DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 02-01-2026

Mapping Perspective

1. **Kaimur Wildlife Sanctuary**

Prelims Perspective

2. **Amazon's Stingless Bees**
3. **Nimesulide**

Mains Perspective

4. **India's status as world's rice leader augurs a water crisis**
5. **Tobacco Tax**

Kaimur Wildlife Sanctuary

Syllabus: GS-3: Protected Areas - WLS

Context:

- Bihar government has approved a **revised proposal** to notify **Kaimur Wildlife Sanctuary** as a **Tiger Reserve**.
- Proposal to be sent to the **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)** for final clearance.

About Kaimur Wildlife Sanctuary

What it is

- Largest wildlife sanctuary in Bihar
- Noted for **rich biodiversity**, **forest plateaus**, and **archaeological heritage**

Location (Mapping Focus)

- **Districts:**Kaimur&Rohtas (south-western Bihar)
- **Physiographic setting:**
  - Lies in the **Kaimur Range** (eastern extension of Vindhyas)
  - Covers parts of the **Kaimur Plateau** and **Rohtas Plateau**

Historical Background

- **Established:** 1979
- **Cultural–archaeological importance:**
  - Prehistoric **cave paintings**, megaliths, fossil sites

- Historic forts: **Rohtasgarh Fort**, **Shergarh Fort**

- **Recent relevance:** Evidence of **tiger movement** revived proposal for Tiger Reserve status

Geological & Physical Features

- **Landscape:**
  - Plateaued hills with **steep escarpments**
  - Deep **forested valleys**
- **Major Waterfalls (important for mapping):**
  - **Karkat**, **Telhar**, **Dhua Kund**, **Tutla Bhawani**, **Manjhar Kund**, **Kashish**
- **Lakes & Dams:**
  - **Anupam Lake**, **Karamchat Dam**, **Kohira Dam**
- **Forest Types:**
  - Tropical Dry Mixed Deciduous
  - Dry Sal forests
  - **Boswellia** forests
  - Dry Bamboo brakes

Ecological Significance

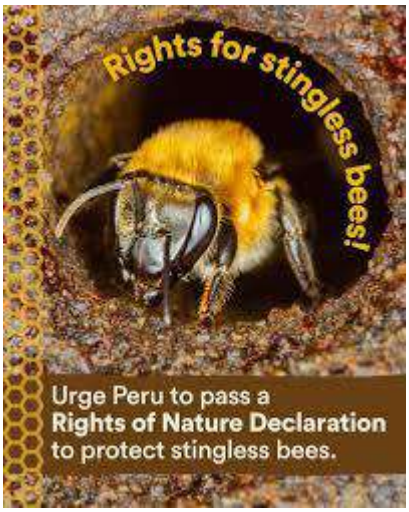
- **Biodiversity hotspot:**
  - Mammals: **Bengal tiger**, leopard, sloth bear, pangolin, sambar, chital, four-horned antelope, nilgai
  - Avifauna: **70+ resident bird species**; migratory birds from **Central Asia** in winter
- **Tiger conservation potential:**
  - Large **contiguous forest landscape**
  - Critical for **ecological corridors in eastern India**
- **Ecosystem services:**
  - Maintains **forest–river–plateau ecological balance** of south-western Bihar

Amazon's Stingless Bees

Syllabus: GS-3; Biodiversity & Conservation, GS-4; Ethics – Rights of Nature

Context

Amazonian stingless bees became the **first insects globally to receive legal rights** after Peruvian municipalities passed an ordinance recognising their **right to exist and flourish**.



About Stingless Bees

- **Definition:** Bees with absent or non-functional stingers; harmless to humans but vital pollinators.
- **Evolutionary origin:** Among the **oldest bee lineages**, existing for nearly **80 million years** (since dinosaur era).
- **Diversity:** ~500 species worldwide; nearly **50% found in the Amazon**.
- **Habitat:** Tropical forests; **Peru hosts over 170 species**.

Ecological & Cultural Significance

- **Key pollinators:** Pollinate over **80% of Amazonian flora**.
- **Agricultural value:** Support crops like **coffee, cacao, avocado and blueberries**.
- **Indigenous linkages:** Integral to **Asháninka and Kukama-Kukamiria** communities for medicine, culture and spirituality.

Legal Rights Granted – Why Historic?

- **Rights recognised:**

- Right to exist and maintain healthy populations
- Right to regenerate natural cycles
- Right to pollution-free habitat
- Right to legal representation when threatened

➢ **Significance:**

- **Global first:** First legal recognition of insect rights
- **Conservation tool:** Enables legal challenges to deforestation and pollution
- **Rights of Nature:** Shifts law from anthropocentric to **ecosystem-centric justice**

Nimesulide

Syllabus: GS-2; Governance – Health, GS-3; Science & Tech

Context

The Union Government banned **oral formulations of Nimesulide above 100 mg** under **Section 26A of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940**, citing public health risks.

