



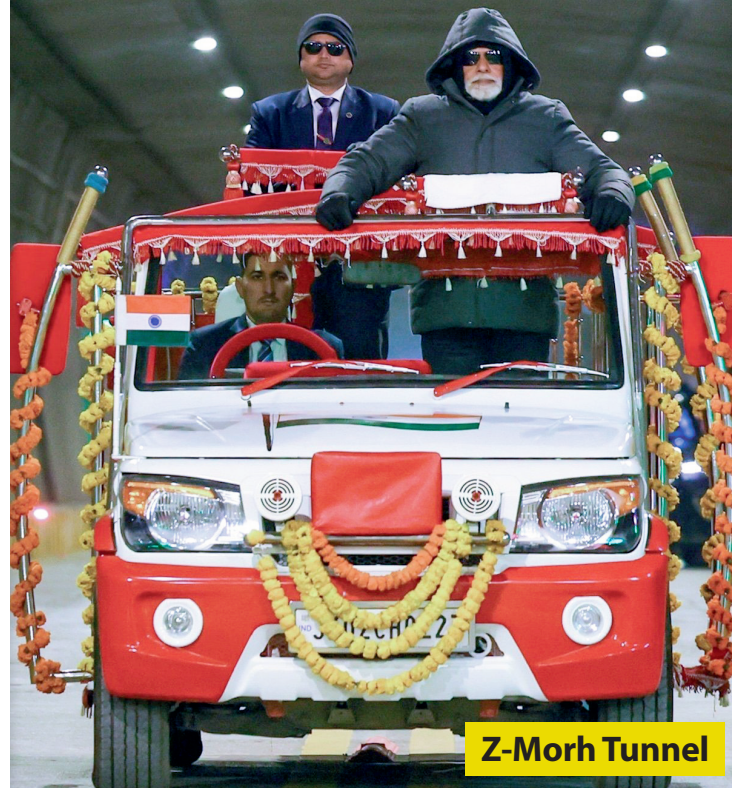
# WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

*Coverage of*

**08 Jan. - 14 Jan., 2025**

★★ Useful for ★★

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



**Z-Morh Tunnel**

PM Modi inaugurated infrastructure project in Jammu & Kashmir

8<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2025

## Indonesia: New Full Member of BRICS

- **Context:** Indonesia has officially become a full member of the BRICS group, as announced by Brazil, strengthening partnerships with other developing nations of the group.

### About BRICS

- BRICS is an acronym representing Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. The group was informally established in 2006 and formalised in 2009.
- The inaugural summit took place in Yekaterinburg, Russia.
- South Africa joined the following year, expanding the group's influence.
- BRICS has since included additional members, including Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia and UAE, reflecting its growing prominence in global affairs.
- The intergovernmental organization is currently looking to cement its reputation as an alternative to G7 grouping, which is led by the US.
- Over 30 nations, including Southeast Asian countries like Thailand, Malaysia, and Vietnam, have shown interest or applied for BRICS membership.

## India's GDP Growth Forecast for FY25

- **Context:** India's Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth is projected to reach a four-year low of 6.4% for the financial year 2024-25, as estimated by the National Statistics Office (NSO).

### Key Highlights

- The prediction falls short of the Reserve Bank of India's growth estimate of 6.6 per cent and the government's range of 6.5-7 per cent as outlined in the Economic Survey 2023-24.
- The first advance estimates are derived from data collected during the initial months of FY25 and aim

to assist in the formulation of the upcoming Union Budget.

- The first advance estimates reveal a marked slowdown in the primary and secondary sectors, excluding agriculture.
- Manufacturing Gross Value Added (GVA) is expected to decline to 5.3 per cent from 9.9 per cent in the previous year.
- Mining and quarrying growth is projected at 2.9 per cent, lower than the 7.1 per cent recorded in FY24.
- Consumption demand is expected to rise by 7.3 per cent, up from 4 per cent last year. However, investment growth is forecasted at 6.4 per cent, a decline from the previous year's 9 per cent. This disparity marks the challenges in stimulating corporate investments despite improved consumption.
- The services sector is anticipated to perform relatively well, with growth estimated at 7.2 per cent compared to 7.6 per cent in FY24. Public administration, defence, and other services are projected to grow by 9.1 per cent, showcasing resilience in this sector amidst broader economic challenges.
- Government Final Consumption Expenditure (GFCE) is set to increase by 4.1 per cent, up from 2.5 per cent in the previous year. This rise in government spending is expected to support overall economic growth, despite the subdued investment climate.

