

Daily Current Affairs

 Date : 18 February, 2026



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National Launch of 'Bharat VISTAAR' in Jaipur

Why in News?

- Taking a historic step towards a digital revolution in the agriculture sector, the Union Minister of Agriculture, Farmers Welfare and Rural Development launched the first phase of the "Bharat VISTAAR Yojana" in Jaipur on February 17, 2026.



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Key Points:

- **Agri Kosh and Roadmap:** On this occasion, a farmer-centric AI hackathon and the Agri Kosh and AI Strategy Roadmap were also unveiled by the Union Agriculture Minister and Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma at the State Institute of Agricultural Management (SIAM), Durgapura (Jaipur).
- Announced in the Union Budget 2026-27, 'Bharat VISTAAR' is a multilingual, AI-based interactive advisory system that provides comprehensive agricultural services to farmers across the country on a unified digital platform. Under this system, farmers will dial "155261" to report their problems and receive immediate solutions.
- Through this platform, farmers will have easy and accessible access to services such as crop-based scientific advisories, real-time market prices, weather forecasts, agricultural loan and insurance information, eligibility and application guidance for government schemes.
- This initiative has been developed as a Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) in the agriculture sector, aimed at increasing farmer productivity, reducing costs, and minimizing risks.
- This system has been integrated with the resources of AgriStake and the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).
- Additionally, 'Bharat VISTAAR' will connect with various central and state agricultural schemes, the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), market prices, and state-level digital systems to provide accurate and up-to-date information to farmers at one place.

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Facts for Prelims:

Key announcements related to farmer welfare in the Rajasthan Budget 2026-27:

- **Mission Raj GIFT:** Launch of Mission Raj GIFT (Geographical Indication for Transformation of Production and Livelihoods) to provide national and international recognition to the state's unique agro-processed products and better prices to the farmers associated with them.

Centers of Excellence (CoE)

- Center of Excellence for Onion and Vegetables – Alwar.
- Center of Excellence for Kinnow – Sriganganagar.
- Center of Excellence for Mango – Banswara.
- **Note:** 'Organic Food Markets' will be established in Jodhpur, Kota, and Udaipur.

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'Rajasthan AI Pavilion' at India AI Impact Summit 2026

Why in News?

- The 'Rajasthan AI Pavilion' was set up by the Department of Information Technology and Communications, Rajasthan, at the 'AI Impact Summit - 2026', held at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi from February 16-20, 2026.



Key Points:

- **Pavilion theme:** 'People, Planet and Progress'.
- **Related department:** Department of Information and Technology, Rajasthan.
- The 'Rajasthan AI Pavilion' featured 20 stalls showcasing various departmental and government initiatives, as well as the state government's 'iStart' registered AI startups.

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- The pavilion showcased AI-based crop health management through 'RajKisan', data-driven Targeted Direct Benefit Transfer through the Rajasthan Jan Aadhaar platform, and real-time scheme monitoring through the 'SMART' (Service Management with Artificial Intelligence and Real Time System) system.
- The pavilion also showcased the 'RajGPT'-based investment facilitation system with RajNivesh, which provides investors with guidance on incentives, land processing, and approvals.
- The pavilion also showcased three key Rajasthan policies related to Artificial Intelligence (AI). Such as Rajasthan AI/ML Policy 2026, Rajasthan Data Center Policy – 2025, and Rajasthan AVGC-XR Policy – 2024.

Facts for Prelims:

- **Rajasthan Regional AI Impact Conference – 2026:** Jointly organized by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and the Department of Information Technology and Communications, Rajasthan, in Jaipur on January 6, 2026.

Rajasthan AI-ML Policy – 2026

- **Launched:** By Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma during the 'Rajasthan Regional AI Impact Conference – 2026' in Jaipur on January 6, 2026.
- **Full name:** Rajasthan Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning (AI-ML) Policy – 2026
- **Announced:** In the Rajasthan Budget 2025-26.
- **Approved:** By the Rajasthan Cabinet on December 30, 2025.

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- **Objective:** To make public service delivery more prompt, transparent and citizen-centric, enhance administrative efficiency and promote innovation-led economic growth through responsible, ethical and secure use of Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning.
- **Note:** The policy provides for the establishment of an 'Artificial Intelligence Centre of Excellence'.



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Key Announcements During the Budget Estimates 2026-27

Why in News?

- Recently, Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Diya Kumari, made important announcements regarding the Budget 2026-27, during the general discussion in the House on the Budget Estimates 2026-27.

