



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 17-01-2026

Mapping Perspective

1. **Thanthai Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary**

Prelims Perspective

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3. **Vrindavani and Karan Fries Cattle Breeds**

Mains Perspective

4. **Consumer Price Index and a new base year**
5. **UGC brings out new rules against caste discrimination**

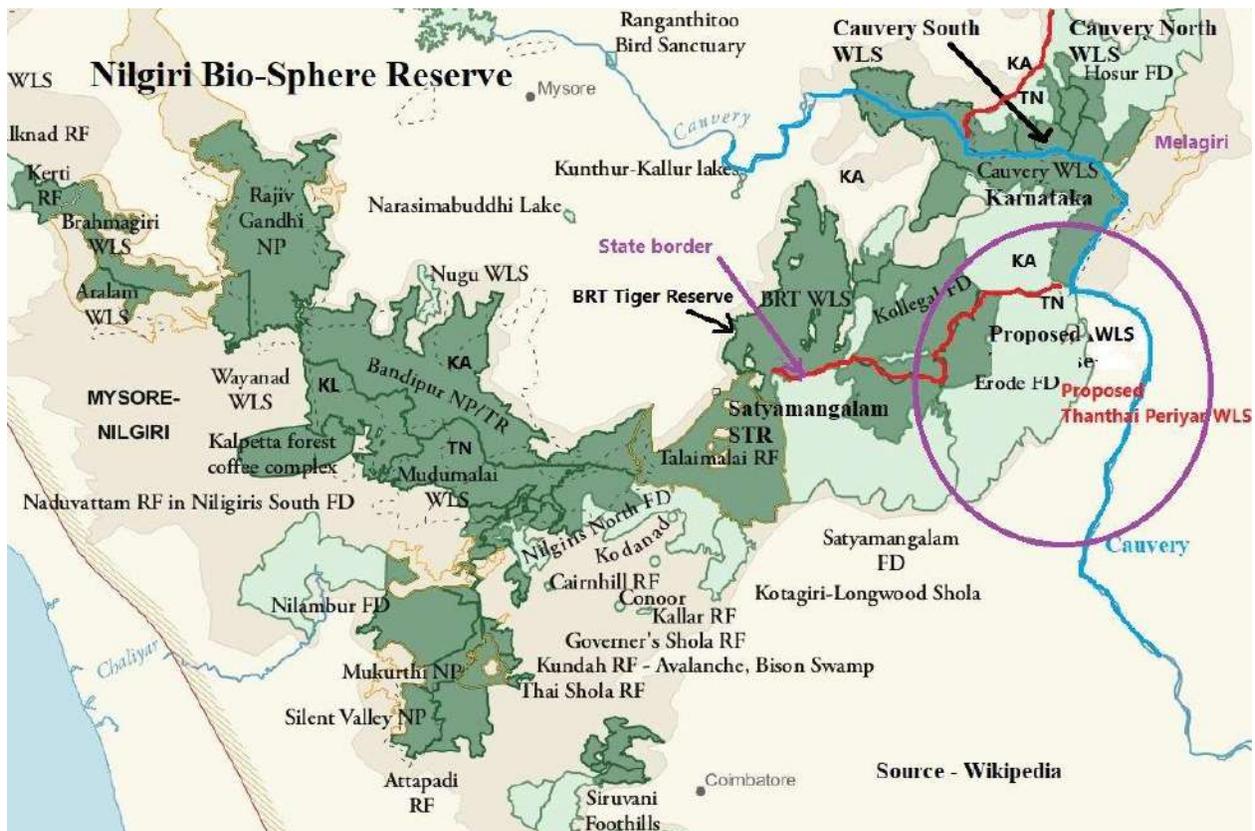
Thanthai Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary

Syllabus: GS-3; Environment -Biodiversity Conservation

Context

The first phase of **All-India Tiger Estimation-2026 (AITE-26)** commenced in the Thanthai Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary.

About the Sanctuary



- Located in **Bargur Hills**, Erode district, Tamil Nadu.
- Lies between Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve (TN) and Male Mahadeshwara & Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuaries (Karnataka).
- Identified as a **tiger corridor** by NTCA.
- Part of the **Nilgiris Elephant Reserve**.
- Eastern Ghats merge with Western Ghats in this region.

