

Daily Current Affairs

Date : 17 January, 2026



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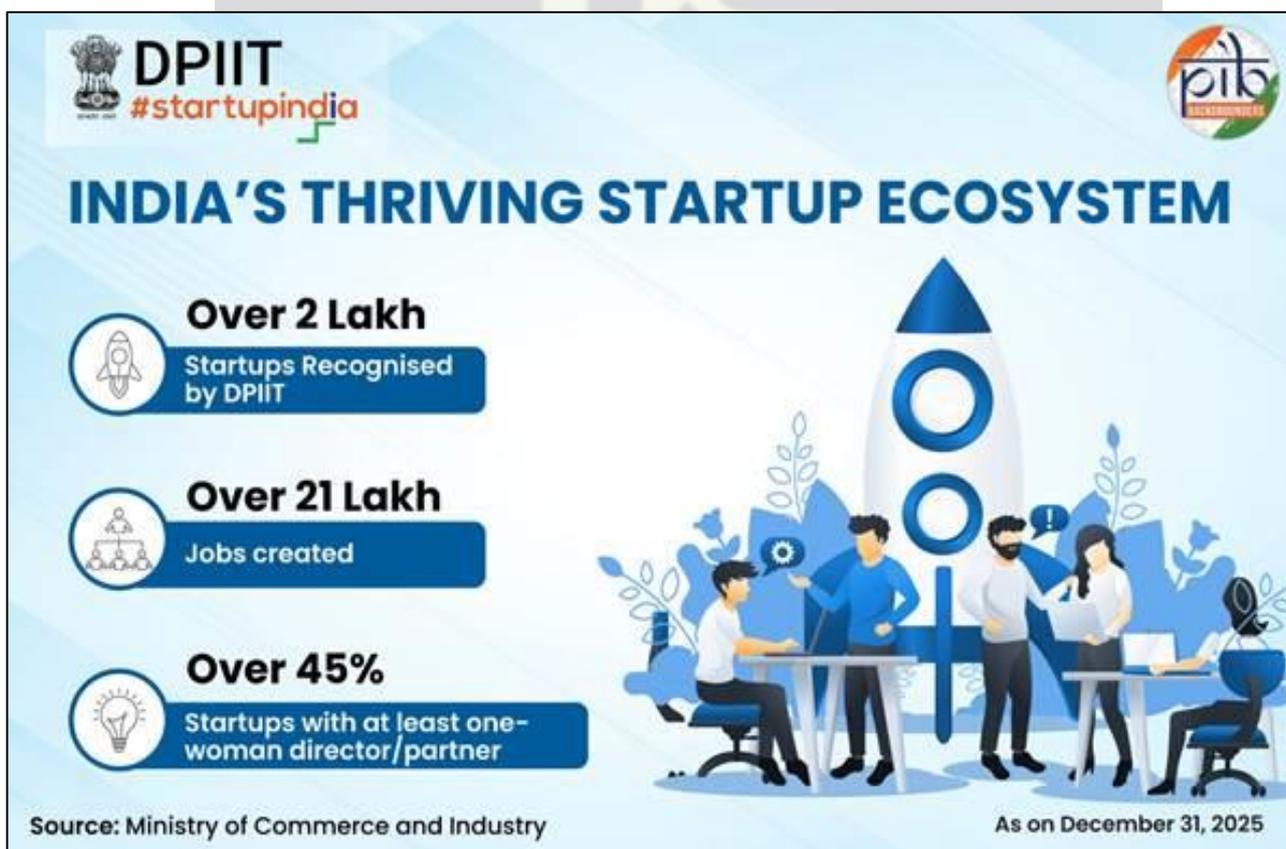


'National Startup Day' Program Organized under PM USHA



Why in News?

- A startup exhibition and live presentation program was organized in Jaipur on the occasion of National Startup Day (January 16).



Key Points:

- **Organizers:** Directorate of College Education, Higher Education Department, and Government of Rajasthan.
- **Associated Campaigns:** This program was organized under the Central Government's PM-USHA (Pradhan Mantri Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan) and RUSA (Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan).

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- **Objective of the Program:** To connect the youth and educational institutions of the state with the startup and innovation culture.
- Startups associated with the Innovation and Incubation Centers established in the state under RUSA 2.0 (Rashtriya Uchcharat Shiksha Abhiyan - 2.0) participated in this program.
- The startup 'Agrobot' from Kota showcased an advanced prototype of AI-based smart agricultural equipment to address the problems faced by farmers.

Other Important Points:

- **Rajasthan receives Leader Award:** At the National Startup Day program held at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi, Rajasthan was honored with the 'Leader Award' by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) and Startup India for its robust and dynamic startup ecosystem.