Key Points:

- New Ayushman Arogya Mandirs:** Khara Rathod (Ramsar), Barmer, and Madarampura (Sanganer), Jaipur.
- STRI (Safety Training Resource Initiative) Scheme:** The STRI (Safety Training Resource Initiative) Scheme will be launched to provide self-defense training, psychological counseling, information on various laws related to women, and protection against cyber fraud to girls and women. Under this scheme, approximately one lakh women will be trained through subject matter experts.
- Mini Secretariat:** Lunkaransar (Bikaner).
- New courses at IIIT, Kota:** New courses in Artificial Intelligence (AI), Data Analysis and other emerging areas will be started at the Indian Institute of Information Technology (IIIT), Kota, and a DPR will be prepared with the support of the Central Government to develop it as an IT hub.
- Industrial Development:** RIICO will develop a large industrial area near the new greenfield airport under construction in Kota-Bundi, in which industries like logistics, textiles, etc. will be established.
- Robotic Hand for Prostatic Surgery for Urology:** At Medical College, Kota.



NEWS IN SHORTS



S. No.	News
1.	<p>All India Institutional Leadership Conclave - 2026</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Venue: February 16-17, 2026, at the Rajasthan International Centre (RIC), Jaipur.■ Organized by: Vidya Bharati, Rajasthan University, and the Commissionerate of College Education.■ Main theme: “A dialogue on inter-institutional development.”■ Objective: To empower the leadership of educational institutions and promote Indian knowledge traditions and innovation in modern education.
2.	<p>CA Vijay Kumar Choudhary: CA CXO for Large Corporate Services Award</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Recently, CA Vijay Kumar Choudhary, Executive Director of NBCC (India) Limited, was honored with the prestigious “CA CXO for Large Corporate Services” award.■ The award was presented by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) during the 19th ICAI Awards ceremony, held on the occasion of the 'World of Finance and Accounting' (WOFA) - 2026.

3.

Dr. Munish Bhateja

- Recently, Dr. Munish Bhateja from Rajasthan completed a triathlon of 1.9 km swimming, 90 km cycling, and 21.1 km running at the 'Ironman 70.3 Middle East Championship' held in Muscat, Oman.

4.

Thar Cultural Circuit

- The Rajasthan government announced an ambitious tourism project, the 'Thar Cultural Circuit,' in Budget 2026-27.
- **Districts covered:** Jaisalmer, Jodhpur, Bikaner, Barmer, and Jalore.
- Its main objective is to promote and integrate the rich desert culture, folk arts, and traditions of western Rajasthan.





Emergency Landing Facility

Why in News?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the 4.2-kilometer-long Emergency Landing Facility on the Moran bypass in Assam, the first such facility in Northeast

Key Points:

- The Emergency Landing Facility is a reinforced highway section designed to serve as an alternate runway for the Indian Air Force.
- The concept of ELF (Electro-Lift Landing System) emerged during the Cold War, when countries developed highway runways to reduce the vulnerability of permanent airports. Countries like Finland, Sweden, and Switzerland still use such dual-use infrastructure.
- Located approximately 300 kilometers from the Line of Actual Control, the Moran ELF provides vital support during conflict situations and strengthens disaster response in remote areas.
 - o It can handle fighter aircraft weighing up to 40 tons and transport aircraft weighing up to 74 tons.
- Approximately 15 such facilities are now operational, and this strategic network stretches from the deserts of Rajasthan to the expressways of Uttar Pradesh and now to the strategic borders of the Northeast.



Ol Chiki Script

Why in News?

- President Draupadi Murmu inaugurated the centenary celebrations of the Ol Chiki script in New Delhi and emphasized its importance in preserving Santhali heritage.

Key Points:

- Ol Chiki was developed in 1925, by Pandit Raghunath Murmu to provide a dedicated writing system for the Santhali language.
- It consists of 30 characters designed to accurately capture Santhali sounds, enabling systematic documentation of its vocabulary and grammar.
- Santhali, a member of the Austroasiatic language family, is spoken in Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal, Assam, and Bihar.
 - o It was included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution in 2003.



Economic Developments



Demands for Reform of the Global Trading System

Why in News?

- Recently, the head of the World Trade Organization agreed with US demands for reform of the global trading system, stating that the system is flexible but not robust.