### About GDP Growth Estimates

- GDP growth estimates are crucial for economic planning. The NSO releases advance estimates to guide government departments in budget preparation.
- The current estimate indicates a slowdown influenced by various factors, including weak industrial performance and investment growth.

## Southern California Wildfires

- **Context:** Southern California is currently facing a severe wildfire crisis.

## Key Facts

- Multiple wildfires have wreaked havoc across the region, leading to mass evacuations and extensive property damage.
- The rapid spread and intensity of these fires can be attributed to specific climatic conditions and human factors.
- Three major wildfires are currently active in Southern California.
- The primary causes of wildfires in the United States are human activities, accounting for nearly 85% of all forest fires. These fires can be started either deliberately or accidentally.
- In the case of the current wildfires, the exact cause remains undetermined. However, the rapid spread can be linked to specific environmental factors.

## About Santa Ana Winds

- Santa Ana winds are a factor in the wildfire dynamics of Southern California. These winds occur when high pressure builds over the Great Basin, creating a pressure difference with low pressure along California's coast.
- The resulting winds blow from the inland deserts towards the Pacific Ocean. As these winds descend from the mountains, they compress and heat up, resulting in extremely low humidity levels.
- This dry air can lower moisture levels in vegetation to as little as 10%, making it highly susceptible to ignition.

9<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2025

## Sonobuoys

- **Context:** In recent developments, India and the United States have announced a strategic partnership aimed at co-producing sonobuoys for Undersea Domain Awareness (UDA) within the Indian Navy.

## Key Highlights

- This initiative reflects both nations' concerns regarding the increasing Chinese naval presence in the Indian Ocean Region.
- The cooperation was brought into light during U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's visit to India, which focused on enhancing defence innovation and industrial collaboration.

## About Sonobuoys

- Sonobuoys are devices used for detecting submarines in deep waters. They are deployed from aircraft or ships and can monitor underwater sounds.
- These technologies play a critical role in naval operations, particularly in anti-submarine warfare.

## India's First Green Hydrogen Hub

- **Context:** India's first integrated green hydrogen production facility "Green Hydrogen Hub (GHH)" project has been officially launched in Pudimadaka, Anakapalli district, Andhra Pradesh.

## Key Highlights

- This initiative, part of the National Green Hydrogen Mission, represents a step towards enhancing India's renewable energy capacity and achieving its net zero goals by 2070.
- The GHH will feature a capacity to produce 1,500 tonnes per day (TPD) of green hydrogen. Additionally, it will produce 7,500 TPD of green hydrogen derivatives, including green methanol, green urea, and sustainable aviation fuel.
- The GHH project is expected to generate over 57,000 jobs by 2032. This employment boost will impact the local economy, encouraging growth in the region and contributing to India's broader economic objectives.
- The GHH project aligns with India's target of achieving 500 GW of non-fossil energy capacity by 2030. It aims to facilitate decarbonisation across major sectors and support the nation's quest for energy independence.



10<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2025

## Gulf of Mexico

- **Context:** Recently, US President-elect Donald Trump announced plans to rename the Gulf of Mexico to the “Gulf of America”.

### Key Facts

- Trump’s remarks were part of a broader critique of trade and immigration issues. He claimed that the United States does most of the work in the region and suggested the name change was appropriate.
- In response, Mexico’s President Claudia Sheinbaum proposed renaming North America to “Mexican America”, referencing historical maps.

### Historical Facts

- The name “America” originates from the Italian explorer Amerigo Vespucci. His letters described the existence of a “New World”.
- In 1507, cartographer Martin Waldseemüller created a map that labelled the new continent as “America”, inspired by Vespucci’s first name. This map represented advancement in geographical knowledge, clearly distinguishing the Western Hemisphere.
- The term “Mexico” derives from the Nahuatl language of the Aztecs. It combines three words – “metztli” (moon), “xictli” (belly button), and “-co” (place). This refers to Tenochtitlan, the Aztec capital located on an island in Lake Texcoco, also known as the Moon Lake. The official name “United Mexican States” was first used in 1824, inspired by the United States.
- Renaming the Gulf of Mexico would not be a unilateral action by the US. The International Hydrographic Organisation (IHO) oversees the naming of maritime areas and requires consensus among member states. There is no formal protocol for renaming such bodies of water.