National Startup Day:

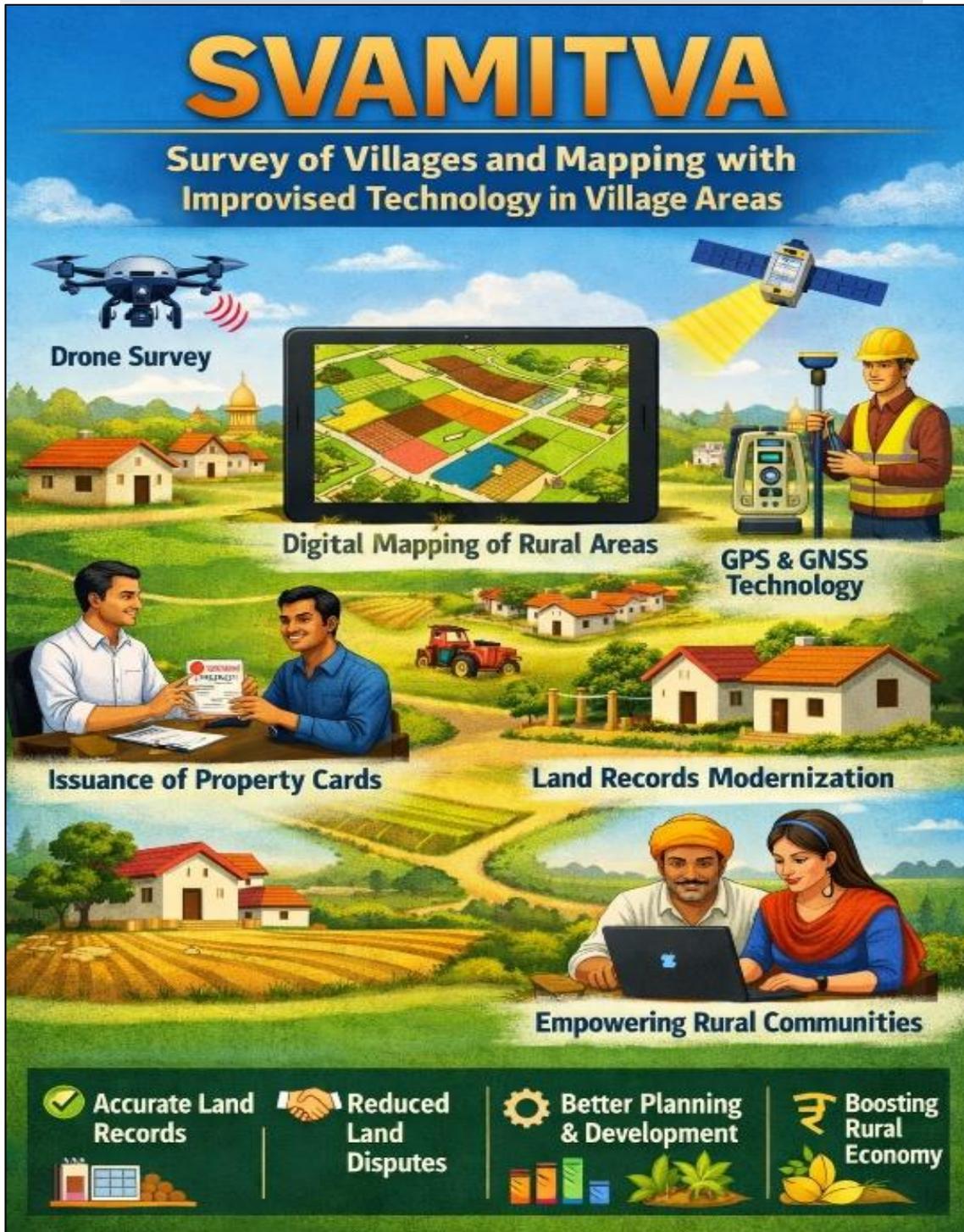
- National Startup Day is celebrated every year on January 16.
- This day was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 16, 2016, on the occasion of the launch of the 'Startup India' initiative.
- The objective of Startup India is to make India a country of job creators rather than job seekers, while promoting innovation, fostering entrepreneurship, and enabling investment-led growth.

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Rajasthan's Performance in the 'SVAMITVA Scheme'

Why in News?

- Recently, under the Ministry of Panchayati Raj's SVAMITVA scheme, digital mapping of 35,955 villages has been completed in Rajasthan.