Key Points:

The Global Trading System and the Role of the WTO

- The World Trade Organization (WTO) is the sole global body that regulates international trade rules.
- Its objective:** To ensure smooth, predictable, and free trade through agreements negotiated and approved by member countries.
- It manages global trade rules, serves as a forum for negotiating agreements, resolving trade disputes, and providing assistance to developing countries.
- Its decisions are made by member governments through ministers or representatives in Geneva.

Emerging Issues

- Rising Protectionism:** The increasing use of tariffs and trade barriers is undermining the norms of free trade.
- Geopolitical Rivalry:** Strategic competition among major powers is disrupting supply chains and markets.
- Agricultural disputes:** Subsidies provided by developed countries distort trade, impacting developing countries.

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- **Dispute settlement crisis:** The WTO's Appellate Body has been inactive since 2019, weakening enforcement of rules.
- **Digital and climate issues:** The lack of global consensus on e-commerce, data flows, and carbon taxes is creating new trade tensions.

Recommendations

- Restore dispute settlement and update rules for digital trade, services, and sustainability.
- Strengthen the voice of developing countries, especially on agricultural and climate trade issues.
- Diversify sources to reduce over-dependence and improve sustainability.
- Align trade policies with climate goals and promote green technologies.

UTKARSH

CIVIL
SERVICES

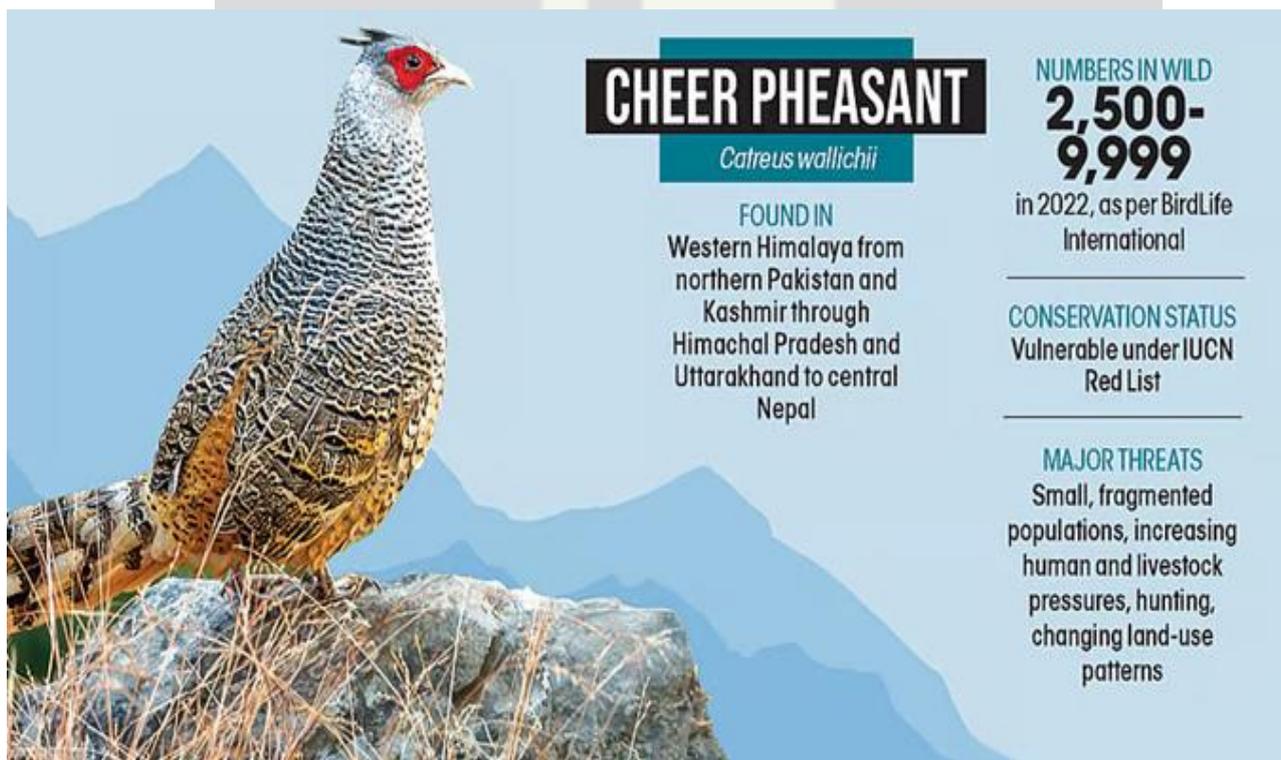
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ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY

Cheer Pheasant

Why in News?

