



*For success in a changing world*

## **DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 09-01-2026**

### **Mapping Perspective**

1. Socotra Island

### **Prelims Perspective**

2. Nagauri Ashwagandha
3. Bio-Bitumen

### **Mains Perspective**

4. The Right to Disconnect in an “Always-On” Economy
5. Open Network for Digital Commerce

## Socotra Island

**Syllabus: GS-1; Geography-Mapping**

### Context

Tourists were stranded on Socotra Island after flights were grounded due to clashes in mainland Yemen.



### About Socotra Island

- Located in the **Indian Ocean**, ~340 km southeast of Yemen.
- Area: ~3,600 sq km.
- Interior dominated by **Hajhir Mountains**.
- Broke from Arabian Peninsula ~80 million years ago.
- Nicknamed "**Galápagos of the Indian Ocean**."
- UNESCO World Heritage Site (2008).

### Biodiversity

- 37% endemic plant species
- 90% endemic reptiles
- 95% endemic land snails



## **Nagauri Ashwagandha**

**Syllabus: GS-3; Agriculture- Intellectual Property Rights**

### **Context**

The Centre has granted a **Geographical Indication (GI)** tag to *Nagauri Ashwagandha*.



### **About Nagauri Ashwagandha**

- Cultivated mainly in **Nagaur district, Rajasthan**.
- Dry climate and sandy soil are ideal for its growth.
- Features long, thick, brittle, starchy roots rich in alkaloids.
- Dark bright red berries indicate superior quality.

- Considered the **finest Ashwagandha variety in arid regions.**

### **Ashwagandha: Key Facts**

- Botanical name: *Withania somnifera*
- Also called **Indian ginseng / Indian winter cherry**
- Important medicinal plant in Ayurveda.

### **Climatic Requirements**

- Region: Dry and sub-tropical
- Soil: Sandy loam/light red soil (pH 7.5–8.0)
- Rainfall: 500–750 mm
- Temperature: 20°C–38°C
- Crop: Late kharif

### **Major Producing States**

- Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra

### **Benefits**

- Adaptogenic (stress resistance)
- Anti-inflammatory
- Improves sleep, immunity, and energy levels

## **Bio-Bitumen**

### **Syllabus: GS-3; Science & Technology, Environment, Infrastructure**

#### **Context**

The Union Minister of State for Science and Technology announced that India has entered the era of “*Clean, Green Highways*” following the successful technology transfer of “**Bio-Bitumen via Pyrolysis: From Farm Residue to Roads.**”



### About Bio-Bitumen

- Bio-bitumen is a sustainable alternative to petroleum-based bitumen.
- It is produced from **renewable organic materials** such as agricultural residue, plant-based oils, and biomass.
- These materials undergo specialised processing to create a binder comparable to conventional bitumen.
- It reduces **carbon emissions** and **import dependency** on crude oil.

### Significance

- Significantly lower greenhouse gas emissions.
- Promotes circular economy and waste-to-wealth.
- Suitable for eco-friendly road infrastructure.

### Key Processes in Bio-Bitumen Production

1. **Biomass Collection & Processing** – Collection and pre-processing of crop residue and plant-based materials.
2. **Pyrolysis & Bio-oil Extraction** – Thermal decomposition of biomass at controlled temperatures.

3. **Refining & Modification** – Polymer modification to enhance viscosity, adhesion, and thermal stability.
4. **Blending & Finalisation** – Partial blending with conventional bitumen to improve performance.

### **Bio-Bitumen via Pyrolysis Technology**

- Developed by **CSIR-CRRI, New Delhi** and **CSIR-IIP, Dehradun**.
- Uses post-harvest rice straw converted into bio-oil through pyrolysis.
- **20-30% replacement** of conventional bitumen possible without compromising performance.

## **The Right to Disconnect in an “Always-On” Economy**

**Syllabus: GS-2: Fundamental Rights – new concepts related to rights**

### **Context:**

Why The Right To Disconnect Bill 2025 has sparked buzz and when it will become a law.

### **Background & Context**

- Rapid digitisation, remote work, and instant communication tools have blurred boundaries between **work time and personal life**.
- Employees are increasingly expected to remain available beyond official working hours.
- This has given rise to an **“always-on” work culture**, affecting employee well-being and productivity.

### **Key Concerns Highlighted**



### **a) Work-Life Imbalance**

- Expansion of work into evenings, weekends, and holidays.
- Difficulty in mentally disengaging from work due to continuous digital notifications.
- Erosion of family life, leisure, and rest.

### **b) Health and Productivity Issues**

- Increased incidence of:
  - Stress and burnout
  - Anxiety and depression
  - Lifestyle diseases
- Long working hours do not necessarily translate into higher productivity.

### **c) Unequal Impact on Workers**

- White-collar, IT, gig, platform, and remote workers are most affected.
- Power asymmetry prevents employees from refusing after-hours work.
- Women workers face disproportionate burdens due to unpaid care responsibilities.

## **Legal and Institutional Gaps in India**

- Existing labour laws are designed for **factory-based and time-bound work**.
- Labour Codes do not adequately address:
  - Digital surveillance
  - Remote work expectations
  - After-hours communication
- Gig and contractual workers largely remain outside formal protections.

