

NEXT IAS

DAILY NEWS

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5th January

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EXPLAINED

1. VENEZUELA V-P TO TAKE OVER AS MADURO HELD IN US JAIL

CONTEXT:

- I. Under Operation **Absolute Resolve**, early on January 3, 2026, elite U.S. forces (reportedly **Delta Force**) conducted a 30-minute raid. Using stealth technology and low-altitude flight paths through the mountains, they breached the presidential compound in Caracas.
- II. President Donald Trump claimed that Maduro was 'bum-rushed' just as he was trying to reach a secure steel vault. Both Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, were taken into custody and immediately flown out of Venezuela to a U.S. warship.
- III. Post this, the Vice President of Venezuela took over as acting President.

WHY?

- I. The U.S. argues that the Maduro regime isn't just a political entity but a criminal organization involved in global drug trafficking. He is also accused of arresting the public mandate and declaring himself elected despite losing the elections.
- II. The organization linked to Nicolas Maduro is the **Cartel of the Suns** (Cartel de los Soles) which is linked to drug-trafficking and narco-terrorism.

WHAT IS THE "CARTEL OF THE SUNS"?

- I. **The Name:** The name comes from the "soles" (sun-shaped insignias) worn on the epaulettes of Venezuelan military generals.
- II. **Not a Traditional Cartel:** Unlike other Venezuelan Sinaloa cartels, **which are external criminal gangs, the Cartel of the Suns is allegedly a 'state-run' criminal network.** It refers to high-ranking members of the Venezuelan military and government who use their official power to facilitate drug trafficking.
- III. **History:** Under Maduro, the U.S. argues this system became fully integrated into the state.
- IV. **Allegations:** The U.S. indictment claims Maduro partnered with Colombian guerrilla groups (FARC and ELN). **These groups produced the cocaine in Colombia, while the Venezuelan military (Cartel of the Suns) provided the 'safe passage', fuel, and airstrips to fly the drugs into the U.S. and Europe.**

- V. More recently, the **Maduro regime has been linked to *Tren de Aragua***, a violent Venezuelan mega-gang that has spread across the Americas. The U.S. alleges that Maduro uses this gang to control territory and manage illicit finances.
- VI. By designating the **Cartel of the Suns as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO)** in late 2025, the U.S. created the legal 'bridge' needed for Operation Absolute Resolve. It allowed the U.S. military to treat the Venezuelan government as a "non-state armed group" rather than a sovereign nation.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUNDER

- I. **1950s–1998: The Era of Cold War Partners:** In the mid-20th century, Venezuela and the U.S. were close allies, primarily bound by anticommunism and petroleum.
 - (a) **The Dictatorship (1953–1958):** The U.S. supported the military dictator **Marcos Pérez Jiménez**. He was a staunch anti-communist who allowed American oil companies like Exxon and Mobil to flourish.
 - (b) **The 1958 Transition:** Even after Jiménez was overthrown, the U.S. maintained a strong relationship with the democratic 'Punto Fijo' governments. Venezuela was seen as a 'Model Democracy' in Latin America—a stable, pro-Western source of oil during the Cold War.
 - (c) **Economic Dependency:** By the 1970s, despite Venezuela nationalizing its oil, the U.S. remained its biggest customer, and the two countries were deeply integrated economically.
- II. **1999–2013:** Everything changed when Hugo Chavez took office. He transformed Venezuela from a U.S. ally into the leader of the Latin American "Pink Tide".
 - (a) **The 2002 Coup Attempt:** A turning point occurred when a brief coup removed Chavez for 47 hours. Chavez accused the U.S. (Bush administration) of backing the plot. This created a permanent scar of distrust.
 - (b) **Oil as a Weapon:** Chavez used oil wealth to fund an anti-U.S. alliance, befriending adversaries like **Russia, China, Iran, and Cuba**. He famously called President George W. Bush "the Devil" at the UN.
 - (c) **Nationalization:** Chavez expelled U.S. oil giants (ExxonMobil and ConocoPhillips) in 2007, leading to massive legal battles and the beginning of economic decoupling.

