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Current Affairs - 26 January 2026

INDIA AND THE EU — A FIT PARTNERSHIP IN A DIVIDED WORLD

- The strengthening of India–EU ties must be understood against a backdrop of eroding trust in traditional **alliances**.
- India’s relationship with the United States has come under strain due to punitive **tariffs** and sharp rhetoric linked to India’s energy ties with Russia.
- Europe has faced similar disillusionment amid shifting U.S. priorities and the consequences of the Ukraine conflict.
- These experiences have reinforced a shared conclusion: reliance on any single power is increasingly risky, and strategic diversification is essential for long-term stability.

The Strategic Importance of the Free Trade Agreement

- A key pillar of this renewed engagement is the long-pending Free Trade Agreement between India and the EU.
- Negotiated intermittently since 2007, the FTA has taken on new significance as a tool of economic and strategic diversification.
- Its conclusion could expand trade across sectors such as textiles, pharmaceuticals, automobiles, machinery, and digital services.
- For India, it offers greater access to European markets and support for its manufacturing ambitions.
- For the EU, it provides an opportunity to reduce over-dependence on China by engaging one of the world’s fastest-growing major economies.

Climate Equity and Trade Challenges

- The FTA negotiations also expose important tensions, particularly around climate equity.
- The EU’s Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, which imposes carbon-related charges on imports such as steel and cement, has emerged as a major concern for India.
- These measures risk undermining the economic benefits of the agreement by acting as de facto non-tariff barriers.

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Defence and Security Cooperation

- Beyond economics, defence cooperation represents a critical dimension of India–EU engagement.
- Proposals for a dedicated security and defence **partnership**, comparable to EU arrangements with Japan and South Korea, reflect growing strategic convergence.
- For Europe, closer ties would open access to India’s defence market and enable co-production opportunities. For India, such cooperation aligns with domestic manufacturing goals and enhances access to advanced technology.
- Expanded collaboration would also strengthen **security** in the Indian Ocean region, an area of increasing geopolitical competition.

A Model for a Multipolar World

- At a systemic level, the India-EU relationship has the potential to serve as a template for cooperation in a multipolar world.
- Both partners emphasise **sovereignty** and resist external vetoes over national decision-making, whether from Washington, Beijing, or Moscow.
- Having experienced the costs of over-dependence-on energy supplies, markets, or security guarantees-India and the EU increasingly view strategic **resilience** as a shared objective.
- Their partnership demonstrates how flexibility, mutual respect, and pragmatic **cooperation** can coexist with differing domestic priorities.

Conclusion

- The deepening India-EU relationship reflects a broader search for stability and balance in a rapidly changing global order.
 - By advancing collaboration in trade, climate policy, defence, and global governance, both sides can translate long-standing potential into durable outcomes.
 - Success will depend on political resolve and the ability to overcome bureaucratic inertia.
 - If sustained, this partnership could strengthen **multilateralism** and contribute meaningfully to a more balanced, equitable, and resilient international system.
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DELIMITATION AFTER 2027, REDRAWING POWER IN INDIA

- The Constitution originally required delimitation after every Census to ensure equal suffrage.
- This principle was suspended in **1976**, freezing the inter-State distribution of **Lok Sabha** seats at **1971** population levels so that States would not be penalised for controlling population growth.
- The **84th Amendment** (2001) extended this freeze until the first Census after **2026**.
- As a result, India's parliamentary map reflects a country of **548 million**, not today's **1.47 billion** people.
- With the suspension expiring after Census 2027, redistribution becomes unavoidable, raising profound constitutional and political challenges.

Demographic Divergence and the Moral Paradox

- In the 1970s, fertility rates across States were broadly similar. Today, sharp divergence defines India's demographic landscape.
- Southern and western States invested in education, health, and women's empowerment, achieving below-replacement fertility.
- Northern States such as **Uttar Pradesh** and **Bihar** continue to record higher population growth.
- Population-based redistribution would dramatically increase northern representation.
- Projections suggest that in an expanded House of around **888 seats**, U.P. and Bihar together would command over a quarter of Parliament.
- Although southern States gain seats in absolute terms, their share of total representation declines.
- This creates a moral paradox. States that demonstrated **governance** success and adhered to national population goals face diminished political influence, while those that did not gain power. The ethical reasoning behind the original freeze therefore remains compelling.