Hydrology

- Catchment area of the **Palar River**, draining into Cauvery.

Fauna

- Elephants
- Indian Gaur
- Other large herbivores

All-India Tiger Estimation

- Conducted once every **four years**
- Purpose: Assess tiger population
- Previous cycles: 2006, 2010, 2014, 2018, 2022

Tirukkural

Syllabus: GS-1; Art & Culture

Context

The Prime Minister of India paid homage to **Thiruvalluvar** on **Thiruvalluvar Day**, urging citizens to read the **Tirukkural** and highlighting its timeless ethical and social values.

About Thiruvalluvar

- **Who he was:** A celebrated **Tamil poet-philosopher**, associated with the **Sangam / post-Sangam period**, revered as a universal moral teacher.
- **Period:** Dates debated; traditionally placed between **300 BCE – 600 CE**.
- **Associated place:** **Mylapore (Chennai)** in popular tradition.

Key Contributions

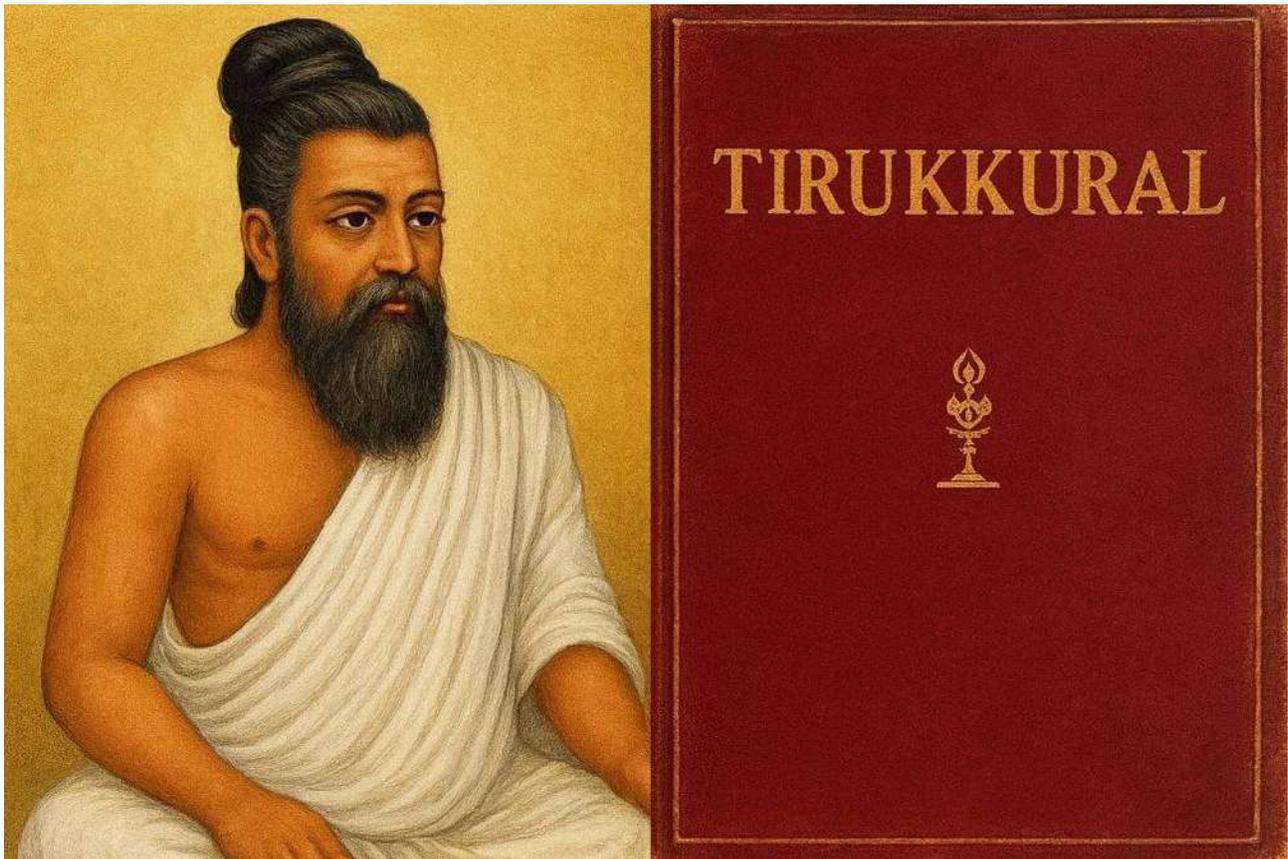
- **Ethical philosophy:** Practical morality for individuals, society, and rulers.
- **Governance & statecraft:** Ideals of just rule, good administration, and welfare.
- **Universal humanism:** Truth, compassion, self-control, non-violence, social harmony beyond sectarianism.