III. 2013–2026: Economic Collapse and the “Narco-State” Label

- (a) When Nicolas Maduro took over after Chavez’s death, the relationship deteriorated into open hostility.
- (b) **The Sanctions Era (2014–2024):** Following crackdowns on protests and disputed elections (2018 and 2024), the U.S. imposed “Maximum Pressure” sanctions. These targeted Venezuela’s oil sector, freezing billions in assets and contributing to hyperinflation and a massive migration crisis.
- (c) **The “Narco-Terrorism” Charges:** In 2020, the U.S. officially indicted Maduro for narco-terrorism, placing a \$15 million bounty on him. The U.S. narrative shifted from “he is a bad leader” to “he is a criminal cartel leader”.
- (d) **2025 Military Buildup:** Throughout 2025, the U.S. began intercepting “drug boats” and oil tankers in the Caribbean, setting the stage for a direct strike. Moreover, according to reports, Maduro was threatened by President Trump in November 2025 over a phone call for leaving Venezuela and initiating transfer of power.

VENEZUELA AND DUTCH SYNDROME

Dutch Disease is a term used by economists to describe how a blessing (huge oil reserves) became an economic curse.

I. The “Spending Effect” (Currency Overvaluation)

- (a) When oil prices are high, billions of U.S. dollars flow into Venezuela. To spend this money locally, the government and citizens must convert those dollars into the local currency (the Bolívar).
- (b) **The Result:** High demand for the Bolívar makes it ‘artificially strong’ (overvalued).
- (c) **The Damage:** Because the Bolívar is so strong, everything Venezuela produces besides oil (like coffee, cocoa, or manufactured goods) becomes extremely expensive for other countries to buy. At the same time, it becomes cheaper for Venezuelans to import everything from abroad than to make it at home.

II. De-industrialization (Killing Local Business)

- (a) As imports (like clothes, food, and electronics) flooded the country because they were so cheap, local Venezuelan farmers and factory owners couldn’t compete.

- (b) **The Result:** Manufacturing plants and farms shut down.

- (c) **The Damage:** Venezuela stopped being a “productive” country and became a ‘consuming’ country. By the time Maduro took power, nearly 95% to 98% of Venezuela’s export revenue came from oil alone.

III. The “Resource Movement Effect” (Brain Drain to Oil)

- (a) Capital and labor (the smartest engineers, the most money, and the best workers) all moved toward the oil sector or government services because that’s where the ‘easy money’ was.
- (b) **The Result:** Innovation in other sectors—like technology, tourism, or agriculture—completely stalled.
- (c) **The Damage:** The entire country’s ‘economic eggs’ were placed in one basket: the state-run oil company, PDVSA.

IV. The ‘Crash’ Phase (When the Music Stops):

- (a) Dutch Disease is manageable as long as oil prices are high. However, when oil prices crashed (post-2014) and U.S. sanctions hit (later on), Venezuela had nothing else to fall back on.
- (b) **The Result:** Since they had destroyed their own farms and factories years earlier, they couldn’t produce their own food or medicine.
- (c) **The Disaster:** Without oil money to pay for imports, shelves went empty, leading to hyperinflation (reaching 130,000% in 2018) and the humanitarian crisis.

MAP



2. DELHI SET TO DECLARE RABIES A NOTIFIABLE DISEASE

CONTEXT

As of January 5, 2026, the Delhi government is set to officially declare human rabies a notifiable disease under the Epidemic Diseases Act.

NOTIFIABLE DISEASE

- I. Epidemics Diseases Act, 1897, Section 2 allows State governments to take special measures if they are satisfied that the state is threatened by an outbreak of a dangerous epidemic disease. This includes **the power to declare a disease notifiable**.
- II. Any person **who fails to report a notifiable disease or violates the regulations can be punished under Section 188 of the Indian Penal Code** (Disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant).
- III. When a doctor or lab **reports a case of a notifiable disease, it triggers a response—health workers may visit the area to find the source (e.g., contaminated water for Cholera) or ensure the patient is isolated**.
- IV. Because **health is primarily a State subject**, the exact list can vary from one state to another.

