicle equipped with V2V technology **continuously broadcasts and receives data** such as speed, location, direction, acceleration and braking status.
 - When a potential risk is detected, the system alerts the driver, giving them extra time to react.
 - The technology will **provide alerts related to safe vehicle distance** and will also warn drivers about nearby roadside or stationary vehicles.



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- The system will provide signals from all sides of the vehicle, ensuring 360-degree communication.
 - It will work in coordination with Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS).
 - **Advantage:** This feature will be extremely useful during foggy conditions when visibility between vehicles drops to almost zero.
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KATHPUTLI



- Kathputlis is a traditional string puppet play from Rajasthan.
 - It is one of Rajasthan's oldest folk art forms.
 - Historically, Kathputli performances were used by travelling performers to narrate tales of Rajput kings, brave warriors, folk heroes, and moral stories to village audiences.
 - The name comes from **kath**(wood) and **putli** (doll), reflecting their simple yet expressive construction.
 - A kathputli is **made up of wood, cloth, thread**, and metal wire. Its upper body is made up of wood, and the rest is made of cotton and fabric.
 - They **do not have legs** and are covered with long trailing skirts.
 - The puppeteer **manipulates them with his** fingers tied with two to five strings.
 - **Features of Kathputli:**
 - They **possess distinctive facial features** like large eyes, oval faces, large lips, and arched eyebrows.
 - Their colourful attire draw **inspiration from royal courts and desert traditions**, while their sharp features and exaggerated expressions add drama to every movement.
 - **Theme:** Each puppet represents a character from **everyday life or folklore**.
 - It is accompanied by **folk music on the dholak** and
 - The performances brim with **humour, music, and satire**, often reflecting social realities alongside legendary tales.
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