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Govt. seeks feedback on draft Bill to regulate pesticides, promote 'safe and effective' use

The Hindu : 09/01/2026 - Page 14

Trump clears Bill to slap up to 500% tari on buying Russian oil

The Hindu : 09/01/2026 - Page 1



SEBI revamps stockbroker rules to ease compliance

The Hindu : 09/01/2026 - Page 17

Textiles ministry signs MoUs with 15 States under Tex-RAMPS scheme

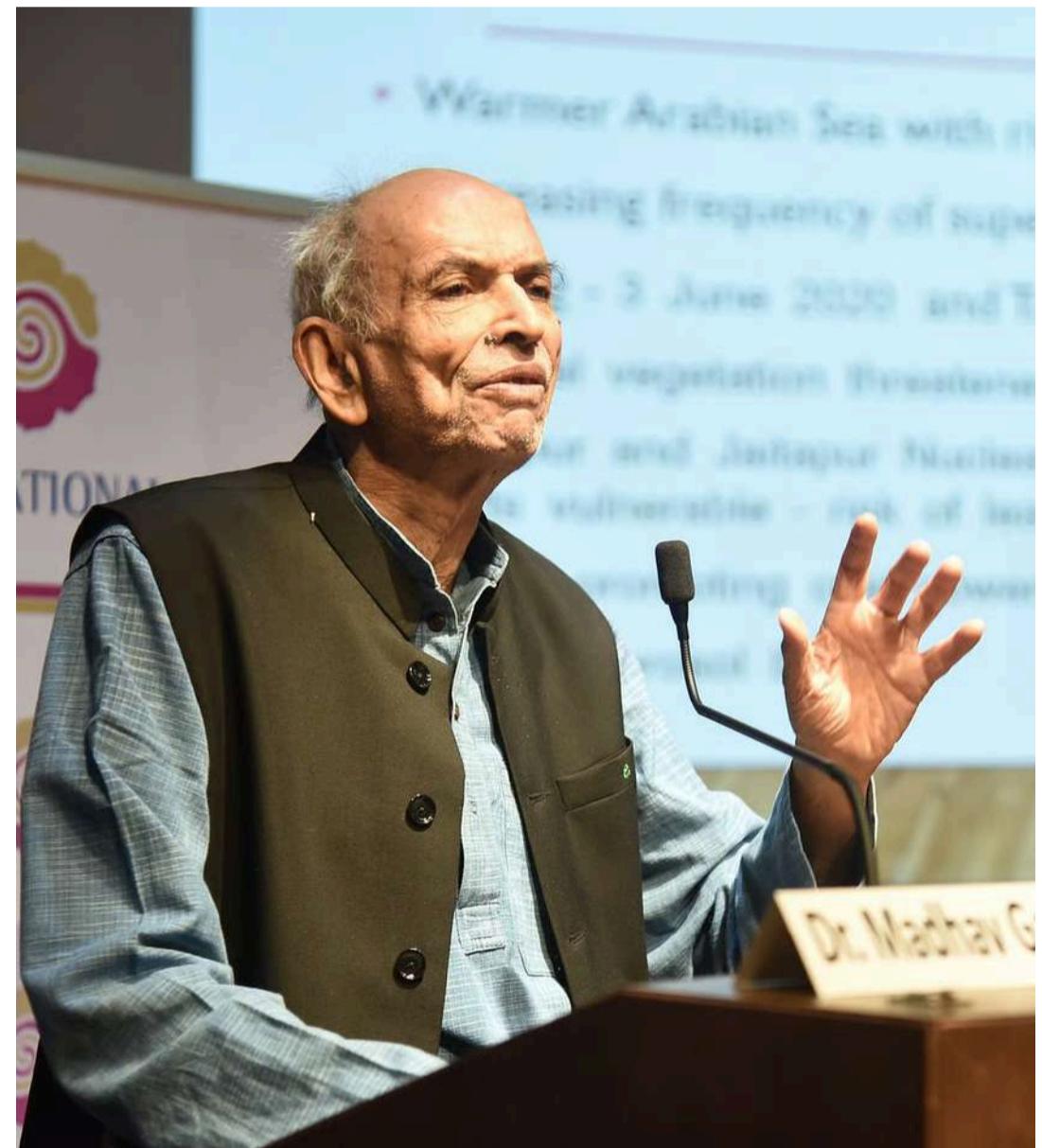
The Hindu : 09/01/2026 - Page 17



## Madhav Gadgil (1934–2026): A life devoted to nature

India's foremost ecologist, Madhav Gadgil, passed away on January 7. He leaves behind a legacy of rigorous scientific scholarship and community-oriented conservation. A pioneering figure in India's environmental movement, he made foundational contributions to biodiversity conservation.

**Protector of the Ghats :** Gadgil's most widely discussed contribution remains his role as Chair of the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel, popularly known as the Gadgil Commission. Under his leadership, the Commission submitted its report in 2011, identifying large sections of the Western Ghats as ecologically sensitive zones. The panel had warned that unchecked economic exploitation of hillsides, forests, wetlands, and rivers would have devastating consequences for both the ecology and the communities that inhabit these mountains. Although the report was never implemented, subsequent years have only underlined the accuracy of its warnings.



### Major Contributions

- Laid the groundwork for the establishment of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (1986).
- Launched India's first wild elephant census.
- Co-authored influential works such as *This Fissured Land and Ecology and Equity: The Use and Abuse of Nature in Contemporary India* with Ramachandra Guha.
- Developed guidelines for People's Biodiversity Registers and helped create the Western Ghats Biodiversity Network.
- His work consistently highlighted the ecological costs of unplanned development and resource overexploitation.

### Honours

- Padma Shri (1981) and Padma Bhushan (2006).
- Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize (1986) from CSIR.
- Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement (2015).
- Volvo Environment Prize (2017).
- UN Champions of the Earth Award (2024).

*From the sacred groves of Maharashtra to the deciduous forests of Kerala, Gadgil's work left a lasting legacy of sustainability.*