## EmpowHER Biz

- **Context:** The Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) of NITI Aayog has recently launched a new initiative called EmpowHER Biz – Sapno Ki Udaan.

### Key Highlights

- The EmpowHER Biz initiative aims to empower women entrepreneurs by providing them with essential skills and resources to thrive in the organised retail sector.
- This programme is in partnership with New Shop, a leading 24/7 convenience retail chain in India.
- EmpowHER Biz is designed to equip aspiring women entrepreneurs with mentorship and comprehensive training.
- The programme focuses on key areas such as retail management, digital tools, financial literacy, and business development. It seeks to create a supportive environment for women to succeed in retail.

### About Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP)

- Women Entrepreneurship Platform was incubated in NITI Aayog in 2018 and transitioned into a public-private partnership in 2022.
- The platform aims to empower women entrepreneurs by addressing information asymmetry and providing support across several pillars – Access to Finance, Market Linkages, Training and Skilling, Mentoring & Networking, Compliance & Legal Assistance, and Business Development Services.

11<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2025

## Angel Tax

- **Context:** The recent abolition of the angel tax in India has sparked a wave of optimism among startups.

## Key Highlights

- Many companies are relocating their headquarters back to India, encouraged by government initiatives aimed at improving the ease of doing business.
- The decision, part of the FY25 Budget, has been instrumental in reversing the trend of startups registering abroad for better tax advantages.
- The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has reported uptick in the number of startups returning to the country.

## About Angel Tax

- Angel tax is aimed to curb tax avoidance and money laundering by taxing the difference between the fair market value (FMV) of shares and the price at which closely held companies issued them.
- It was introduced in 2012.
- The removal of angel tax has led to a wave of “reverse flipping,” where startups that initially registered abroad are now returning to India.

## INS Vaghsheer

- **Context:** Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) recently delivered INS Vaghsheer, the final submarine of the Scorpene class to the Indian Navy.

## Key Highlights

- INS Vaghsheer represents milestone in India’s naval capabilities. The delivery occurred after extensive testing to ensure the submarine is combat-ready.
- The Scorpene class submarines are advanced diesel-electric vessels. They are designed for a variety of missions, including anti-surface and anti-submarine warfare.
- The submarines feature state-of-the-art technology, ensuring superior stealth and operational capabilities.

## Key Features of INS Vaghsheer

- INS Vaghsheer is equipped with advanced stealth capabilities. These include low radiated noise levels and hydro-dynamically optimised shapes.

- It is equipped with low radiated noise levels, acoustic silencing techniques and a hydrodynamically optimised shape.
- The submarine can launch precision-guided weapons, such as torpedoes and anti-ship missiles at the surface or underwater.

## LingoSat

- **Context:** Japan recently launched LingoSat, a wooden satellite, that marks milestone in space exploration.

## Key Highlights

- This unique wooden satellite is the first of its kind to be sent into Earth’s orbit. It was delivered by the International Space Station, diverging from traditional rocket launches.
- Built as a collaborative effort between Kyoto University and Sumitomo Forestry in Japan, LingoSat aims to assess the viability of wood as a material for satellites.
- The primary aim of LingoSat is to evaluate how wood behaves in the harsh conditions of space. Its sensors will monitor the wood’s reaction to extreme temperature fluctuations and radiation exposure.
- The satellite will orbit Earth for six months, providing valuable data on wood’s durability and performance in space.

## Construction and Design

- LingoSat measures just 10 cm and weighs 900 grams. It is crafted from Honeki Magnolia wood panels.
- The construction process utilised a traditional Japanese wood joinery method, eliminating the need for metal screws or adhesives. This innovative design enhances the satellite’s environmental credentials.

12<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2025

## World Economic Situation and Prospects Report 2025

- **Context:** The Indian economy is projected to grow by 6.6 per cent in 2025, according to the United Nations' World Economic Situation and Prospects report.