RABIES

- **Cause:** The Rabies virus (a Lyssavirus) is usually transmitted through the **saliva** of an infected animal.
- **How it spreads:** Most commonly through **bites or scratches**. In rare cases, it can spread if infected saliva comes into contact with open wounds or mucous membranes (eyes, nose, mouth).
- **The 'Traveler' Virus:** Once inside the body, the virus travels slowly along the nerves toward the **brain and spinal cord**. This journey (incubation period) typically takes **30 to 90 days**, though it can range from 10 days to over a year depending on the distance of the bite from the brain.
- Once the virus reaches the brain, it causes inflammation (**Encephalitis**), leading to two clinical forms:

Furious Rabies (Common ~80%)	Paralytic Rabies (~20%)
Hyperactivity, agitation, and aggression.	Gradual paralysis starting at the bite site.
Hydrophobia (Fear of water/spasms while drinking).	The patient slowly sinks into a coma.

Aerophobia (Fear of drafts or fresh air).	Often misdiagnosed, leading to underreporting.
Death within a few days due to cardiac arrest.	Longer course than the furious form.

Doctors decide treatment based on these WHO categories:

- (a) **Category I:** Touching or feeding animals, licks on intact skin (No treatment needed).
- (b) **Category II:** Nibbling of uncovered skin, minor scratches or abrasions without bleeding (vaccine required).
- (c) **Category III:** Single or multiple transdermal bites/scratches, or licks on broken skin (vaccine + immunoglobulin required).

3. PM ON SOMNATH SWABHIMAN PARV-1000 YEARS OF UNBROKEN FAITH

CONTEXT

The Somnath Temple, located in Prabhas Patan, Gujarat, is known as the '**Shrine Eternal**'. It holds a unique place in Indian history as a symbol of resilience, having been destroyed and rebuilt at least seven major times over two millennia.

The year 2026 is significant for the Somnath Temple. It has been 1000 years since the first attack on this great shrine. It was in January of 1026 that Mahmud Ghazni attacked this temple, seeking to destroy symbol of faith and civilization.

TRADITIONAL HISTORY: According to tradition, the temple was built in four stages by different figures:

- I. **The Golden Temple:** Built by Soma (the Moon God) to thank Lord Shiva for freeing him from a curse.
- II. **The Silver Temple:** Rebuilt by Ravana.
- III. **The Wooden Temple:** Rebuilt by Lord Krishna.
- IV. **The Stone Temple:** Rebuilt by the Solanki kings (10th century).

KEY LITERARY SOURCES

- I. **Rigveda:** Mentions the Prabhas Kshetra as a holy site.
- II. **Mahabharata:** Describes it as a Triveni Sangam (confluence of three rivers: Kapila, Hiran, and Saraswati) where Krishna spent his final moments.
- III. **Puranas:** The Shiva Purana lists Somnath as the **first of the 12 Jyotirlingas**.

IV. **Foreign Accounts:** * **Al-Biruni (11th century):** Described the temple's immense wealth and its importance as a trade hub connecting China and Africa.

- ♦ **Marco Polo (13th century):** Noted its continued status as a center of religious and economic activity.

ATTACKS AND RECONSTRUCTION

Year	Attacker/Destroyer	Rebuilder/Restorer
~725 CE	Al-Junayd (Arab Governor of Sindh)	Nagabhata II (Gurjara-Pratihara King) in 815 CE using red sandstone.
1026 CE	Mahmud of Ghazni (Most famous sack; looted 20M dinars).	King Bhima I (Solanki) and King Bhoja (Paramara).
1299 CE	Ulugh Khan (General of Alauddin Khalji).	Mahipala I (Chudasama King) in 1308 CE.
1395 CE	Zafar Khan (Governor of Gujarat).	Rebuilt shortly after by local devotees.
1451 CE	Mahmud Begada (Sultan of Gujarat).	Local restoration efforts.
1706 CE	Aurangzeb (Ordered total demolition and conversion).	Ahilyabai Holkar built a separate temple adjacent to the ruins in 1782. She built a new temple in 1783, located about 200 meters away from the original ruins. To protect the deity from future raids, she designed the temple with an underground sanctum (Garbhagriha).

