

7. Short News

1. North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971

Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura marked their Statehood Day on 21 January 2026, commemorating their creation under the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971.

About North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971 – The Act was enacted to reorganise India's northeastern region to address administrative efficiency, ethnic aspirations, and regional development. Creation of States and Union Territories (Sections 3–8)

- a) Manipur and Tripura were elevated from Union Territories to full-fledged states.
- b) Meghalaya was carved out of Assam and granted statehood.
- c) Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh were created as Union Territories (both became states in 1987).

Judicial Reorganisation (Section 28)– Established a common Gauhati High Court for Assam, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur and Tripura. Separate High Courts for Meghalaya, Manipur and Tripura were later enabled by the 2012 Amendment Act (effective 2013).

Autonomous Districts (Section 71)– Amended the Sixth Schedule to restructure Autonomous District Councils in Meghalaya.

Institutional Support– Alongside the Act, the North-Eastern Council Act, 1971 was passed to promote coordinated regional development, connectivity and security.

The Act laid the constitutional foundation for political stability, identity recognition, and balanced development in India's Northeast.

2. Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary Declared Eco-Sensitive Zone

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has issued a notification declaring the Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary as an Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ).

About Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary

Location– Located primarily in Rajsamand District, and also spanning parts of Udaipur and Pali districts in Rajasthan, India. Surrounds the historic Kumbhalgarh Fort (a UNESCO World Heritage Site).

Geography– The sanctuary lies within the Aravalli Range and encompasses four Aravalli sub-ranges– Kumbhalgarh, Sadri, Desuri, and Bokhada. Important for watershed functions for the Banas and Luni river systems.

Ecosystem– Part of the Khathiar-Gir dry deciduous forests ecoregion.

Wildlife–

1. Mammals– Leopard, Indian wolf, sloth bear, striped hyena, golden jackal, jungle cat, sambar, nilgai, chinkara, Indian pangolin, and Indian hare.
2. Bird life includes species such as Painted francolin, grey junglefowl, white-breasted kingfisher, and many other resident and seasonal birds.

History– Declared a wildlife sanctuary in 1971.

Conservation Status– Recently, the area around the sanctuary (up to 1 km from its boundary) has been declared an Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ).

About Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZ)

Definition– Ecologically Sensitive Zones are buffer or transition zones notified around Protected Areas. Protected Areas include National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries, Tiger Reserves, and Biosphere Reserves.

Purpose– They act as “shock absorbers” to minimize negative human impacts on fragile ecosystems and core conservation areas, while allowing regulated sustainable development.

Legal Basis– Notified by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. The concept draws from the National Wildlife Action Plan (2002–2016), which recommended declaring areas within 10 km of protected area boundaries as ESZs.

Width of ESZ– The actual width of an ESZ is site-specific, based on ecological sensitivity and consultation with State Governments. It can be less than or greater than 10 km, but must not be less than 1 km around core protected boundaries.

Activities in ESZs – Classified into three categories as per 2011 MoEFCC guidelines and notifications–

1. Prohibited– Commercial mining, stone quarrying, saw mills, polluting industries (air/water/soil/noise), major hydroelectric projects, commercial firewood collection/use.
2. Regulated– Activities needing prior approval (e.g., tourism/resorts, construction of buildings/roads, tree felling, certain agricultural practices, etc.).
3. Permitted– Ongoing traditional/rural activities, eco-friendly practices, small-scale development compatible with conservation.

3. Two New Rare Ant Fly Species Discovered in India

Researchers from Kerala and Tamil Nadu have identified two previously unknown species of ant flies — *Metadon ghorpadei* and *Metadon reemeri*.

Key Characteristics of Ant Flies (Microdontinae)

Taxonomy– These belong to the subfamily Microdontinae within the family Syrphidae (hoverflies). These flies are extremely rare due to their specialized lifestyle called myrmecophily. Their larvae live inside ant nests and feed on ant broods (eggs, larvae, and pupae). Adult flies rarely visit flowers and stay near ant colonies, making them hard to spot.

Ecological Role– The discoveries emphasize the biodiversity value of both urban green spaces and protected hotspots.

Metadon ghorpadei

Location– Northern Ridge Forest, Delhi. It is a disturbed urban forest patch amid roads, traffic, and residential areas.

Habitat– Found in a moderately dense vegetation area within thorny scrub forest.

Name– Named *Metadon ghorpadei* in honour of eminent Indian dipterist Dr. K.G. Ghorpade.

Significance– Highlights the hidden ecological value of urban forests, which are often overlooked in city conservation focused only on green cover.