### Key Highlights

- The report maintains its previous growth forecast, reflecting confidence in India's economic resilience. The public sector plays important role in funding infrastructure projects. These projects enhance physical and digital connectivity and improve social infrastructure, including sanitation and water supply.
- The UN report emphasises the importance of capital expenditure on infrastructure. Such investment is expected to yield strong multiplier effects on economic growth. Infrastructure development is crucial for enhancing productivity across various sectors.
- The manufacturing and services sectors are anticipated to expand, contributing to overall economic activity.
- Strong export growth in service industries and specific goods categories, such as pharmaceuticals and electronics, will further stimulate the economy.
- Agricultural growth will contribute to the overall economic performance of India. Enhanced agricultural productivity can support rural incomes and consumption.

### Regional Economic Outlook

- The economic growth forecast for South Asia remains robust, primarily driven by India. The region is projected to grow at 5.7 per cent in 2025 and 6 per cent in 2026. India's performance is crucial for the region's overall economic health.
- The interconnected nature of economies in South Asia amplifies the impact of India's growth on its neighbours.

## INROAD Project

- **Context:** The INROAD (Indian Natural Rubber Operations for Assisted Development) project is making progress in the North-Eastern India.

### Key Facts

- Launched with a financial backing of 100 crore, the initiative aims to enhance the quality of natural rubber produced in the region.
- This funding will facilitate skill development for rubber growers and the establishment of model infrastructure.
- The project has garnered support from key players in the tyre industry, demonstrating a unique collaboration between agriculture and manufacturing.
- The INROAD project focuses on improving the quality of natural rubber through direct involvement from tyre manufacturers.
- The project is financially supported by four major companies – Apollo, Ceat, JK, and MRF.
- The Rubber Board of India oversees its implementation.

13<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2025

## Prabowo Subianto

- **Context:** Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto will attend India's Republic Day celebrations as the Chief Guest.

### Key Highlights

- This visit marks diplomatic engagement between Indonesia and India.
- India's Republic Day event commemorates the adoption of the Constitution in 1950.
- Each year, India invites a foreign leader as the Chief Guest.

### Indonesia-India Relations

- The evolving relationship between Indonesia and India holds promise for future collaborations.

- Defence procurement discussions may lead to enhanced military capabilities for Indonesia. Additionally, the potential maintenance support for Sukhoi fighter jets could further strengthen ties.
- Indonesia's defence ministry has requested a loan from India to purchase BrahMos missiles. This joint development between India and Russia has gained interest from several Southeast Asian nations.
- Indonesia seeks to modernise its military capabilities, particularly in light of its extensive coastline. The proposed \$450 million loan reflects Indonesia's commitment to enhancing its defence infrastructure.

## Interpol's Silver Notice

- **Context:** Interpol has recently launched its first Silver Notice, aimed at locating laundered assets across borders.

### Key Highlights

- This initiative is part of a pilot project involving 52 member countries, including India.
- The Silver Notice is a new addition to Interpol's existing suite of colour-coded notices, which facilitate international cooperation in law enforcement.
- The Silver Notice is designed to assist countries in tracking down assets linked to criminal activities. It allows member nations to request information on properties, vehicles, financial accounts, and businesses associated with individuals involved in serious crimes such as fraud, corruption, and drug trafficking.
- Each participating country can request up to 500 notices, which will be evenly distributed among them. This collaborative approach aims to enhance the effectiveness of asset tracing on a global scale.
- Before publication, every Silver Notice will undergo a review by Interpol's General Secretariat to ensure compliance with the organisation's rules. This includes verifying that notices are not used for political purposes, in line with Article 3 of Interpol's Constitution.

## Interpol's Colour-Coded Notices

Interpol currently employs several types of notices to facilitate international cooperation:

- **Red Notice:** Requests the detention of fugitives.
- **Yellow Notice:** Aids in locating missing persons, especially minors.
- **Blue Notice:** Collects additional information related to individuals in criminal investigations.
- **Black Notice:** Seeks information on unidentified bodies.
- **Green Notice:** Provides warnings about individuals posing a potential threat.
- **Orange Notice:** Warns of imminent threats to public safety.
- **Purple Notice:** Shares information on criminal methods and techniques.
- **UN Security Council Special Notice:** Targets individuals or entities under UN sanctions.

## La Niña

- **Context:** La Niña conditions have re-emerged in the Pacific Ocean, as recently reported by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

### Key Highlights

- La Niña phenomenon is part of the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO), which influences global weather patterns.
- The emergence of La Niña is characterised by below-average sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern Pacific, contrasting with the warmer conditions typically associated with El Niño.