About Tirukkural

- **Nature:** Classical Tamil text of **1,330 couplets (Kurals)**.
- **Author:** Thiruvalluvar.
- **Structure:**
 - **Aram** – Virtue (Ethics)
 - **Porul** – Wealth/Polity
 - **Inbam** – Love
- **Features:** Extremely concise aphorisms; secular and universal tone.
- **Also known as:** “*Tamil Veda*” (popular tradition).

Significance

- Ethical foundation for **public life and governance**.
- Pillar of **Tamil cultural identity**.
- One of the **most translated Tamil texts globally**.



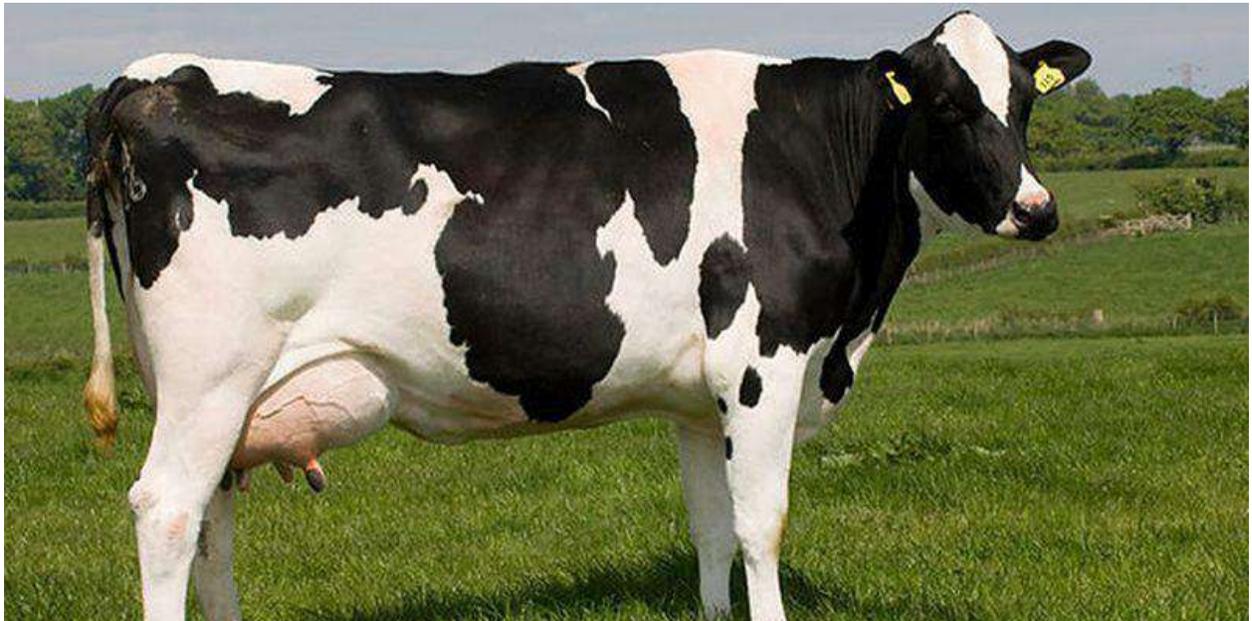
Vrindavani and Karan Fries Cattle Breeds

Syllabus: GS-3; Agriculture / Animal Husbandry

Context

India has officially registered **two high-yielding synthetic cattle breeds: Karan Fries and Vrindavani.**