SVAMITVA
Survey of Villages and Mapping with Improved Technology in Village Areas

Drone Survey

Digital Mapping of Rural Areas

GPS & GNSS Technology

Issuance of Property Cards

Land Records Modernization

Empowering Rural Communities

Accurate Land Records

Reduced Land Disputes

Better Planning & Development

Boosting Rural Economy

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Key Points:

- The top-performing districts under the scheme include Jaipur, Jhalawar, Chittorgarh, and Nagaur. The newly formed districts, such as Balotra, Beawar, and Phalodi, have the fewest villages digitally mapped.
- **Full form of the SVAMITVA:** Survey of Villages And Mapping with Improved Technology in Village Areas.
- **Launch of the scheme:** By the Prime Minister on April 24, 2020, on the occasion of Panchayati Raj Day.
- **Objective:** To provide rural people with the right to document their residential properties so that they can use their property for economic purposes.
- **Implementation of the scheme:** Jointly by the Panchayati Raj Department, the Survey of India, and the Revenue Department.
- Under the scheme, the Survey of India prepares a digital map of the inhabited areas of all villages in the state using drones and submits it to the concerned Gram Panchayat.
- Based on the map, the concerned Gram Panchayat will issue a lease deed to the concerned person under the provisions of the Rajasthan Panchayati Raj Act, 1996.

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NEWS IN SHORTS

S. No.	News
1.	<p>Global Rajasthan Agritech Meet (GRAM) – 2026</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The Global Rajasthan Agritech Meet (GRAM) – 2026 is proposed to be held in the capital city Jaipur.■ In this regard, special camps will be organized at the Girdawar Circle level in the state from January 23, 2026 (Basant Panchami).■ These camps will be held on January 23, 24, 25 and 31, 2026 and February 1, 5, 6, 7 and 9, 2026.■ In these camps, proposals for necessary development works in villages will be collected under the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act-2025 (VB-G RAM G). Benefits of various schemes related to agriculture and horticulture, animal husbandry, fisheries, dairy, etc., including Soil Health Cards, Kisan Credit Cards, policy distribution under the Mangla Animal Insurance Scheme, approval of polyhouses, and animal vaccination, will also be provided.
2.	<p>'Aaju Guja 2.0' Festival in Bikaner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The 'Aaju Guja 2.0' festival was organized in Bikaner from January 16 to 18, 2026.■ This festival is specially organized for children.

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3.

MoU between CSU New Delhi and JRRSU Jaipur

- Recently, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Central Sanskrit University (CSU), New Delhi and Jagadguru Ramanandacharya Rajasthan Sanskrit University (JRRSU), Jaipur for cooperation in Sanskrit language, Indian knowledge systems and technology-based research.
- **Vice-Chancellor of JRRSU:** Professor Madan Mohan Jha.

4.

'Bawalistan' (a book by Tasneem Khan)

- Recently, the collection of short stories 'Bawalistan' by author Tasneem Khan has been released at the Jaipur Literature Festival held in Jaipur.

5.

Operation "Vishanu Bahu"

- An operation launched by the Rajasthan Anti-Narcotics Task Force (ANTF) and the Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) to apprehend drug traffickers.

6.

Industrialist Mohan Lal Mittal Passes Away

- Mohan Lal Mittal, founder and chairman of the Geeta Mittal Foundation, recently passed away in London at the age of 99.
- He was born in Sadulpur (Rajgarh) in Churu district. He was associated with the fields of education, social service, and skill development.
- Mohan Lal Mittal was the father of Lakshmi Mittal, chairman of ArcelorMittal, the world's second-largest steel company.

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7. **Department of Chemicals and Petrochemicals Workshop: Jaipur**
- A training program on the topic of "Chemical and Petrochemical Industrial Safety" was organized by the Department of Chemicals and Petrochemicals (Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers) in Jaipur on January 15 and 16, 2026.
 - This program was organized under the 100-day action plan of 'Viksit Bharat@2047'.
 - **Venue:** Central Institute of Petrochemicals Engineering & Technology (CIPET), Jaipur.

8. **Dr. Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar**
- Indian Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi honored Dr. Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar, a former member of the Mewar royal family, with a special award for his outstanding work in the field of social service.
 - Chief of Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi presented this special award to Dr. Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar for donating two high-tech ambulances to the Indian Army during COVID-19-like situations, for his unwavering dedication to serving the army, and for establishing 9 Guinness World Records in the fields of social service, education, women's education, healthcare, women's hygiene management, and environmental protection and conservation.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

India's Bioeconomy

Why in News?

- India's bioeconomy has grown 16-fold in a decade, from \$10 billion (2014) to \$165.7 billion (2024).