MODERN RECONSTRUCTION

After India's independence in 1947, the **"Iron Man of India", Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, visited the ruins and vowed to restore the temple to its former glory.** He was supported by K M Munshi in this effort.

- Foundation:** Laid by Jam Saheb Digvijay Singh in 1950.
- Inauguration:** On May 11, 1951, **India's first President, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, performed the Pran Pratistha (consecration), despite political tension with PM Jawaharlal Nehru over the state's involvement in a religious event.**
- Architecture:** Built in the **Māru-Gurjara (Chalukya) style.** It features the Kailash Mahameru Prasad design with a 150-foot tall Shikhara.

MODERN DISCOVERIES & INTERESTING FACTS

- The Arrow Pillar (Baana Stambh):** A pillar on the temple grounds points south and claims there is **no landmass** in a straight line between the temple and the South Pole—a geographically accurate fact known to ancient builders.

- ♦ **Archaeological Evidence:** Ground-penetrating radar (GPR) studies in 2017-2020 revealed a **three-story L-shaped structure** buried beneath the current temple, confirming multiple layers of historical construction.

- ♦ **The Floating Lingam:** Medieval Arab accounts (like Zakariya al-Qazwini) claim the original Lingam was suspended in the air using **magnets** in the **ceiling and floor**, though modern historians often view this as legend or a clever architectural trick.

It is widely believed by historians and scientists that the temple's architects used a sophisticated understanding of magnetism. **By placing massive lodestones (natural magnets) in the ceiling and floor, and potentially in the walls, they created a balanced magnetic field that held the iron-containing stone Lingam in place through magnetic levitation.**

The Demystification: According to legend, Mahmud was suspicious. To prove it wasn't a divine miracle, he began removing stones from the temple's structure. As **he removed stones from the ceiling, the magnetic balance was disrupted; the Lingam began to tilt and eventually crashed to the floor.**

4. TARGETED CANCER TREATMENT COULD BE IN SIGHT, VIA NANOBOTS

CONTEXT

Dr. Ambarish Ghosh, IISC, received TATA TRANSFORMATION PRIZE in November for his advanced cancer treatment using magnetic nanorobots.

HOW NANOROBOTS REACH THE CANCER TISSUE?

- I. The nanorobots mimic the movement of bacteria with a little helix-shaped tail. It functions as a propeller in a boat as they travel through different media. As the helix turns the object moves forward.
- II. The helix has a little magnet attached to it to create magnetic fields that mimic the drilling motion.
- III. Doctors use external magnetic fields to steer them through blood, dense tissue, and even into the interior of a tumor.

HOW THEY ATTACK THE CANCER CELLS?

- I. **Targeted Delivery:** They **carry drugs directly to the tumor**, sparing healthy cells. Either the surface or the **tip is coated with the drug and rest is made with silica**. They preferentially bind to cancer cells after penetrating their environment without affecting non-cancerous cells.
- II. **Magnetic Hyperthermia:** By alternating the magnetic field, **the bots can be made to vibrate and generate heat (above 42°C), which physically kills cancer cells** from the inside.

OTHER SIMILAR DEVELOPMENTS

IIT Madras: The “Nanoinjection” System

In December 2025, researchers from **IIT Madras**, in collaboration with Australian universities, patented a revolutionary **nanoinjection platform** specifically for breast cancer.

- **How it works:** It uses needle-like **silicon nanotubes** to inject drugs directly into the heart of a cancer cell.
- **Effectiveness:** Lab tests showed this system is **23 times more effective** than conventional chemotherapy delivery.
- **Sustained Release:** It can release drugs steadily for up to **700 hours**, preventing the toxic ‘burst’ that causes the severe side effects typical of chemo.

IIT Guwahati: Smart Injectable Hydrogels

As of January 2025, **IIT Guwahati** researchers developed a ‘smart’ hydrogel that acts as a mother-ship for nanotherapeutic agents.

- **The Trigger:** The gel is injected near a tumor. It only releases its medicinal cargo when it detects high levels of **Glutathione (GSH)**, a molecule that is abnormally high in cancer cells.