## Govt. seeks feedback on pesticides bill



The Union Agriculture Ministry has invited public comments on the draft Pesticides Management Bill, which seeks to repeal the Insecticides Act, 1968. The proposed legislation aims to comprehensively regulate the manufacture, import, packaging, labelling, storage, advertisement, sale, transport, distribution, use and disposal of pesticides to ensure the availability of safe and effective products.

A key focus of the Bill is the promotion of biological and safer pesticides that minimise risks to human beings, animals and non-target organisms. It also expands and clarifies the definition of "pesticide" to include substances of chemical or biological origin intended to prevent, destroy, repel or control pests in agriculture, industry and public health, as well as plant growth regulators, defoliants, desiccants, fruit-thinning agents and sprouting inhibitors.

The Bill further provides for the constitution of a Central Pesticides Board to advise the Central and State governments on technical and scientific matters related to pesticide regulation.

## SC says presence of stray dogs in public institutions poses a 'danger'

The Supreme Court has flagged the growing presence of stray dogs in public institutions such as courts and schools, observing that it poses a "danger" in light of the recent rise in dog-bite incidents and related accidents.

The court is currently hearing suo motu proceedings to evolve a national framework for stray dog management, highlighting the need to balance public safety, animal welfare, and urban governance capacities.

During the case proceedings, the court noted that the situation reflects a serious failure of municipal authorities to implement the Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules, 2023, notified under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960.

While acknowledging public safety concerns, Animal welfare organisation underlined that isolated incidents cannot justify indiscriminate removal of stray animals. It reiterated that the legally mandated approach remains sterilisation, vaccination and scientific population control rather than culling or displacement.

The case underlines a broader governance challenge — the gap between regulatory frameworks and last-mile implementation by urban local bodies — and raises important questions about public health, municipal accountability and humane urban planning.



## U.S. pulls out of 66 global bodies

The Trump administration has announced the United States' withdrawal from 66 international bodies, including the India-France-led International Solar Alliance, marking a broader shift in U.S. foreign policy. The administration has cited concerns over national interest and institutional effectiveness as the reason for the move.