Karan Fries



- **Developed by:** National Dairy Research Institute (NDRI), Karnal
- **Crossbreed:**
 - Indigenous **Tharparkar** × Exotic **Holstein-Friesian**
- **Milk yield:**
 - ~**3,500 kg** in 10-month lactation
 - Peak daily yield up to **46.5 kg**
- **Trait:** High productivity with resilience

Vrindavani



- **Developed by:** ICAR–Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI), Bareilly
- **Genetic composition:**
 - Exotic: Holstein-Friesian, Brown Swiss, Jersey
 - Indigenous: **Hariana**
- **Objective:** High milk yield with adaptability to Indian conditions

About ICAR

- **Full form:** Indian Council of Agricultural Research
- **Status:** Autonomous body under **DARE**, Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare
- **Established:** 16 July 1929
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi
- **Role:** Apex body for agricultural, animal, fisheries, and horticultural research

Consumer Price Index and a new base year

Syllabus: GS-3: Indian Economy – Inflation.

Context:

- India is transitioning to a **new Consumer Price Index (CPI) series** with an updated base year.
- December 2025 marked the **last inflation release based on the 2012 base year**.
- The editorial highlights the **disconnect between official inflation numbers and household inflation perception**, underscoring the need for statistical reform.

Consumer Price Index (CPI): Basics

- **Definition:** CPI measures the average change over time in prices paid by households for a basket of goods and services.
- **Purpose:**
 - Primary measure of **retail inflation** in India
 - Anchor for **monetary policy** under inflation targeting
 - Basis for **wage indexation**, social sector adjustments, and policy calibration
- **Base Year Concept:**
 - A reference year where index value = 100
 - Enables comparison of price changes over time

Problems with the Old CPI (Base Year: 2012)



Outdated Consumption Basket

- Consumption patterns have changed significantly since 2012 due to:
 - Rising service-sector expenditure
 - Digital economy and lifestyle shifts
 - Changes in food habits and energy use
- Old weights fail to reflect **current household spending realities**.

Inflation Perception Gap

- Official CPI inflation figures appeared unusually low in recent months.
- Household surveys show **much higher perceived and expected inflation**.
- This divergence undermines:
 - Credibility of official statistics
 - Public confidence in inflation data

Limited Granularity

- National CPI averages mask:
 - Regional price disparities
 - Rural–urban consumption differences
- Leads to inadequate reflection of **local inflation pressures**.

New CPI Series: Key Features

Updated Base Year

- **New base year: 2024**
- Reflects post-pandemic structural shifts in consumption and prices.

Revised Weights

- Weights derived from the **latest Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (2023–24)**.
- Expected changes:
 - Lower relative weight of food items
 - Higher weight for services, health, education, transport, and housing

Expected Benefits of CPI Revision

- More accurate inflation measurement
- Better alignment between:

- Statistical inflation
- Lived inflation experience of households
- Improved policy signalling for:
 - RBI's interest rate decisions
 - Fiscal and welfare policy design

Significance for Policy and Economy

A. Monetary Policy

- CPI is the nominal anchor for **inflation targeting (4% ± 2%)**.
- Accurate CPI ensures:
 - Appropriate interest rate decisions
 - Avoidance of premature easing or excessive tightening

B. Governance and Public Trust

- Transparent and realistic inflation data enhances:
 - Trust in official statistics
 - Credibility of economic governance

C. Market and Household Decisions

- Reliable inflation signals help:
 - Households plan savings and consumption
 - Businesses make pricing and investment decisions

Way Forward

- Regular and timely revision of price indices should become institutionalized.
- Complement CPI with:
 - Regional inflation indicators
 - Alternative cost-of-living indices
- Strengthen communication to explain differences between:
 - Headline inflation
 - Household inflation perception

Conclusion

- Updating the CPI base year to 2024 is a **necessary statistical modernization**.

- A realistic inflation measure is crucial for:
 - Effective monetary policy
 - Informed economic decision-making
 - Restoring alignment between data and lived realities

UGC brings out new rules against caste discrimination

Syllabus: GS-2: Social Justice – Laws and Policies.

Context:

- The **University Grants Commission (UGC)** notified the *Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions Regulations, 2026*.
- Aim: Address persistent caste-based discrimination in universities and colleges through clearer definitions, stronger institutional mechanisms, and enforceable penalties.