Key Points:

- Target:** It is projected to reach \$300 billion by 2030.
- India's Global Standing:** India ranks 12th globally in biotechnology, 3rd in the Asia-Pacific region, 3rd largest globally in the startup ecosystem, and 1st in vaccine production.
- By 2020, the market was divided into 4 key segments:

Sector	Contribution	Description
Bio-Industrial	47%	The largest share led by the ethanol blending program, which achieved its 20% E-20 target in 2025, five years ahead of the set timeline.
Bio-Pharma	35%	India has become the "Pharmacy of the World," supplying 65% of the WHO's vaccine requirements.
Bio-Research and IT	9%	The fastest-growing sector, inspired by AI-driven drug discovery.
Bio-Agriculture	8%	Focused on climate-resistant crops and bio-fertilizers.

- Biotech Startups:** Increased from 50 in 2014 to over 11,000 in 2026.

Government's Key Initiatives:

- 1. India's First National Biofoundry Network:** Established 6 biofoundries and a high-performance biomanufacturing platform to strengthen indigenous biomanufacturing under the Bio E-3 policy.
- 2. Genome India Project:** The Genome India Project achieved a national milestone with the launch of the Indian genomic data set and the operationalization of the FeED and IBDC portals, making 10,000 whole genome sequences globally accessible.
- 3. Experiments on Axiom-4 Mission:** This includes India's first human muscle stem cell experiment on the International Space Station (Axiom-4) and validation of the growth of microalgae and cyanobacteria in microgravity for future space missions.
- 4. Agricultural Technologies:** This includes gene-edited high-yielding rice (+20%), drought-resistant varieties of rice (Arun), climate-tolerant varieties of chickpeas, and transgene-free CRISPR-edited mustard.
- 5. Startup and Innovation Ecosystem:** This includes 75 BioNEST centers, 19 E-YUVA centers, 30,000 startups, over 1300 intellectual property (IP) filings, and progress towards the commercialization of over 800 products.

Japan and Rare Earth Minerals

Why in News?

- Japan has launched the world's first experimental attempt to extract rare earth elements from the deep sea at a depth of approximately 6,000 meters using its scientific drilling vessel Chikyu.

Key Points:

- **Reason:** This initiative is aimed at reducing Japan's over-reliance on China and making Japan self-sufficient in rare earth minerals.
- **NOTE:** China holds approximately two-thirds of global rare earth mining locations and more than 90% of refined production.
- **Mining Location:** Minami-Torishima: This test mission is being conducted near Minami-Torishima, an island located within Japan's exclusive economic zone in the Pacific Ocean.
- **Mineral Reserves in Minami-Torishima:** An estimated 16 million tons of rare earth mineral reserves are present.
- This involves the extraction of mineral deposits from depths greater than 200 meters in the ocean, which covers 2/3 of the world's seabed, for industrial use (electric vehicles, electronics, wind turbines, and defence).
- This mining is conducted through 3 methods:
 1. Collection of polymetallic nodules
 2. Mining of sulfide deposits on the seabed.
 3. Extraction of cobalt-rich crusts.

Other Important Points:

- **Rare Earth Minerals:** Rare earth elements are called the 'vitamins' of modern electronics. This group of elements includes 15 lanthanides (57-71), scandium, and yttrium.

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Categories:

1. **Light Rare Earth Elements (LREEs):** Elements such as lanthanum, cerium, praseodymium, and neodymium.
 2. **Heavy Rare Earth Elements (HREEs):** These are comparatively less abundant and are more valuable.
- **India's Vision:** Under the Atmanirbhar Bharat (Self-Reliant India) and Viksit Bharat@2047 initiatives, emphasis is being placed on the '3M Hub' (Mining, Minerals & Materials).

Efforts:

1. National Mineral Mission
 2. Critical Mineral Mission (Establishment of Centres of Excellence at IIT Bombay, IIT Hyderabad, and CSIR-IMMT Bhubaneswar)
 3. Satyabhama Portal (Digital platform for research)
 4. Development of a park in Bhopal based on the Rare Earth Metals and Titanium theme.
- **NOTE:** China is the world's largest producer of Rare Earth Elements (REE), accounting for 60% of the global share.

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SCHEMES

NPS Vatsalya Scheme

Why in News?

- The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) has issued guidelines for the NPS Vatsalya Scheme-2025.