Earlier, the U.S. had exited organisations such as the World Health Organization and UNESCO. Analysts warn that the latest round of withdrawals could create leadership and funding gaps in global governance, particularly in areas such as climate action and multilateral cooperation. The International Solar Alliance and similar platforms are seen as crucial for coordinating global responses to climate and energy transition challenges. The development comes at a time when many of these institutions are seeking greater coordination among major economies to address global challenges such as climate change and energy transition.

## Trump greenlights 500% tariff bill



The U.S. President Donald Trump has 'greenlit' the proposed Russia Sanctions Bill of 2025, which would empower the U.S. administration to impose tariffs of up to 500% on countries that continue to purchase Russian oil. The legislation, introduced in the U.S. Senate with bipartisan support, is aimed at pressuring major buyers such as India, China and Brazil to curtail energy trade with Russia.

According to Senator Lindsey Graham, the Bill would also give the U.S. President discretion to determine the tariff level over and above the 25% penalty tariffs already imposed on Indian goods. The move comes ahead of the arrival of U.S. Ambassador-designate Sergio Gor in New Delhi, who has indicated that ending India's import of Russian oil would be a top diplomatic priority.

Recent trends suggest a moderation in India's Russian oil purchases. Reliance Industries has halted such imports for the time being, while Nayara Energy remains constrained due to Western sanctions.

## Rare Earth Permanent Magnet Manufacturing Ecosystem

The Union Government has approved a ₹7,280 crore scheme for the manufacturing of Sintered Rare Earth Permanent Magnets (REPM), with the objective of establishing 6,000 metric tonnes per annum (MTPA) of integrated domestic capacity.

The scheme will cover the entire value chain, from the extraction of rare-earth oxides to the production of finished magnets. It aims to enhance self-reliance in critical inputs for sectors such as electric mobility, renewable energy, electronics, aerospace and defence.



Backed by India's rare-earth mineral resources, the initiative has the potential to position the country as a key player in the global REPM market. It also supports the objectives of Atmanirbhar Bharat, strengthens supply chain resilience in strategic sectors, and contributes to India's long-term Net Zero 2070 vision.

In the backdrop of growing US-China trade restrictions on critical minerals, the REPM scheme will reduce India's dependence on external suppliers and insulate strategic sectors from supply chain disruptions.

## Stock brokers can now offer services overseen by RBI and IRDAI



The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has permitted stock brokers to undertake activities that fall under the regulatory ambit of authorities such as the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), in a move aimed at widening the scope of financial services offered by market intermediaries.

The decision is expected to allow stock brokers to expand their business models and provide a wider range of financial services to clients through a single platform, while remaining under the supervision of the respective sectoral regulators.

Under the new framework, activities falling under each sector will remain under the jurisdiction of the concerned regulators.

To strengthen oversight, SEBI has mandated that every stock broker appoint a designated compliance officer to ensure adherence to applicable laws, regulations, and stock exchange rules, as well as to ensure timely redressal of investor grievances.

At the same time, SEBI has reiterated that stock brokers must refrain from engaging in or promoting activities not permitted under existing regulations.

## India to continue to work with ISA, back solar adoption

India will continue to engage with the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and remain committed to advancing global solar adoption and energy transition goals, government sources said on Thursday, even as the United States announced its decision to withdraw from the grouping. The U.S. move follows an executive order signed on January 7, under which Washington decided to exit 66 international organisations it described as “wasteful, ineffective or harmful,” a list that includes the India–France-led solar alliance.



International Solar Alliance (ISA) is a collaborative initiative of India and France to promote solar energy solutions in the fight against climate change. It was conceived at COP21 (Paris, 2015). The National Institute of Solar Energy (NISE) in Gurugram, India operates as ISA headquarters. ISA is moving forward with the guiding principle of “Towards 1000” strategy that aims to mobilise USD 1,000 billion in investments in solar energy by 2030.