### About La Niña

- La Niña is a climate pattern that represents the cool phase of ENSO. It occurs when cooler ocean temperatures dominate the central and eastern tropical Pacific.
- This phenomenon typically leads to increased rainfall in some regions and droughts in others.

- La Niña conditions are often linked to stronger trade winds, which push warm water towards the western Pacific.

### About ENSO Cycle

- The El Niño Southern Oscillation comprises three phases – El Niño, La Niña, and neutral.
- El Niño is characterised by warmer sea surface temperatures, while La Niña features cooler temperatures. These phases occur irregularly, typically every two to seven years.
- Each phase lasts approximately one year, but La Niña events may repeat and persist longer than El Niño events.
- ENSO impacts global weather patterns. El Niño can lead to increased global temperatures and extreme weather events, such as heavy rainfall and flooding in some areas. In contrast, La Niña often results in cooler temperatures and can cause droughts in regions reliant on consistent rainfall.

14<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2025

### Z-Morh Tunnel

- **Context:** The Z-Morh Tunnel, infrastructure project in Kashmir, aims to enhance connectivity in the region, has been inaugurated by PM Narendra Modi.

### Key Highlights

- A 6.4-kilometre-long tunnel Z-Morh connects Sonamarg, a popular tourist destination, with Kangan town in the Ganderbal district.
- Its construction addresses the challenges posed by heavy snowfall and avalanches during winter, which often render the roads impassable.
- The tunnel promises year-round access, benefiting both tourism and military operations in Ladakh.
- The Z-Morh Tunnel will ensure uninterrupted access, vital for both civilian and military transport.
- Initiated in 2012, the project faced numerous delays due to financial and administrative issues.

### Strategic Importance

- The Z-Morh Tunnel is part of the broader Zojila Tunnel project, which aims to connect Srinagar with Ladakh.
- This connectivity is critical for India's defence strategy, especially given the region's contentious borders with Pakistan and China.
- The tunnel will reduce reliance on air transport for military logistics, enhancing operational efficiency.

### Nag Mark 2 Missile

- **Context:** The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has recently conducted successful field evaluation trials of the Nag Mark 2 missile.

### Key Highlights

- This third-generation fire-and-forget anti-tank guided missile was tested at the Pokhran field range in Rajasthan.
- The trials demonstrated exceptional precision and reliability, effectively destroying all designated targets.
- The Defence Ministry confirmed that the trials validated the missile's firing range capabilities.

### About Nag Mark 2 Missile

- Nag Mark 2 is a third-generation anti-tank guided missile developed in India. It features fire-and-forget technology, allowing operators to lock onto targets before launch.
- This technology ensures precision strikes without requiring further guidance after launch.
- The missile is designed to neutralise modern armoured threats, making it a vital addition to India's defence arsenal.
- **The Nag Mark 2 boasts several key features:**
  - **Fire-and-Forget Technology:** This allows for precision targeting with minimal operator intervention after launch.



- **Versatile Performance:** It can neutralise modern armoured vehicles, including those equipped with explosive reactive armour (ERA).
- **Platform Compatibility:** The missile is successfully integrated with NAMICA, enhancing its deployment options on the battlefield.

## Atomic Energy Commission

- **Context:** The Government of India has recently reconstituted the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), incorporating new members to enhance its oversight and policy formulation capabilities.

### Key Highlights

- The reconstitution reflects a strategic move to strengthen the governance of atomic energy in the country.
  - The AEC is crucial for developing policies that guide the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE), which plays a very important role in India's nuclear energy landscape.
- The reconstituted AEC now includes figures such as T V Somanathan and Manoj Govil, who serve as the Cabinet Secretary and Expenditure Secretary, respectively.
  - Ajit Kumar Mohanty, the Secretary of the Department of Atomic Energy, has been appointed as the Chairman of the commission.
  - Other notable members include National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri, both of whom bring a wealth of experience to the commission.

### About Atomic Energy Commission

- The Atomic Energy Commission was established in August 1948 as part of the Department of Scientific Research.
- The Department of Atomic Energy was formed later, on August 3, 1954, under the direct supervision of the Prime Minister.
- The AEC was officially constituted in March 1958, following a Government Resolution. This historical framework has set the foundation for India's nuclear policy development.