- **Results:** In preclinical trials, a single dose led to a **75% reduction** in tumor size within just 18 days.

INST Mohali & IIT Bombay: Gold ‘Nano-Cups’

In June 2025, a joint effort between **INST Mohali** and **IIT Bombay** led to the creation of gold “nano-cups.”

- **The Tech:** These are unique, cup-shaped nanostructures that absorb near-infrared light.
- **The Action:** Once they settle in a tumor, a harmless laser is shined on the area. The ‘cups’ catch the light and convert it into intense, localized heat to ‘cook’ the tumor.
- **Advantage:** This method is entirely non-toxic and uses a ‘one-step’ synthesis process, making it much cheaper to produce than previous versions.

5. INDIA HAS SURPASSED CHINA, IS NOW THE WORLD’S LARGEST RICE PRODUCER: AGRI MINISTER

CONTEXT

At an event, Agricultural Minister Sh. Shivraj Singh Chauhan said that India has surpassed China in rice production and has become the world’s largest producer of rice.

DATA:

1. India’s rice production has **reached 150.18 million tonnes which is greater than China’s 145.28 million tonnes**.
2. India is a leading global agricultural exporter, most notable for being **the world’s largest exporter of rice**.
3. **Rice-Basmati and Rice-Non-Basmati** put together form the highest exported agricultural item in India.

CONDITIONS FOR RICE CULTIVATION

Parameter	Optimal Range/Condition	Importance
Average Temperature	21°C to 37°C	Sustains metabolic activity; temperatures below 15°C can stunt growth.
Germination Temp	25°C to 35°C	Faster emergence and uniform seedling establishment.

Annual Rainfall	100 cm to 150 cm	Critical for rainfed crops; ensures the semi-aquatic environment.
Soil Texture	Clayey Loam or Silty Clay	High water-retention capacity; essential for "puddling."
Soil pH	5.5 to 7.0 (Slightly Acidic)	Maximum nutrient availability; rice is slightly tolerant of acidity.

Relative Humidity	80% to 85%	High humidity during vegetative growth prevents water stress.
Standing Water	5 cm to 12 cm	Controls weed growth and regulates soil temperature.
Sunshine	High/ Prolonged	Essential during the "ripening phase" for high grain filling.

STATES WITH HIGHEST PRODUCTION

State	Production (Million Tonnes)	Share of India's Output	Key Growing Conditions	Popular Varieties
Uttar Pradesh	~20.9	~14.0%	Fertile Gangetic plains; extensive canal & tube-well irrigation; humid subtropical climate.	Basmati, Sona Masoori, Kalanamak
West Bengal	~16.5	~11.1%	High rainfall (175–250 cm); rich alluvial soil; three cropping seasons (Aus, Aman, Boro).	Gobindobhog, Swarna, Tulaipanji
Telangana	~17.1	~11.5%	Large-scale lift irrigation (Kaleshwaram); warm temperatures; red and black soils.	Telangana Sona (RNR 15048), BPT 5204
Punjab	~14.4	~9.6%	100% assured irrigation; highly mechanized; intensive use of high-yield fertilizers.	1121 Basmati, PR 121
Andhra Pradesh	~11.8	~7.9%	Fertile Krishna-Godavari deltas; coastal humid climate; robust drainage systems.	BPT 5204 (Samba Mahsuri), IR 64

6. UNUSUAL GENETIC CODE IN ANTARCTIC MICROBES YIELDS RARE AMINO ACID

CONTEXT

Scientists have discovered that certain microbes have a "rebranded" version of the instructions for life, which could change how we engineer new materials and medicines.

THE DICTIONARY OF LIFE

To understand this discovery, think of DNA as a manual written in a code of 64 three-letter "words" called **codons**.

- **Sense Codons:** In almost every living thing, 61 of these words tell the cell to add a specific building block (amino acid) to a protein.
- **Stop Codons:** The remaining 3 words usually act like a **period at the end of a sentence**, telling the cell to stop building the protein.

To visualize how these work, you can think of the DNA sequence as a string of letters like AUGGCATAG.