### Goals :

- Enable installation of 1,000 GW of solar energy capacity
- Provide energy access to 1,000 million (1 billion) people

## Textiles ministry signs MoUs with 15 States under Tex-RAMPS scheme



The Ministry of Textiles has signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with 15 States under the “Textiles-focused Research, Assessment, Monitoring, Planning and Start-Up” (Tex-RAMPS) scheme, aimed at strengthening data-driven governance and planning in the textiles sector.

The Tex-RAMPS scheme is designed to improve the coverage, quality, timeliness and credibility of textile-related statistical products and research. The initiative seeks to promote integrated planning across key segments such as handlooms, handicrafts, apparel and technical textiles, with a specific focus on interventions at the cluster and district levels.

Under the scheme, the Ministry of Textiles will provide an annual grant of ₹12 lakh to each participating State or Union Territory. In addition, a grant of ₹1 lakh per year will be provided for each district, linked to the preparation and implementation of district-specific action plans.

The MoUs were signed on the first day of the two-day National Textiles Ministers’ Conference in Guwahati, held on the theme “India’s Textiles: Weaving Growth, Heritage and Innovation.”

## PRELIMS CORNER :

1) With reference to India, the terms 'Halbi, Ho and Kui' pertain to :

a) Dance forms of Northwest India

b) Musical instruments

c) Pre-historic cave paintings

d) Tribal languages

2) Which of the following is/are the principal feature(s) of the Government of India Act, 1919? (2012)

1. Introduction of diarchy in the executive government of the provinces

2. Introduction of separate communal electorates for Muslims

3. Devolution of legislative authority by the center to the provinces.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

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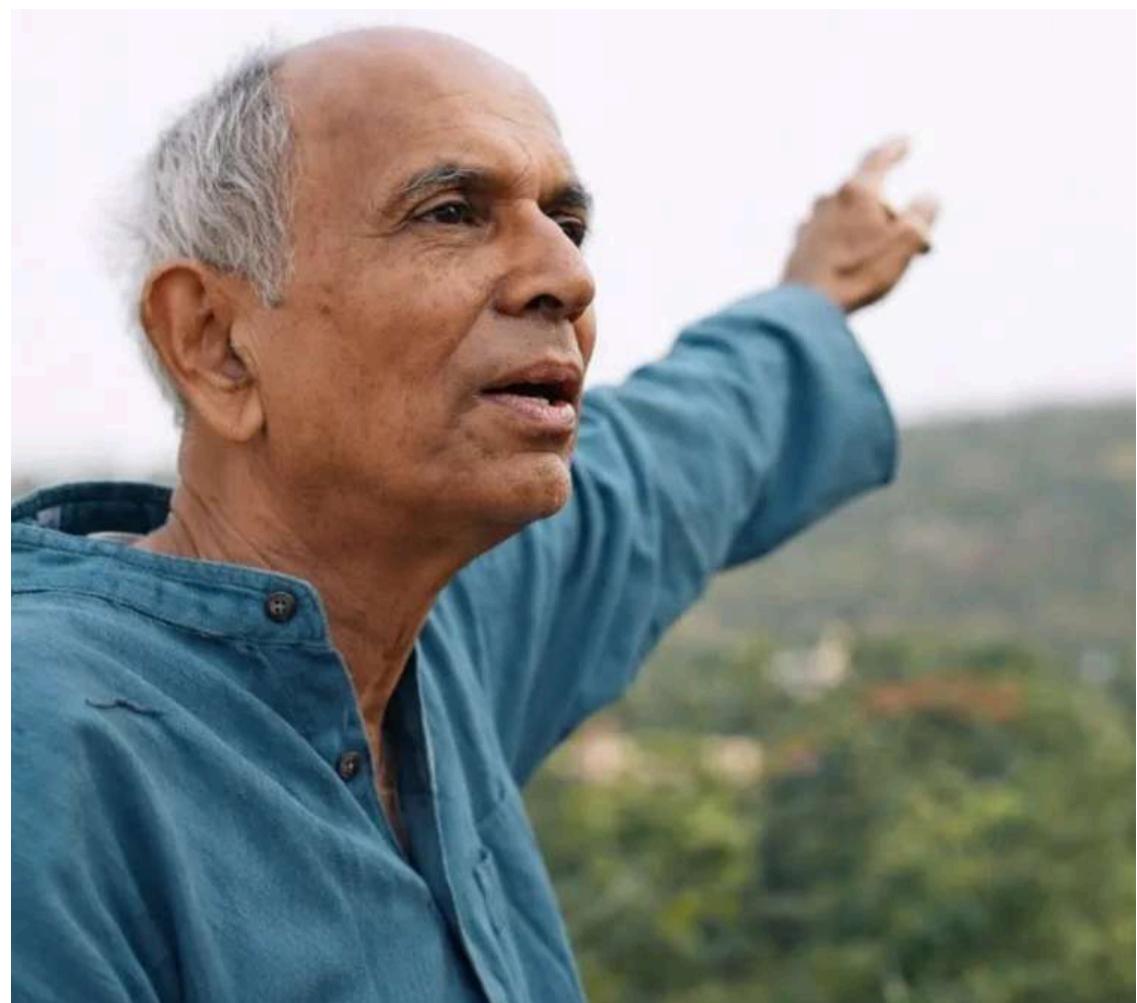
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## Knowledge and Action