About Nimesulide

- **Drug class:** Non-steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drug (NSAID)
- **Therapeutic use:** Short-term treatment of **acute pain and fever**
- **Mechanism:** Inhibits **prostaglandin synthesis**, reducing inflammation and pain

Safety Profile

- **Common side effects:** Nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, raised liver enzymes

- **Major risk: Hepatotoxicity**, especially at higher doses or prolonged use

Reason for Ban

- Oral doses **above 100 mg** linked to serious **liver injury**
- **Safer alternatives** available
- Exercised under **Section 26A**, empowering the government to prohibit harmful drugs

Significance

- Strengthens **drug safety regulation & pharmacovigilance**
- Reduces risk of **drug-induced liver damage**
- Promotes **rational drug use** and evidence-based prescribing

India's status as world's rice leader augurs a water crisis

Syllabus: GS-1: Geography – Ground Water Resource.

Context:

- India has emerged as the **world's largest rice producer and exporter**, overtaking China.
- Annual rice production exceeds **140 million tonnes**.
- India accounts for **~40% of global rice exports**, making rice a key strategic agri-commodity.
- However, this leadership is increasingly associated with **severe water stress**, especially groundwater depletion.

Why Rice Cultivation Is Water-Intensive

High Water Requirement

- Rice requires **3,000–4,000 litres of water per kg** of output.
- Indian rice cultivation uses **significantly more water** per kg than the global average due to:
    - Flood irrigation practices
    - Hot climatic conditions
    - Inefficient on-farm water management

Groundwater Dependence

- Major rice-producing states such as **Punjab** and **Haryana** rely heavily on groundwater.
- Reasons:
  - Limited surface water availability
  - Expansion of tube-well irrigation
- Groundwater levels have declined from **30–40 feet to over 100–200 feet** in many areas.
- Several blocks are classified as **"over-exploited" or "critical"**.

Policy-Induced Drivers of Water Stress

Minimum Support Price (MSP) Bias

- Repeated increases in rice MSP have:
  - Encouraged monocropping of paddy
  - Reduced incentives for crop diversification
- Rice remains economically safer than pulses or millets despite higher water costs.

Power and Input Subsidies

- Free or highly subsidised electricity:
  - Makes groundwater extraction artificially cheap
  - Encourages excessive pumping
- Fertiliser and procurement policies further lock farmers into paddy cultivation.

Key Impacts

1. Groundwater Depletion

- Extraction far exceeds recharge rates.
- Deep aquifers are non-renewable in the short term.
- Even normal or excess monsoons fail to reverse long-term depletion trends.

2. Rising Cost and Farmer Stress

- Deeper borewells → higher capital and energy costs.
- Small and marginal farmers are disproportionately affected.
- Long-term viability of rice farming is under threat.

3. Food Security vs Water Security Trade-off

- India already produces **more rice than domestic consumption needs**.
- Export-driven production intensifies water stress without proportionate food security gains.
- Raises concerns over exporting "**virtual water**".

4. Climate Vulnerability

- Over-reliance on groundwater reduces resilience to:
  - Erratic monsoons
  - Heat stress
  - Climate-induced droughts

Government Responses and Limitations

Crop Diversification Efforts

- Some states offer **financial incentives** to shift away from paddy.
- Examples include per-hectare subsidies for alternative crops.
- Limitations:
  - Incentives are temporary
  - Lack assured procurement and MSP support like rice

Technological Solutions (Under-utilised)

- Water-saving methods:
  - Direct Seeded Rice (DSR)
  - Alternate Wetting and Drying (AWD)
- Adoption remains limited due to:
  - Risk perception
  - Knowledge gaps
  - Absence of strong institutional backing

Way Forward

- **Rationalise MSP and subsidies** to reflect water scarcity.
- Promote **agro-ecological suitability-based cropping**.
- Scale up **micro-irrigation and water-efficient rice technologies**.
- Strengthen **groundwater governance**:
  - Community-based management

- Aquifer mapping and monitoring

- Align agricultural trade policy with **long-term water sustainability**.

Tobacco Tax

Syllabus: GS-3: Indian Economy – Taxation.

Context:

Govt. notifies February 1 as the end of GST compensation cess, start of new tobacco tax regime.