- **Hunting and habitat degradation remain the primary causes of the Cheer Pheasant's decline.**



Key Points:

- **Habitat:** They are found primarily in the mid-mountain grasslands of the western Himalayas. These birds can be seen in Pakistan, India, and Nepal.
- **Conservation Status:**
 - o **IUCN:** Vulnerable
 - o **CITES:** Listed in Appendix I
 - o **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Listed in Schedule

Circular Economy in Agriculture: Waste to Wealth

Why in News?

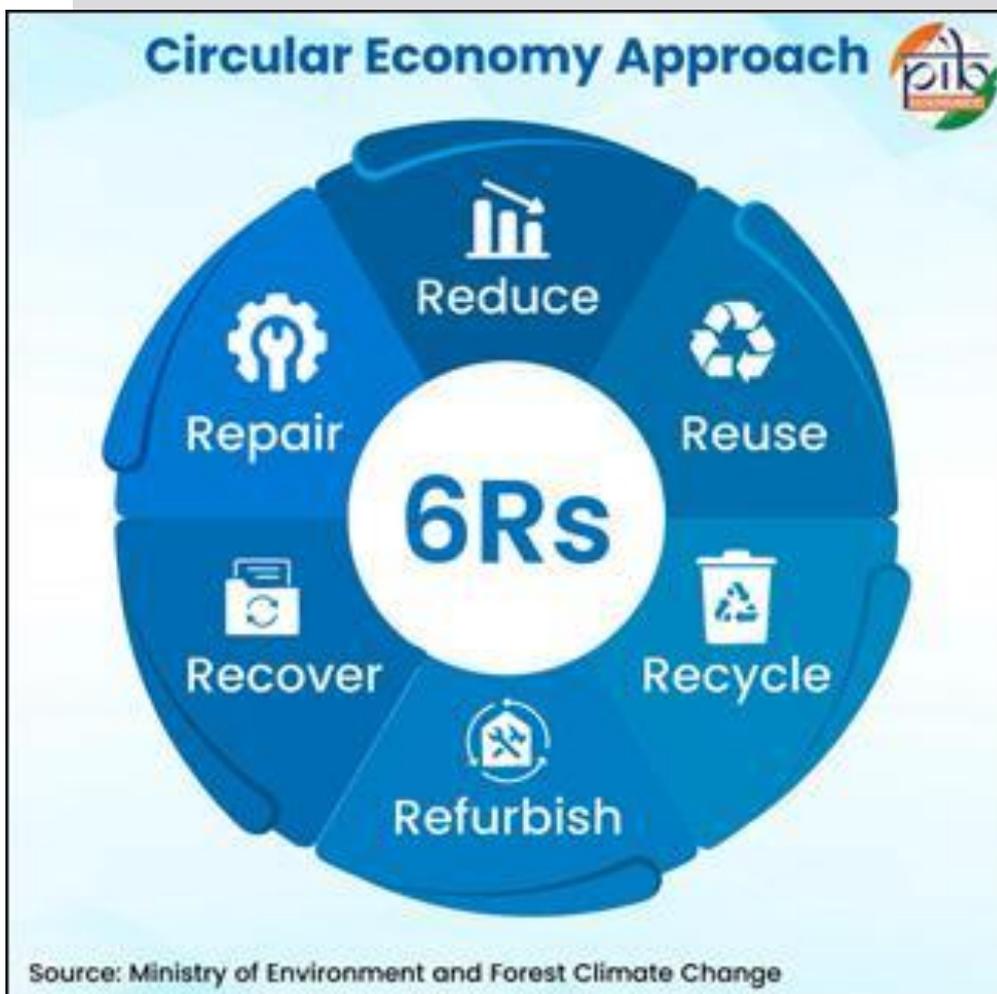
- Agricultural waste production in India is increasing every year, posing a serious environmental and economic challenge.
- India generates 350 million tons of agricultural waste annually, including crop residues, husks, straw, and by-products from food processing.
- If these wastes are not managed properly, they can cause air, soil, and water pollution. However, the process of converting these agricultural wastes into energy, organic fertilizers, and climate-friendly products is being facilitated under the circular economy.