In his autobiography *A Walk up the Hill: Living with People and Nature*, Madhav Gadgil, India's renowned ecologist, wrote: "The purpose of scholarship is not merely to understand, but to deploy that understanding towards action." This idea captures the essence of his life's work.

As a scientist, Gadgil consistently sought to build knowledge that could help society understand the needs and challenges of communities living in close association with nature. Throughout his career, his work highlighted how unplanned models of development lead to overexploitation of natural resources and increasing ecological stress.

He repeatedly stressed the link between habitat fragmentation, environmental degradation, and the growing frequency of natural disasters, reminding us that ecological neglect ultimately translates into human suffering.

Gadgil's life offers a powerful lesson: education and expertise are not meant merely for personal advancement, but for serving society. For aspirants preparing for public life, his example shows how knowledge, when guided by purpose, can become a tool for meaningful and lasting change.

# Prelims Corner: Explanations

## 1) Answer is option D

According to the 2011 census the Odisha tribal population is 95,90,765.

Odisha's tribal language is divided into 3 main language families. They are Austro-Asiatic (Munda), Dravida and Indo Aryan.

Every tribe has its own language and language family. Each clan has a different dialect although speaking the same language. 21 languages and 74 dialects are in use.

The languages are

**Austro-Asiatic:-** Bhumij, Birhor, Rem (Bonda), Gatah (Didyai), Gutab (Gadaba), Sora(Saora), Gorum (Parenga), Khadia, Juang, Santali, Ho, Mundari, etc

**Dravid:-** Gondi, Kui-Kondh, Kuvikondh, Kisan, Koya, Olari, (Gadaba) Parja, Peng, Kudukh (Oraon) etc.

**Indo Aryan:-** Bathudi, Bhuyan, Kurmali, Sounti, Sadri, Kandhan, Aghria, Desia, Jharia, Halbi, Bhatri, Matia, Bhunjia, etc.



## 2) Answer is option C

The Government of India Act, 1919 introduced diarchy in the provinces. Under this system, the provincial subjects were divided into two categories: reserved and transferred.

The reserved subjects (e.g., law and order) were controlled by the Governor and his Executive Council.

The transferred subjects (e.g., education, public health) were handled by ministers who were responsible to legislature. Statement 1 is correct.

**Communal Electorates for Muslims:** Separate communal electorates for Muslims were introduced earlier by the Indian Councils Act of 1909 (Morley-Minto Reforms), not by the Government of India Act, 1919.

Statement 2 is incorrect.

**Devolution of Legislative Authority:** The 1919 Act marked the beginning of devolution of legislative authority from the central government to the provinces. Provincial councils were given more power to legislate on subjects transferred to them, marking a step toward provincial autonomy. • So, Statement 3 is correct. Correct Answer: (c) 1 and 3 only.

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