



WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

Coverage of

01 Jan. - 07 Jan., 2025

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**UPSC ESE, PSUs,
RRB, SSC, Banking &
State Services Exams**



India's first Glass Bridge over Sea
Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu

1st JANUARY 2025

One Nation One Subscription

- **Context:** The One Nation One Subscription (ONOS) initiative is a landmark step aimed at democratizing access to global scholarly knowledge in India.

Key Highlights

- The Information and Library Network Centre under UGC will centrally manage the subscription and distribution, ensuring seamless digital access to resources.
- A centralized platform will simplify access and reduce administrative burdens.
- A 6,000 crore budget has been allocated for the scheme's first phase (2025–2027).
- **Phase I (2025–2027):** Establish the framework, provide access to research materials, and negotiate Article Processing Charges (APCs) for Indian researchers.
- It will provide equitable access to international research resources across tier-2 and tier-3 cities, addressing regional disparities in research opportunities.
- It will provide access to high-quality journals enhances research capabilities, enabling Indian researchers to contribute to cutting-edge global innovations.
- The discounts on Article Processing Charges (APCs) will make publishing in high-impact journals more accessible.
- Integration with global research communities promotes interdisciplinary and international collaborations, elevating India's global research footprint.
- It will enhance India's R&D ecosystem, supporting innovation in critical areas like STEM, medicine, and social sciences, which are pivotal for economic growth and self-reliance.
- It will complement initiatives like the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), creating a more robust research infrastructure.

Willow Chip

- **Context:** Google launched its latest quantum processor named 'Willow,' which created significant achievement in the potential of quantum computers to tackle practical problems.



Key Facts

- Willow has 105 physical qubits and operates at extremely low temperatures.
- It boasts better error correction and faster performance than other quantum computers.
- It can operate at near absolute zero temperatures (-273.15° C) for maximum stability.
- The coherence time of Willow's data qubits is about 100 microseconds, improved by error correction protocols.
- Willow's architecture allows for lower error rates with more qubits.
- Google tested Willow using Random Circuit Sampling (RCS), a computationally hard task, which Willow completed in a few minutes, outperforming classical computers by a massive margin.

India's First Glass Bridge Over Sea

- **Context:** India's first glass bridge over the sea has been inaugurated in Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu.

Key Facts

- This bridge connects the Tiruvalluvar Statue and Vivekananda Rock Memorial in Kanyakumari.
- The inauguration was part of the 25th anniversary celebrations of the Tiruvalluvar Statue.
 - The statue is officially named the "Statue of Wisdom."
 - It represents the 133 chapters of Tirukkural.
- The 77-meter-long, 10-meter-wide bridge allows safe passage between the two landmarks while providing views of the sea below.

- The glass bridge was built to address issues faced by ferries, which are often unable to dock near the Tiruvalluvar Statue due to rough seas and low tides.

2nd JANUARY 2025

Business Ready (B-READY) 2024 Report

- **Context:** India is facing challenges in achieving good scores in the World Bank's Business Ready report.

Key Highlights

- The B-READY report, launched by the World Bank, benchmarks the business environment and investment climate across economies.
- It evaluates regulatory frameworks, public services, and their effectiveness in facilitating business operations, replacing the previous Doing Business index.
- Multiple steps in business entry and incomplete digital integration, leading to moderate scores.
- Four labour codes introduced, but uneven state-level implementation results in slow progress and moderate to low scores.
- High logistics costs, customs delays, and inconsistent trade regulation enforcement hinder efficiency.
- Burdensome GST compliance, slow dispute resolution, and limited SME credit access add to challenges.
- Positive strides in digital and green technologies enhance India's regulatory framework, though further improvement is needed.

Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana and Restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme

- **Context:** The Union Cabinet has approved the continuation of Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana and Restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme till the Financial Year 2025-26.

About Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana

- It was launched in 2016 by the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers welfare.
- It is a crop insurance scheme that provides financial support to farmers in case of crop failure or damage due to natural calamities, pests, or diseases.
- **Objectives:**
 - to stabilize the income of farmers to ensure their continuance in farming;
 - to encourage farmers to adopt innovative and modern agricultural practices;
 - to ensure flow of credit to the agriculture sector.
- All farmers including sharecroppers and tenant farmers growing the notified crops in the notified areas are eligible for coverage.
- **Coverage of Crops:** Food crops (Cereals, Millets & Pulses), Oilseeds and Annual Commercial / Horticultural crops.
- As the States have a major role in implementation of the scheme, the premium subsidy is shared by the Central and State Government on a 50 : 50 basis and for North-Eastern States sharing pattern has been made 90 : 10.

About Restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme (RWBCIS)

- It was launched in 2016 to mitigate the hardship of the insured farmers against the likelihood of financial loss on account of anticipated crop loss resulting from adverse weather conditions.
- While PMFBY is based on yield, RWBCIS uses weather parameters as "proxy for crop yields in compensating the cultivators for deemed crop losses.
- All standard Claims are processed and paid within 45 days from the end of the risk period.

2025: Year of Defense Reforms

- **Context:** The Ministry of Defence (MoD) has declared 2025 as the "Year of Defense Reforms," signifying a commitment to modernizing and strengthening its armed forces.

Key Facts

- A strong and modern military is essential to safeguard the nation's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and strategic interests.
- It ensures readiness to address multi-domain conflicts, including cyber, space, and traditional warfare.
- It will enhance tri-services synergy by integrating the Army, Navy, and Air Force under unified commands.
 - Each command will address specific geographical challenges using shared resources.
 - Optimizes resource utilization and ensures joint operations across domains.
- **Technological Advancements:** Emphasis on cybersecurity, space operations, and emerging technologies like:
 - Artificial Intelligence (AI)
 - Machine Learning (ML)
 - Hypersonic systems
 - Robotics
 - Focus on multi-domain integrated operations.
- **Streamlined Procurement:** Simplification of acquisition processes for faster capability development.
 - Promotion of indigenous manufacturing and global competitiveness.
 - **Collaboration and Integration:** Breaking silos across defense stakeholders.
 - Encouraging public-private partnerships and technology transfers.
 - Collaboration between defense and civil industries.

3rd JANUARY 2025

Norovirus

- **Context:** Recently, a surge in the outbreak of Norovirus has been detected in parts of the United States.

Key Facts

- Norovirus, often called the stomach flu or stomach bug, is a highly contagious virus causing vomiting

and diarrhea. It leads to inflammation in the stomach or intestines, a condition known as acute gastroenteritis.

- First identified in Norwalk, Ohio, during the 1970s, it is a leading cause of foodborne illnesses globally.
- The norovirus belongs to a family of small RNA viruses called Caliciviridae.
- **Transmission:** Norovirus spreads rapidly through multiple routes; direct contact, by consumption of contaminated food or liquids & aerosolised particles released by an infected person.
- **Symptoms:** Vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach pain and nausea.

Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC)

- **Context:** The Prime Minister highlighted (Open Network for Digital Commerce) ONDC's contribution in empowering small businesses and revolutionising e-commerce.

About ONDC

- It was launched in 2022 by the Department of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce.
- Aim: To provide equal opportunities to MSMEs to thrive in digital commerce and democratize e-commerce.
- It promotes open networks for all aspects of exchange of goods and services over digital or electronic networks.
- Currently, there are partners like Paytm, Meesho, Magicpin, Mystore, Craftsvilla, and Spice Money, which act as online storefronts, allowing users to order food or any other product from a business listed on the ONDC platform.
- ONDC is built as a network of independent service providers, including sellers, buyers, logistics providers, and payment gateways, all connected through an open platform.

- It uses standardized protocols for product catalogs, transactions, logistics, and payments, making it possible for users from different platforms to interact with each other.

Project VISTAAR

- **Context:** The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras has partnered with the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare on Project VISTAAR (Virtually Integrated System to Access Agricultural Resources).

Key Highlights

- It is a digital platform developed to transform agricultural extension services by providing farmers with access to critical information and innovative solutions from start-ups in agriculture and allied sectors.
- **Key Features:**
 - It offers advisory support on crop production, marketing, value addition, and supply chain management.
 - It incorporates a database of over 12,000 agri-startups, enabling farmers to adopt cutting-edge technologies and solutions.
 - It ensures farmers receive timely, contextual, and accurate information to make informed decisions.

4th JANUARY 2025

Baanknet Portal

- **Context:** The Government of India recently launched a revamped e-auction portal named 'Baanknet', for buyers and investors interested in properties auctioned by public sector banks (PSBs).

Key Highlights

- The portal aims to streamline the auction process and enhance transparency in the real estate market.
- Baanknet boasts several advanced features designed to improve user experience. It offers

a frictionless journey for users, integrating pre-auction, auction, and post-auction processes into a single application.

- The portal includes an automated payment gateway and KYC tools, ensuring secure transactions.
- The portal consolidates listings of over 122,500 properties, including residential, commercial, and agricultural assets. Users can find flats, houses, shops, vehicles, and more, all in one place. This consolidation simplifies the search process for potential buyers and investors.
- This initiative aims to boost investor confidence and improve the economic environment. Enhanced efficiency in the auction process will aid PSBs in recovering their assets, positively affecting their balance sheets.
- The introduction of Baanknet is anticipated to enhance credit availability for businesses and individuals. The collaboration between PSBs, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI), and Debt Recovery Tribunals (DRTs) is crucial for the platform's success.

Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV)

- **Context:** China is observing an increase in human metapneumovirus (HMPV) infections, particularly in northern provinces, which is emerging as a notable pathogen among younger populations.

About Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV)

- Human metapneumovirus is a respiratory virus first identified in 2001. It belongs to the Pneumoviridae family, which includes other viruses like respiratory syncytial virus (RSV).
- HMPV causes infections resembling the common cold, affecting both upper and lower respiratory tracts.
- The virus is most prevalent during winter and early spring, with children, the elderly, and immunocompromised individuals at higher risk for complications.

- Symptoms of HMPV infection include cough, runny or blocked nose, sore throat, fever, and wheezing. The incubation period typically ranges from three to six days. Most individuals recover without medical intervention within a few days. However, some may develop complications such as bronchitis or pneumonia, necessitating medical attention.
- HMPV spreads through direct contact with infected individuals or contaminated surfaces. Transmission can occur via respiratory secretions from coughs or sneezes. Close contact, such as shaking hands or hugging an infected person, increases the risk.

Green Gross Domestic Product (Green GDP)

- **Context:** Chhattisgarh has launched a pioneering initiative that integrates the ecological services of its forests into the Green Gross Domestic Product (Green GDP).

Key Highlights

- This innovative approach aims to tell the relationship between the environmental contributions of forests and the state's economic growth.
- The initiative seeks to ensure sustainable economic development while preserving the environment for future generations.

About Green GDP

- Green GDP is an alternative economic indicator that factors in the environmental costs associated with economic growth.
- Unlike traditional GDP, which focuses solely on economic output, Green GDP considers natural resource depletion and ecological degradation.
- This metric aims to provide a more holistic view of a nation's economic and environmental health.
- Green GDP incorporates environmental impacts into economic assessments. It distinguishes between environmentally beneficial and harmful economic activities.

- The primary goals of Chhattisgarh's Green GDP initiative include enhancing budget planning, creating policies that support economic growth while prioritising ecological sustainability, and formally recognising the economic value of forest ecosystem services.

5th JANUARY 2025

Ramesh Chand Committee

- **Context:** The Union Government announced the formation of Ramesh Chand Committee to revise the country's Wholesale Price Index (WPI), with a new base year of 2022-23, replacing the current base year of 2011-12.

Key Facts

- The WPI has undergone revisions in the past, with the last update occurring in 2015 when the base year was changed from 2004-05 to 2011-12.
- The primary objective of updating the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) is to provide a more accurate representation of inflation at the producer level.
- Currently, the WPI focuses solely on goods, overlooking the service sector, which accounts for more than half of India's economic output.
- To address this limitation, the government plans to transition to a more inclusive Producer Price Index (PPI). This shift aims to capture a broader range of economic activity by incorporating both goods and services, ensuring a more comprehensive and precise measure of inflation.

About Ramesh Chand Committee

- The panel, headed by NITI Aayog member Ramesh Chand, will also review the methodology and composition of a new Producers' Price Index (PPI).
- The group's task is to assess and suggest improvements to the price collection system, refine the computation methods for both indices, and develop a roadmap for transitioning from the WPI to the PPI.

- It is also expected to propose further enhancements for the reliability of the indices. The final report is due by June 30, 2026.

India's 1st Coastline-Waders Bird Census

- **Context:** Gujarat is set to conduct the country's first-ever census of coastal and wader birds at the Marine National Park and Sanctuary in Jamnagar.

Key Highlights

- The census will be jointly organised by the state forest department and the Bird Conservation Society of Gujarat.
- **Waders Bird:**
 - They are also known as shorebirds or sandpipers, are a group of birds typically found in coastal habitats or wetlands.
 - They are characterized by long legs, slender bodies, and often long bills, which they use to forage for food like insects and worms.

About Marine National Park

- The Marine National Park and Marine Sanctuary in Gujarat is India's first designated marine national park.
- Spanning the districts of Devbhoomi Dwarka, Jamnagar, and Morbi, it covers approximately 170 km of coastline and 42 islands.
- This protected area in the Gulf of Kutch was established to conserve marine biodiversity and mangrove ecosystems.
- The park is positioned along the Central Asian Flyway (CAF).
- It is a key migratory route for birds traveling, covering a large continental area of Eurasia between the Arctic and Indian Oceans and the associated island chains.

6th JANUARY 2025

Presidential Medal of Freedom

- **Context:** Joe Biden, the President of the USA, honoured Presidential Medal of Freedom to 19 distinguished individuals during a ceremony at the White House.



Key Facts

- This event recognised contributions across various fields, including politics, entertainment, and sports.
- The honourees included prominent figures such as Hillary Clinton, philanthropist George Soros, and posthumously awarded Robert F. Kennedy.
- Notable personalities like Lionel Messi, Jane Goodall, and Denzel Washington were also among the recipients.