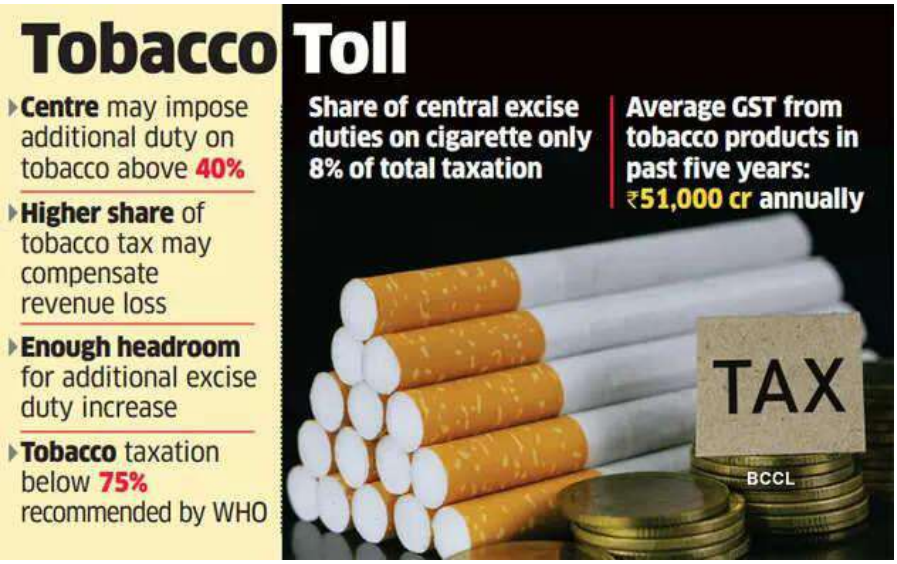
Background: GST Compensation Cess

- **Goods and Services Tax (GST)** implemented from **1 July 2017** to subsume multiple indirect taxes.
- To protect **States against revenue loss**, the Centre guaranteed **14% annual revenue growth** for 5 years.
- For this purpose, a **GST Compensation Cess** was levied on **sin and luxury goods**, especially:
  - Cigarettes
  - Tobacco products
  - Pan masala, gutkha
- Compensation period:
  - Originally till **June 2022**
  - Extended to repay **back-to-back loans** taken by Centre during COVID-19 revenue shortfalls.

Government Notification (Key Development)

- The Central Government has notified:
  - **1 February 2026** as the **end date of GST Compensation Cess** on tobacco products.
  - Simultaneous **start of a new tobacco tax regime** from the same date.
- This marks a **structural shift** from GST-based cess to **excise-based taxation**.

New Tobacco Tax Regime (From 1 Feb 2026)



GST Rates

- **Cigarettes, tobacco, gutkha, pan masala**:
  - **40% GST**
- **Bidis**:
  - **18% GST**
- GST continues, but **without compensation cess**.

Additional Excise Duty on Tobacco

- Introduced through amendments in **Central Excise laws**.
- Levied **outside GST framework**.
- Structure:
  - Specific duty based on:
    - Length of cigarettes
    - Filter / non-filter
- Approximate range:
  - ₹2,000 to ₹8,500 per 1,000 sticks.
- This excise replaces the revenue role earlier played by compensation cess.

Health & National Security Cess (Pan Masala)

- A **separate cess** imposed on pan masala.
- Objective:

- Fund **public health expenditure**
- Support **national security needs**

- Proceeds are **non-shareable** with States.

Legal and Administrative Framework

- **Central Excise (Amendment) Act, 2025**
  - Enables levy of additional excise on tobacco products.
- **Health and National Security Cess Act**
  - Provides statutory backing for special cess on pan masala.
- **Capacity-based taxation rules**:
  - Duty linked to number and capacity of packing machines.
  - Helps curb evasion in gutkha and chewing tobacco sector.

Rationale Behind the Reform

Fiscal Rationale

- GST compensation mechanism has **fulfilled its purpose**.
- Back-to-back loans taken during COVID have been serviced.
- Ending cess avoids perpetual extension of a temporary provision.
- New excise and cess ensure **revenue neutrality** for the Centre.

Public Health Rationale

- Tobacco consumption imposes:
  - High healthcare costs
  - Productivity losses
- Higher taxes:
  - Reduce affordability
  - Act as a deterrent, especially for youth and low-income groups
- Aligns with India's commitments under **WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC)**.

Policy and Federal Flexibility

- Excise duty:
  - Can be modified unilaterally by the Centre.
  - Revenues are **not shared with States**.

- Allows quicker policy response compared to GST Council process.

Expected Impact

Economic Impact

- **Increase in retail prices** of cigarettes and tobacco products.
- Potential decline in legal sales volumes.
- Adverse impact on tobacco company revenues in short term.

Health Impact

- Likely reduction in tobacco consumption.
- Long-term savings in public health expenditure.

Governance Impact

- Improved compliance through:
    - Machine-based duty calculation
    - Reduced scope for under-reporting production.

Concerns and Criticism

- Possibility of:
    - Growth of **illicit cigarette trade**
    - Smuggling due to higher price differentials.
- Employment concerns in tobacco-growing and bidi sectors.
- States may lose indirect benefits from GST-linked revenue sharing.