Evolution: Draft (Feb 2024) → Final Regulations (2026)

Key Criticisms of Draft Regulations (Feb 2024):

- Excluded **Other Backward Classes (OBCs)** from the scope of caste-based discrimination.
- Included penalties to “discourage” false complaints, risking deterrence of genuine grievances.
- Vague and ambiguous definition of discrimination.

Improvements in Final Regulations (2026):

- Explicit inclusion of **OBCs**.
- Removal of provisions penalising “false complaints”.
- Expanded and clearer definition of discrimination, focusing on *impact rather than intent*.

Need for New Regulations

- Recurrent reports of caste-based discrimination and exclusion in higher education institutions.
- Limitations of earlier frameworks (e.g., 2012 regulations) in addressing systemic and subtle discrimination.
- Requirement for:

- Uniform institutional mechanisms.
- Clear accountability and monitoring.
- Stronger enforcement powers with the UGC.

Major Highlights of the 2026 Regulations

Scope of Caste-based Discrimination

- Applies specifically to:
 - Scheduled Castes (SCs)
 - Scheduled Tribes (STs)
 - Other Backward Classes (OBCs)
- Marks a significant expansion by formally recognising **OBCs** within the anti-discrimination framework.

Definition of Discrimination

- Defined as *any unfair, differential or biased treatment*.
- Grounds include:
 - Religion
 - Race
 - Caste
 - Gender
 - Place of birth
 - Disability
(*Individually or in combination*)

Key Features:

- Emphasises **impact over intent**.
- Covers acts that *nullify or impair equality of treatment* in education.
- Omits some explicit prohibitions from 2012 rules (e.g., ban on separate educational systems based on caste or religion), relying instead on a broader definition.

Equal Opportunity Centres (EOCs)

- Mandatory establishment of an **Equal Opportunity Centre** in every higher education institution.

Objectives:

- Promote equity and equal opportunity.

- Foster social inclusion on campus.
- Act as the primary institutional mechanism for addressing discrimination-related concerns.

Equity Committees under EOCs

- Each institution must constitute an **Equity Committee** under the EOC.

Composition & Functioning:

- Chaired by the Head of the Institution.
- Mandatory representation of:
 - SCs
 - STs
 - OBCs
 - Persons with Disabilities
 - Women
- Must meet **at least twice a year**, ensuring continuous oversight.

Reporting and Review Mechanisms

- **Bi-annual reports** by EOCs on functioning and cases handled.
- **Annual compliance reports** by institutions to the UGC.
- Enables periodic review and assessment of institutional compliance.

National-level Monitoring Mechanism

- Constitution of a **National Monitoring Committee** by the UGC.

Composition:

- Representatives from:
 - Statutory professional councils
 - Commissions
 - Civil society organisations

Functions:

- Monitor implementation of regulations.
- Examine systemic issues of discrimination.
- Recommend preventive and corrective measures.

Meetings:

- At least **twice a year**.

Enforcement and Penalties

For non-compliance, UGC may:

- Debar institutions from UGC-funded schemes.
- Prohibit offering:
 - Degree programmes
 - Distance learning
 - Online programmes
- Remove institutions from the UGC's list of recognised higher education institutions.

Significance

- Strengthens the **social justice framework** in higher education.
- Aligns with constitutional mandates:
 - Article 14 – Equality before law
 - Article 15 – Prohibition of discrimination
 - Article 46 – Promotion of educational and economic interests of SCs, STs and OBCs
- Enhances accountability through:
 - Institutional mechanisms
 - Monitoring committees
 - Deterrent sanctions

Conclusion

- The 2026 UGC regulations represent a decisive step towards **institutionalising equity and inclusion** in higher education.
- While normative coverage and enforcement mechanisms have improved, their effectiveness will depend on:
 - Robust monitoring
 - Transparent reporting
 - Genuine institutional commitment beyond procedural compliance.

17 January 2026

Practice Qs:

Q. The University Grants Commission's Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions Regulations, 2026 seeks to address caste-based discrimination in universities and colleges. Critically examine its significance and limitations. (15 marks, 250 words)