Key Points:

Approaches to the Circular Economy:

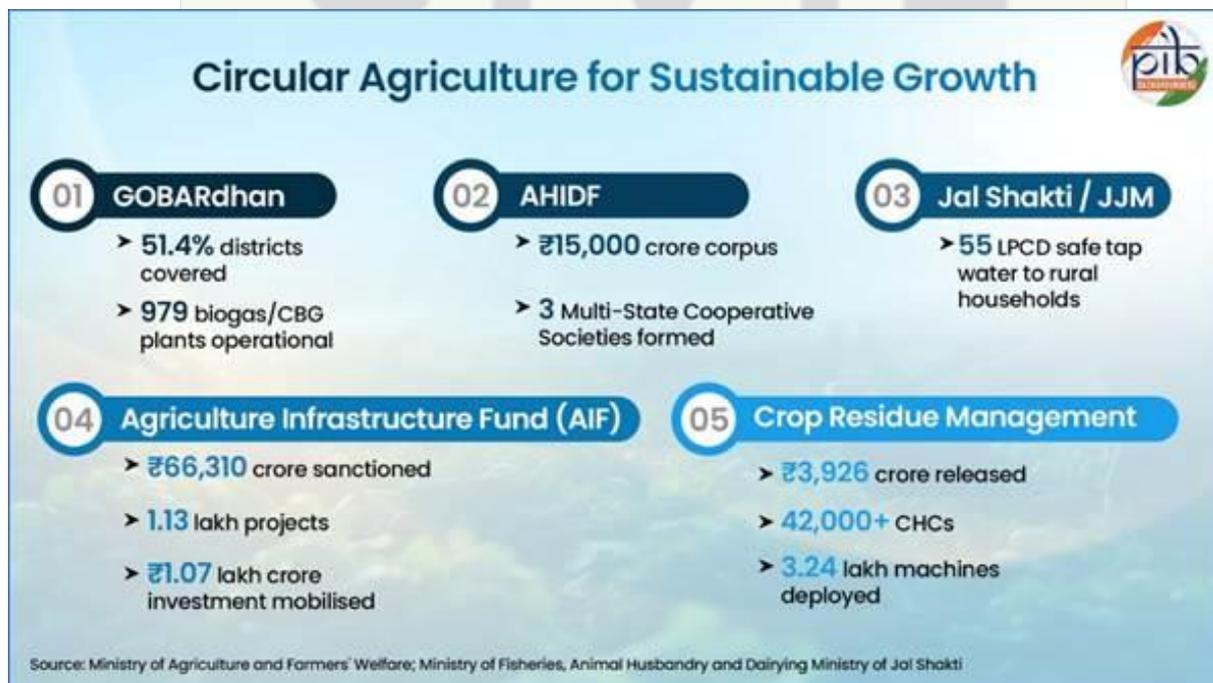
- **Waste-to-Wealth Approach:** The circular economy adopts a "waste-to-wealth" approach, redefining agricultural waste as a resource.
- **Structural Change:** This economy brings about a structural change in traditional methods of production and consumption, minimizing the use of raw materials, water, and energy.
- **Principles of the Circular Economy:** The principles of the circular economy emphasize recovery, reuse, recycling, renovation, and repair. This approach optimally implements resource efficiency and waste management, thereby minimizing environmental damage.



Government Steps Towards Circular Agriculture:

The Government of India has implemented several important policies and schemes to convert waste into resources in agriculture and related sectors:

- Gobardhan Yojana:** Under this scheme, cow dung, crop residues, and food waste are converted into organic fertilizer and biogas. As of January 14, 2026, 979 biogas plants are operational in 51.4% of India's districts.
- Crop Residue Management (CRM):** This initiative aims to reduce open burning of crop residues and utilize these residues for composting, biogas production, and bioenergy.
- Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF):** This fund provides loans to strengthen organic farming and agricultural waste management, thereby promoting circularity in agriculture.
- Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund (AHIDF):** This fund provides incentives for meat, milk processing, animal feed production and 'waste to wealth' management, thereby enhancing value addition and efficiency in the animal husbandry sector.



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Benefits of Circular Agriculture:

- **Sustainable Development:** Circular agriculture helps mitigate the effects of climate change and make optimal use of resources.
- **Social and Economic Inclusion:** It contributes to rural development and job creation, especially through the use of crop residues and biomass.
- **Environmental Protection:** The production of organic manure and biogas increases soil fertility and reduces dependence on chemical fertilizers, thereby reducing environmental pressure.

Conclusion:

- Circular agriculture is making India environmentally sustainable and economically empowering, supporting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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