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Arithmetic versus Assurances

- Political assurances that no State will lose seats offer limited comfort. Parliamentary power functions through absolute numbers, not proportional guarantees.
- Even if southern States retain current seat counts, the dramatic rise in northern representation weakens their bargaining capacity.
- Suspending redistribution indefinitely to preserve balance risks violating **Article 14**, which guarantees equality and fair representation.
- The dilemma is thus structural: reconciling **constitutional fairness** with political stability.

Evaluating the Options

- **Extending the freeze** preserves balance but undermines democratic equality. Expanding the Lok Sabha ensures no State loses seats but fails to address disproportionate dominance by larger States.
- A **weighted formula**, combining population with development indicators such as literacy, health, or sustained fertility control, offers a more ethically balanced model, rewarding outcomes rather than numbers alone.
- Strengthening the **Rajya Sabha** as a truly federal chamber could offset Lok Sabha imbalances.
- Restoring domicile requirements and restructuring seat allocation to emphasise State equality, rather than population, would revive its moderating role.
- **Bifurcating Uttar Pradesh** presents another federal solution.
 - Dividing its projected strength across multiple States would prevent excessive concentration of power while addressing long-standing regional demands.
- Finally, **phased redistribution** across two election cycles would reduce political shock while respecting constitutional obligations.

Conclusion

- Delimitation will reshape **coalition politics**, alter regional influence, and test the balance between democratic equality and federal justice.
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GOVERNOR'S ADDRESS AND CONSTITUTIONAL LIMITS - REASSERTING THE PARLIAMENTARY SPIRIT

- Recent walkouts by Governors during inaugural sessions of State Legislative Assemblies in Opposition-ruled States like **Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala** have triggered a constitutional debate.
- These incidents relate to the Governor's refusal to read or complete the customary address under **Article 176(1)**, prompting concerns over the erosion of constitutional conventions and federal balance.
- The Karnataka government is reportedly considering approaching the **Supreme Court (SC)** for a judicial declaration on the issue, which is required to touch upon key constitutional principles of -
 - Parliamentary democracy,
 - Collective responsibility of the Cabinet,
 - Federalism,
 - Constitutional morality, and
 - Limited discretion of constitutional authorities.

Constitutional Position of the Governor:

- **Article 176(1):**
 - It mandates that the Governor "shall" address the Legislative Assembly (or both Houses where a Legislative Council exists) at the beginning of the first session every year.
 - The address reflects the policies and programmes of the elected State Cabinet, not the personal views of the Governor.
 - The Governor acts indirectly as a **communicator** to the people, through their elected representatives.
- **Aid and advice of the Council of Ministers:**

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- A Council of Ministers, led by the Chief Minister, must aid and advise the Governor in performing their functions, except where the Constitution requires the Governor to act in their discretion (**Article 163**).
- Selective reading, skipping paragraphs, or walking out amounts to **constitutional impropriety**.

Challenges Highlighted and Way Ahead:

- **Politicisation of the Governor's office:** Centre–State friction especially in Opposition-ruled States.
 - **Reinforcing constitutional morality** - Governors must act as neutral constitutional heads, not political actors.
- **Erosion of constitutional conventions:** Codification of conventions - development of binding guidelines for gubernatorial conduct, possibly through an Inter-State Council or SC jurisprudence.
- **Risk of turning the Governor into a parallel power centre:** Judicial clarification - a clear SC declaration on the mandatory and non-discretionary nature of Article 176(1).
- **Undermining the authority of elected State governments:** Strengthening federalism - Respect for State autonomy and Cabinet supremacy in policy matters.

Conclusion:

- The recent gubernatorial walkouts mark a troubling departure from India's parliamentary and federal ethos.
 - The Constitution envisages the Governor as a **constitutional sentinel**, not a veto-wielding authority.
 - Judicial precedents—from Shamsher Singh to Nabam Rebia—clearly establish that discretionary power is limited, defined, and non-personal.
 - Upholding constitutional morality and democratic accountability is essential to prevent the Governor's office from becoming, as the SC warned, a “reincarnation of colonial authority” inimical to responsible government.
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ANTIBIOTIC PIPELINE RUNNING DRY

India is facing a growing threat from **antimicrobial resistance** (AMR) driven by widespread antibiotic overuse. In 2021, an estimated 2.67 lakh deaths were linked to AMR.