Threats– Urban fragmentation and human pressure have reduced the Delhi Ridge (an Aravalli extension) to about 1% of its original extent.

Metadon reemeri

Location– **Siruvani hills, Western Ghats, Tamil Nadu.** It is a globally recognized biodiversity hotspot with high endemism.

Habitat– Protected area, but lesser-studied insect groups like Microdontinae remain poorly documented.

Name– Named *Metadon reemeri* in honour of Dr. M. Reemer, an internationally known expert on Microdontinae and hoverfly taxonomy.

Significance– Demonstrates that even in conserved regions, rare species can still be discovered.

4. Wiley Research Heroes Prize

Indian public health expert Dr. Chandrakant Lahariya, a former staff member of the World Health Organisation (WHO), has won the Wiley Research Heroes Prize 2025.

About the Wiley Research Heroes Prize

Nature of Award- Global recognition for researchers ensuring that research is inclusive, innovative and impactful.

Total Awardees- Five researchers selected globally in different categories

Prize Categories

1. Open Science Advocate Prize- The prize celebrates those who champion transparency, reproducibility, and open access in research.
2. Equity and Inclusion in Research Award- The prize honors efforts to make research more inclusive, diverse, and equitable.
3. Courage in Research Award- The prize is for individuals who have taken principled stands or overcome adversity to conduct research.
4. Research Culture Award- The prize recognizes those who foster a positive and supportive research environment and encourage cross-disciplinary collaboration.
5. Impact Beyond Academia Prize- The prize recognizes researchers whose work has made a tangible difference in policy, industry, or society.

About Dr. Chandrakant Lahariya - Former staff member of World Health Organisation (WHO) Dr. Lahariya is the first and only Indian so far to win this prize He won in the category of "Impact Beyond Academia" prize. He was Selected for outstanding research contributions with clear policy impact.

Key Research Contributions

1. Vaccination Policy- Research on immunisation strategies and public health delivery
2. Maternal & Child Health- Studies on conditional cash transfer schemes for improving health outcomes
3. Primary Healthcare- Evidence-based work on strengthening primary health systems

5. Indira Gandhi Peace Prize

Mozambican rights activist and humanitarian Graca Machel have been selected for the Indira Gandhi Peace Prize, 2025, as announced by the Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust.

About the Indira Gandhi Peace Prize

Also Known as- Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development.

Instituted- It was instituted by the Government of India in 1985 to commemorate the outstanding national and global contributions of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

Selection Body- Chosen by an international jury chaired by former National Security Advisor Shivshankar Menon.

Award Components

1. **Monetary Award-** The prize carries a cash award of ₹10 million (₹1 crore) or its equivalent in foreign exchange.
2. **Trophy and Citation-** The award includes a specially designed trophy along with a formal citation recognising the recipient's contribution.

Symbolism of the Trophy - The trophy is crafted from banded Haematite Jasper, the same stone used at Indira Gandhi's samadhi at Shakti Sthala, New Delhi

Eligibility and Nature of the Award

1. Universal Eligibility- The prize may be awarded to any individual or organisation, irrespective of nationality, race, or religion.
2. Frequency- It is awarded annually, subject to suitable nominations and jury recommendations.

Nomination Process- Recommendations for the prize may be submitted by

1. Past recipients of the Indira Gandhi Prize
2. Former members of the jury
3. Members of either House of the Indian Parliament
4. Members of national parliaments of UN member states
5. Reputed national and international organisations promoting peace and international understanding
6. Individuals or organisations invited or permitted by the jury

Notable Past Recipients

Mikhail Gorbachev (1987)- For contributions to nuclear disarmament and ending the Cold War

UNICEF (1989)- For global child welfare and humanitarian work

Dr. M.S. Swaminathan (1999)- For his outstanding contribution, in the domain of plant genetics and ensuring food security.

ISRO (2014) – For peaceful use of space technology for development

Pratham NGO (2021)- For contributions to education and learning outcomes

Indian Medical Association & Trained Nurses' Association of India (2022)- For public health service during the COVID-19 pandemic

Michelle Bachelet (2024)- Former President of Chile and former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

About Graca Machel

Nationality- Mozambique

Roles

1. First Lady of Mozambique (widow of President Samora Machel)
2. First Lady of South Africa (wife of Nelson Mandela)

Reputation- Widely regarded as a distinguished African stateswoman and human rights advocate

Key Contributions

1. UN Study on Children & Armed Conflict (1990s)- Led a landmark United Nations study on the impact of armed conflict on children
2. Founded and led institutions promoting Women's empowerment, Child development, social transformation