About Presidential Medal of Freedom

- The Presidential Medal of Freedom is the highest civilian honour in the United States. It acknowledges individuals who have made contributions to national interests, world peace, or cultural endeavours.
- Established in 1945 by President Harry S. Truman, it was later renamed by President John F. Kennedy in 1963.
- The medal features a white star over a red pentagon, encircled by five gold eagles, with a blue centre displaying 13 gold stars.
- The President has the authority to award the medal based on recommendations or personal initiative.

ISRO successfully sprouts cowpea seeds in Space

- **Context:** The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) announced the successful sprouting of cowpea seeds in space, marking a major milestone in agricultural research beyond Earth.

Key Highlights

- The CROPS (Compact Research Module for Orbital Plant Studies) experiment, developed by the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), successfully sprouted cowpea seeds in just four days. This experiment aims to understand plant growth in microgravity, crucial for future long-duration space missions.
- The setup involves growing eight seeds in a controlled, closed-box environment with active thermal management.
- The experiment is fully automated and designed to last between five to seven days, focusing on demonstrating seed germination and sustaining growth until the two-leaf stage.
- This achievement occurred shortly after the PSLV-C60 SpaDeX mission, which launched on December 30, 2024, carrying 24 payloads, including the innovative PS4-Orbital Experiment Module (POEM-4).

About POEM

- The PS4-Orbital Experiment Module (POEM) serves as a stabilised platform for conducting various experiments in space.
- It is equipped with solar panels and a Li-Ion battery, enabling it to power multiple payloads.
- POEM's advanced navigation system includes sun sensors, gyros, and a magnetometer, ensuring precise attitude control.
- This stabilised platform represents upgrade over previous orbital platforms, enhancing the scientific capabilities of the experiments onboard.

7th JANUARY 2025

V. Narayanan

- **Context:** Renowned Indian rocket propulsion expert and aerospace engineer Dr. V. Narayanan has been appointed the next chairman of the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO).



Key Facts

- Dr. Narayanan holds experience in cryogenic propulsion systems and is mostly recognised for his noteworthy contributions to Indian space missions.
- He will be succeeding the current ISRO Chairman S. Somanath. This change in leadership comes at an important time as ISRO continues to ramp up its efforts in satellite technology development, advanced space exploration missions, and global collaborations.
- In January 2018, he was appointed Director of the Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC). He helped create the Solid Propulsion Systems for the Augmented Satellite Launch Vehicle (ASLV) and the Rohini Sounding Rockets early in his ISRO career.
- Additionally, Dr. Narayanan was the Project Director for the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle Mark III (GSLV Mk III) C25 Cryogenic Project. He oversaw the group that created the C25 Cryogenic Stage, which uses liquid oxygen and liquid hydrogen to power a 20-ton thrust engine. The GSLV Mk III vehicle was successfully launched on this stage for the first time.

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2025

- **Context:** The 18th edition of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) to be held in Bhubaneswar from January 8 to 10, 2025.

Key Highlights

- This event aims to strengthen ties between India and its diaspora.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi to inaugurate the convention, with President Christine Carla Kanganoo of Trinidad and Tobago as the chief guest addressing the gathering virtually.
- The event celebrates the contributions of overseas Indians to India's progress.
- This year's theme is "Diaspora's Contribution to a Viksit Bharat." The convention will see participation from over 50 countries, including prominent businessmen, entrepreneurs, and economists.

- The event aims to encourage dialogue between the Government of India and its diaspora.
- Discussions will focus on visa regulations, investment opportunities, and community welfare.

About Pravasi Bharatiya Divas

- The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is celebrated annually on January 9. This date marks Mahatma Gandhi's return to India from South Africa in 1915.
- The event marks the importance of the Indian diaspora in shaping India's identity and global presence.
- It serves as a reminder of the historical connections between India and its overseas citizens.

Bharatpol Portal

- **Context:** The Bharatpol portal, launched by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, marks advancement in India's law enforcement capabilities.

Key Highlights

- This innovative platform, developed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), facilitates real-time information sharing among state police and central agencies.

- The initiative aims to enhance international police cooperation through Interpol, particularly in addressing transnational crimes such as cybercrime, human trafficking, and drug trafficking.
- The Bharatpol portal is designed to streamline requests for international assistance in criminal investigations. It allows police forces across states and Union Territories to send requests for information on fugitives and other criminal matters.
- The portal aims to expedite the process of obtaining support from Interpol, which is crucial for tackling crimes that cross national borders.

About Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)

- The CBI was established in 1963, evolving from the Special Police Establishment set up during World War II.
- Originally focused on corruption, the agency has expanded its mandate to include serious crimes such as terrorism, economic fraud, and organized crime.
- The CBI operates under the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946, and is recognised as the nodal agency for Interpol-related affairs in India.