Experts warn that the global antibiotic pipeline is nearly dry, with few genuinely new drugs in development, putting modern medicine at serious risk.

Antimicrobial Resistance in India: A Growing but Largely Invisible Crisis

- AMR is emerging as a silent pandemic in India, intensifying both within hospitals and in the community.
- High antibiotic use in hospitals creates strong pressure on bacteria to evolve resistance through genetic mutations, which then spread rapidly via resistance genes, fuelled by antibiotic misuse.
- Patients often enter hospitals for unrelated conditions such as heart or kidney disease but acquire drug-resistant infections during treatment, sometimes with fatal outcomes.
- This hidden pathway makes AMR difficult to quantify accurately. Reliable global estimates only began emerging in 2021, and even now, comprehensive data remains limited.
- Beyond hospitals, common community infections such as typhoid, diarrhoea and pneumonia are increasingly becoming drug-resistant.
- Given that India accounts for about **18% of the world's population**, roughly one-fifth of global infections are estimated to occur in the country, underscoring the scale of the challenge despite the absence of precise national figures.

Behaviour Drives Antibiotic Overuse in India

- Antibiotic misuse in India is largely behavioural. Many people take antibiotics for common ailments like coughs, colds or diarrhoea without confirming whether the infection is bacterial.
- Antibiotics are often taken on pharmacists' advice or prescribed prophylactically by doctors, reinforcing habitual overuse. This behaviour needs urgent correction.

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A Drying Antibiotic Pipeline

- Although a few antibiotics have been approved in recent decades, almost none belong to new drug classes or use novel mechanisms.
- With no strong replacements in sight, continued misuse risks exhausting the effectiveness of existing drugs.
- **Treating Routine Infections Is Getting Harder**
 - Drug-resistant infections now require stronger, last-resort antibiotics.
 - Even community infections like UTIs and typhoid are becoming harder to treat due to repeated inappropriate antibiotic use.
 - Resistance to **fluoroquinolones** in **Salmonella typhi** is rising, while overuse of ceftriaxone and azithromycin risks rendering them ineffective.
 - However, resistance can reverse when drugs are withdrawn, as seen with older typhoid medicines regaining effectiveness.

Role of Antibiotic Stewardship

- Antibiotic stewardship is the effort to measure and improve how antibiotics are prescribed by clinicians and used by patients.
- Stewardship programmes are more effective than sudden bans. **Kerala's antimicrobial stewardship programme**, launched in 2015, focused on rational prescribing and awareness.
- Only after nearly a decade did the state ban over-the-counter sales, with reasonable success. Responsible use requires public understanding, not just regulation.

Role of Livestock, Environment and Humans

- High resistance levels in humans are largely driven by human antibiotic use, not livestock.
 - Studies by ICMR found significant overlap of resistance genes between human and hospital environments, but minimal overlap with animals.
 - A key concern is antibiotic residues in food, which persist in the gut microbiome and act as a reservoir for resistance.
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ASIATIC WILD DOG



• The Asiatic wild dog, also called **Dhole**, is a **wild Asian carnivore** of the **dog family** (Canidae).

- Scientific Name: **Cuon alpinus**
- Other Names: **Indian wild dog, whistling dog, red wolf, red dog, and mountain wolf.**

Distribution:

- They are found throughout **Central, Eastern and Southeastern Asia.**
- In India, they are found in three clusters across India, namely the **Western and Eastern Ghats, the central Indian landscape, and Northeast India.**
- The Western and Eastern Ghats are stronghold regions for dholes.

Habitat: They inhabit **dense jungles, steppes, mountains, scrub forests, and pine forests.**

Features:

- It is a **sleek, reddish-brown, medium-sized**
- This species tends to **live in groups.**
- They are **great communicators** and **use an eerie whistle to communicate** with each other.

Conservation Status:

- IUCN Red List: **Endangered**
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