## **Concept of the Right to Disconnect**

- The **Right to Disconnect** refers to:
  - The right of employees **not to respond to work-related communications outside working hours**.
  - Protection against adverse consequences for exercising this right.
- Objectives:
  - Safeguard mental and physical health
  - Restore work-life boundaries
  - Promote dignity of labour

## Legislative Developments in India

- Proposal through a **Right to Disconnect Bill** (Private Member's Bill).
- Key provisions proposed:
  - Legal recognition of non-availability beyond work hours
  - Mandatory employer policies defining contact hours
  - Grievance redressal mechanisms
- Challenges:
  - Defining "emergency work"
  - Applicability across sectors
  - Enforcement in informal and gig economy

## International Practices

- Several countries have enacted legal or regulatory frameworks recognising the right to disconnect.
- Common features:
  - Employer obligation to respect non-working hours
  - Collective bargaining-based implementation
  - Emphasis on employee well-being
- Evidence suggests:
  - Improved job satisfaction
  - Better productivity
  - Reduced burnout

## Need for Cultural and Organisational Change

- Law alone is insufficient without workplace reform.
- Required measures:
  - Shift from **availability-based** to **outcome-based** evaluation
  - Sensitisation of management
  - Leadership by example
  - Integration of mental health support systems

## Way Forward

- Harmonise labour laws with digital-age realities.

- Extend protections to gig and platform workers.
- Encourage flexible work policies with clear boundaries.
- Promote social dialogue between employers, employees, and the State.

### Conclusion

- The right to disconnect is essential for **sustainable economic growth**.
- A healthy workforce is more productive than an overworked one.
- Protecting personal time is not anti-growth but **pro-human and pro-efficiency**.

## Open Network for Digital Commerce

**Syllabus: GS-3: Indian Economy -Digital Commerce**

### Context:

- Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has enabled **online ticket booking for 170+ centrally protected monuments and museums**
- Platform used: **Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC)**
- Significance:
  - Enhances **digital access to cultural heritage**
  - Improves **tourist convenience and transparency**
  - Integrates heritage management with **India's digital public infrastructure (DPI) ecosystem**

### Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC)

#### What is ONDC?

- An **open, interoperable digital network** for buying and selling goods and services
- Based on **open protocols** rather than closed, proprietary platforms
- Prevents **platform monopolies** in e-commerce

#### Launch

- **April 2022**

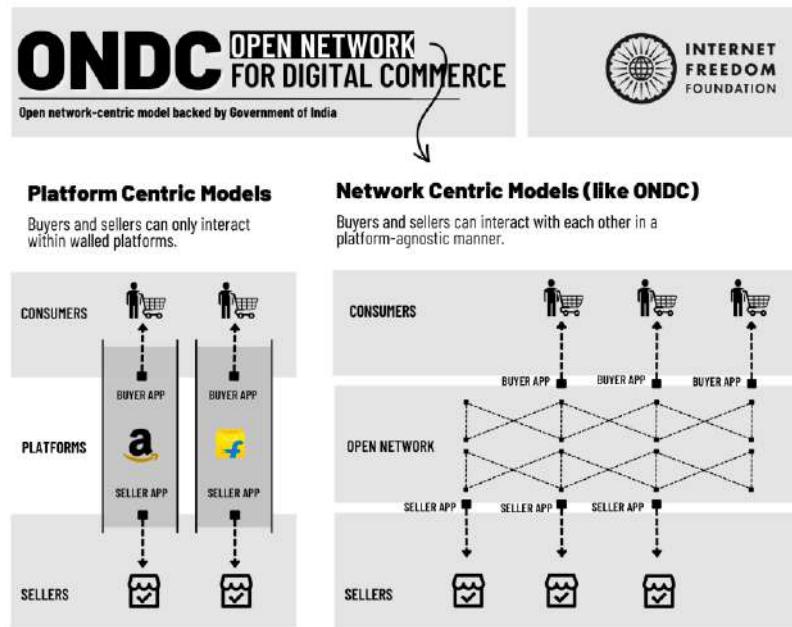
#### Nodal Ministry

- Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)
- Under the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**

## Objectives / Aims of ONDC

- **Democratise digital commerce**
  - Break platform silos (Amazon–Flipkart model)
- **Level playing field**
  - Especially for **MSMEs, small sellers, startups**
- **Promote:**
  - Inclusivity
  - Competition
  - Innovation
  - Cost efficiency
- Enable **consumer choice and price discovery**

## How ONDC Works



## Key Features

- **Decentralised network**, not a central marketplace
- **ONDC:**
  - Does not own inventory
  - Does not control sellers
  - Does not process orders directly

- Acts as a **connector** using common digital standards

## Mechanism

- Uses **open protocols & standardised APIs**
- Any **buyer app** can discover products/services from any **seller app**
- Interoperability ensured irrespective of the platform owner

## Participants in ONDC Ecosystem

- **Buyer Applications**
  - Search, discovery, price comparison, ordering
- **Seller Applications**
  - Catalogue management, pricing, inventory, order confirmation
- **Logistics Providers**
  - Pickup, delivery, tracking (pan-India reach)
- **Technology Enablers**
  - Digital infrastructure, integrations, analytics tools

## Outcome

- Seamless discovery and transactions
- Reduced entry barriers
- Enhanced competition and innovation

## Domains Covered Under ONDC (as of now)

Goods	Services	Digital / Emerging
Food & Beverage	Mobility (autos, cabs, metro, flights)	Financial Services (credit, insurance, investments)
Grocery	Skilled & Subscription-based Services	ONEST – Education & Training
Fashion & Footwear	Health & Wellness	Gift Cards
Home & Kitchen	Agriculture (inputs, outputs, services)	—
Electronics	Beauty & Personal Care	—

## Significance of ASI-ONDC Integration

### Governance & Administration

- Promotes **e-governance in cultural heritage**
- Reduces intermediaries and leakages

### Tourism & Economy

- Boosts **heritage tourism**
- Encourages **formalisation of tourism services**

### Digital India Alignment

- Complements **India Stack, DPI, and platform-neutral governance**
- Demonstrates ONDC's scalability beyond retail commerce