The infographic is titled "NPS Vatsalya Scheme" and is presented in a light orange and white color scheme. At the top, it features the logos of the Ministry of Finance and the NPS Vatsalya program. The main heading is "NPS VATSALYA SCHEME" in large, bold, red letters. Below this, the text states "All minor citizens (age below 18 years)." and "Account can be opened in the name of minor and operated by parent or guardian. Minor will be the beneficiary." It further explains that the scheme can be opened through various Points of presence regulated by PFRDA, such as major banks, India Post, Pension Funds, and an Online platform (e-NPS). It also mentions that subscribers must make a minimum contribution of Rs 1000/- per annum, with no limit on the maximum contribution. The infographic notes that PFRDA will provide multiple investment choices to subscribers, including government securities, corporate debt, and equity in different proportions based on risk appetite and desired returns. Finally, it states that on attaining the age of majority, the plan can be converted seamlessly into a normal NPS account.

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Key Points:

Important Points:

- **Nodal Ministry:** Central Ministry of Finance.
- **Regulatory Body:** Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA).
- **Main Objective:** To inculcate the habit of saving in children from a young age and promote disciplined long-term investment. This will ensure the financial security of children and prepare them for future pensions.



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ECONOMIC SCENARIO



Aquaculture: India-Israel Joint Ministerial Declaration



Why in News?

- India and Israel have signed a joint ministerial declaration of intent to deepen cooperation in fisheries and aquaculture at the second global summit held on the theme "Blue Food Security: See the Future, 2026".



Key Points:

Main provisions of the declaration on fisheries and aquaculture:

1. **Promoting Productivity and Resilience:** Promoting productivity and resilience by prioritizing recirculating aquaculture systems (RAS), cage culture, aquaponics, biofloc, mariculture, and seaweed farming.
2. **Joint Research and Innovation:** Includes joint research and innovation on genetic improvement, pathogen-free seed production, livestock breeding, etc.
3. Establishment of India-Israel Centers of Excellence.
4. Joint cooperation to promote sustainable fisheries, capacity building and development, trade facilitation, and food security.

Other Important Points:

Fisheries and Aquaculture: In the context of India;

- **India's global position:** The world's 2nd largest fish producer after China (8% contribution).
- **Fish production in 2023-24:** 184.02 lakh tonnes.



INDEXES AND REPORTS



Export Preparedness Index, 2024



Why in News?

- Recently, NITI Aayog released the Export Preparedness Index, 2024 to assess the preparedness of Indian states and Union Territories to accelerate India's export-led growth.



Key Points:

- Introduction:** Evaluates Indian states and Union Territories based on export readiness, competitiveness, and institutional capacity.
- Publisher:** NITI Aayog, Government of India
- Edition:** 4th
- Objective:** To promote exports, employment, regional development, and integration with global value chains by creating an evidence-based framework.
- Parameters:**
 - 4 Pillars
 - 13 Sub-pillars
 - 70 Indicators

Pillars:

Column	Share	Focused Areas
Export Infrastructure	20%	Logistics, connectivity, industrial infrastructure.
Business Ecosystem	40%	Macro economy, competition, human capital, finance, MSMEs, innovation, etc.
Policy & Governance	20%	State export policies, regulatory bodies, etc.
Export Performance	20%	Export outcomes, market access, transport systems, diversification, etc.

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- This index categorizes states and union territories as Leaders, Challengers, and Aspirers.

Top performing states and UTs in EPI, 2024:

Rank	Major States / UTs	Smaller States / UTs
1 st	Maharashtra	Uttarakhand
2 nd	Tamil Nadu	Jammu and Kashmir
3 rd	Gujarat	Nagaland
4 th	Uttar Pradesh	Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu
5 th	Andhra Pradesh	Goa



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Global Economic Prospects Report

Why in News?

- The World Bank has released a report titled "Global Economic Prospects."



Key Points:

- This report is published twice a year (January and June). It assesses the prospects for global economic growth.
- **India's Growth Rate:** A growth rate of 7.2% is projected for the fiscal year 2025-26. The June 2025 report had projected a growth rate of 6.3%.
- **Reasons for the higher growth rate:** Strong domestic demand, increased private consumption expenditure, improvements in taxation, and an increase in real household income in rural areas.

Employment and Social Trends-2026 Report

Why in News?

- Recently, the International Labour Organization (ILO) released the Employment and Social Trends-2026 report.



Key Points:

Findings related to India in the report:

- Manufacturing Sector:** India's share in the global manufacturing sector is approximately 3 percent.
- Employment in the Renewable Energy Sector:**
 - India, Japan, and South Korea are collectively making significant progress in increasing job creation in the renewable energy sector.
 - In India, there is a high demand for workers trained in green sector skills.

NEWS IN SHORTS

S. No.	News
1.	<p>Mycorrhizal Networks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">American biologist Toby Kiers has been awarded the Tyler Environmental Achievement Award 2026 for her research on mycorrhizal networks.The Tyler Award is also known as the Nobel Prize of the environmental field.