The cell reads them in groups of three:

1. **AUG** (Start/Methionine)
2. **GCA** (Alanine)
3. **TAG** (Stop)

THE DISCOVERY: A NEW LANGUAGE

Researchers found that some **archaea in the Antarctic** (tiny organisms that look like bacteria but are biologically different) don't use the standard dictionary.

Specifically, they found that a stop codon called **TAG has been completely repurposed**. Instead of acting like a 'period' to stop production, **these organisms read TAG as a signal to add a rare amino acid called pyrrolysine (Pyl)**.

Because they use this 'stop' word as a "building block" word every single time it appears, scientists are calling this the **Pyl code**. This code has 62 building-block words and only 2 stop signs, whereas the standard code has 61 and 3, respectively.

WHY THIS MATTERS

This discovery isn't just a biological curiosity; it has major implications for technology:

- **Correcting Predictions:** Scientists previously likely misread the protein sequences of these organisms because they were using the 'wrong dictionary'.
- **Custom-Built Proteins:** Researchers at UC Berkeley have already successfully taught common *E. coli* bacteria to read this new Pyl code. By doing this, they were able to force the bacteria to create full proteins that include this rare amino acid.
- **Bioengineering:** This opens the door to creating new, 'upgraded' proteins with functional advantages we've never seen before, potentially leading to the production of valuable new materials.

TOTAL NUMBER OF CODONS IN A GENOME

The genetic code is a dictionary consisting of **64 possible codons**. These are three-letter "words" made from four nitrogenous bases: Adenine (A), Guanine (G), Cytosine (C), and either Thymine (T) in DNA or Uracil (U) in RNA.

- **61 Sense Codons:** These instruct the cell to add a specific amino acid to a protein chain.
- **3 Stop Codons:** These act like periods at the end of a sentence, telling the cell to stop building the protein.
- **Redundancy:** Because there are 64 codons but only 20 standard amino acids, most amino acids are represented by more than one codon.

While there are only 64 types of codons, a single strand of DNA contains millions or billions of these triplets repeated in different orders to create genes.

- **In Humans:** The human genome contains approximately **3.1 billion base pairs**. Since a

codon is made of 3 bases, if you were to read the entire genome as codons, there would be roughly **1 billion codons**.

- **Coding DNA:** Only about **1–2%** of the human genome actually codes for proteins. This means there are approximately **30 to 60 million codons** that are actively used to build the 19,000–20,000 different proteins in your body.

7. INDIA LOSES 0.4% OF ITS GDP EVERY YEAR TO NATURAL DISASTERS

DATA POINT

- Emerging Asian economies that comprise India, China, and the ASEAN-11, face an escalating threat from natural disasters that are growing in both frequency and intensity. Over the past decade, the region has had an average of 100 disasters annually, impacting approximately 80 million people.
- The nature of these threats varies by geography: **while floods and storms are the primary drivers of risk in India, tropical cyclones frequently batter the Philippines and Vietnam.**
- Meanwhile, China and Indonesia contend with significantly higher seismic risks. The human and economic toll of this vulnerability has been punctuated by several landmark catastrophes.
- From 1990 to 2024, India sustained average annual disaster-related losses equivalent to 0.4% of GDP.** The composition of these losses is geographically distinct. India's vulnerability is **primarily hydrological (non-storm-related floods and landslides)**, whereas Myanmar's losses are predominantly meteorological (extreme temperatures and cyclonic storms).
- Among the **Asian economies analysed, India ranks second only to the Philippines in the World Risk Index.** The index calculates risk as the geometric mean of exposure (population burden) and vulnerability (a combination of structural susceptibility, coping capacity, and long-term adaptation).

WHO RELEASES WORLD RISK INDEX? The World Risk Index (WRI) assesses a country's disaster risk by combining exposure to extreme natural events (like cyclones, floods, droughts) with societal vulnerability (poverty, weak infrastructure, lack of health services). **Released annually as part of the World Risk Report, it identifies countries most in need of strengthening their preparedness for climate change and natural hazards.**

It is published by **Byter Entwicklung Hilft**.