



WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

Coverage of

22 Jan. - 28 Jan., 2025

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

SWL:60T



Deep Ocean Mission

India's first human-operated underwater submersible as part of the Deep Ocean Mission

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22nd JANUARY 2025

Paris Agreement

- **Context:** US President Donald Trump decided to withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement again — having first done so in 2017.

Key Facts

- On his first day in office, Trump also ordered an immediate revocation of all climate finance commitments made by the US.
 - He has promised to reverse some of the climate-friendly energy policies of the last few years, and reiterated his commitment to extracting more oil and gas to meet America's energy requirements.
- **Background:**
 - Trump's predecessor (and successor) Joe Biden had taken the US back into the Paris Agreement in 2021.
 - The US had not become a party to the 1997 Kyoto Protocol as well, having refused to ratify it after signing on to it.
 - He opined that the international regulations on climate change have been unfair to the US because similar restrictions are not placed on China, on account of it being classified as a developing country.

About Paris Agreement

- It is a legally binding international treaty on climate change, adopted in 2015, at the COP21 to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- It aims to limit global warming to below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, with efforts to limit the increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius.
- The Paris Agreement emphasizes nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and encourages all countries to take climate action.
- Countries must review and update their NDCs every five years to enhance their efforts and increase ambition over time.

- Article 28 of the Paris Agreement lays out the procedure and timeline for a country's withdrawal from the treaty.
- Any time after three years from the date on which this Agreement has entered into force for a Party, that Party may withdraw from this Agreement by giving written notification.

Uniform Civil Code (UCC)

- **Context:** The Cabinet of Uttarakhand approved the rules for the Uniform Civil Code.

Key Facts

- In 2024, The Uttarakhand Legislative Assembly passed The Uniform Civil Code of Uttarakhand Act, 2024, becoming the first Indian State to adopt a UCC post-independence.
- It bans polygamy, nikah halala, child marriage, and extrajudicial divorce practices while ensuring uniform marriageable ages (21 for men, 18 for women).
 - Women gain equal property rights, though personal laws on guardianship and Hindu Undivided Families remain unchanged.
 - Live-in relationships are recognized as quasi-marriages, safeguarding offspring legitimacy.

About Uniform Civil Code (UCC)

- A Uniform Civil Code refers to the provision of one law for the entire country, applicable to all religious communities, in their personal matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption, etc.
- It aims to replace the existing diverse personal laws that vary based on religious affiliations.
- Article 44 contained in part IV of the Constitution says that the state "shall endeavor to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India".
- Part IV of the Constitution outlines the Directive Principles of State Policy, which, while not enforceable or justiciable in a court of law, are fundamental to the country's governance.

- **UCC in Goa:** It follows the Portuguese Civil Code of 1867, which means that people of all religions in Goa are subject to the same laws on marriage, divorce, and succession.
 - The Goa, Daman and Diu Administration Act of 1962, which was passed after Goa joined the union as a territory in 1961, gave Goa permission to apply the Civil Code.

Pinaka Rocket Systems

- **Context:** The Indian Army has set a Rs 10,200 crore order for ammunition related to the Pinaka multi-launch artillery rocket system.

Key Highlights

- The Pinaka MBRL system was developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) of India.
- The system is named after “Pinaka,” a mythical weapon used by Lord Shiva.
- It has the capability to hit targets at 75 kilometers and beyond.
- The Pinaka MBRL is capable of launching a salvo of 12 rockets in 44 seconds, which makes it an effective weapon for quickly overwhelming enemy defenses.
- Armenia became the first export customer for the indigenously developed Pinaka with interest expressed by several countries in the system.

23rd JANUARY 2025

Stargate Project

- **Context:** The United States has launched a significant initiative under the “Stargate Project” to strengthen its artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities.

About Stargate

- Stargate is a \$500 billion initiative designed to establish a comprehensive artificial intelligence (AI) infrastructure in the United States over the next four years.

- It is a collaborative effort between OpenAI, SoftBank, and Oracle, with an initial \$100 billion investment.
- The project involves constructing massive data centers and campuses across the country to support the development and deployment of AI technologies at scale.
- Stargate is envisioned as a critical step toward re-industrializing the United States and enhancing its technological capabilities.

Black Hole

- **Context:** A team of researchers using NASA's James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) and the Chandra X-ray observatory has discovered a bizarre black hole.

Key Facts

- The newfound black hole, designated LID-568, is a low-mass supermassive black hole that existed just 1.5 billion years after the Big Bang.
- The black hole was feeding on a surrounding cloud of matter at almost 40-times greater than what astrophysicists thought was the upper limit.

About Black Hole

- A black hole is an extremely dense object whose gravity is so strong that nothing, not even light, can escape it.
- A black hole does not have a surface, like a planet or star. Instead, it is a region of space where matter has collapsed in on itself.
- This catastrophic collapse results in a huge amount of mass being concentrated in an incredibly small area.
- A black hole is formed when a really massive star runs out of fuel to fuse, blows up, leaving its core to implode under its weight to form a black hole.
- The center of a black hole is a gravitational singularity, a point where the general theory of relativity breaks down, i.e. where its predictions don't apply.
- A black hole's great gravitational pull emerges as if from the singularity.

Estimation and Measurement of India's Digital Economy

- **Context:** The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has released a comprehensive report titled 'Estimation and Measurement of India's Digital Economy'.

About

- The report uses globally adopted methodologies developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).
- The report is an attempt to compile the first set of credible, comprehensible, and current estimates of India's digital economy.

Major Highlights

- India's digital economy stood at 11.74% of the national income in 2022-23 and is likely to rise to 13.42% by 2024-25.
- **Growth:** India's digital economy is expected to grow almost twice as fast as the overall economy, contributing to nearly one-fifth of national income by 2029-30.
 - In less than six-years, the share of the digital economy will become larger than that of agriculture or manufacturing in the country.
- **Employment Generation:** In 2022-23, the digital economy accounted for 14.67 million workers, or 2.55% of India's estimated work force.
- India's digital economy is steadily moving beyond the realm of the ICT industries, diffusing across all parts of the economy.

24th JANUARY 2025

Geographical Indication (GI) Tags

- **Context:** The Union Minister of Commerce & Industry, set a target of reaching 10,000 Geographical Indication (GI) Tags by 2030.

Key Facts

- The number of GI tags issued by the department till date stands at 605.
- The number of authorized users for GI tags increased from 365 to 29000 and the number of patents granted increased from 6000 to 100000, in the last 10 years.

About GI Tag

- A geographical indication (GI) is a sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin.
- GIs are part of the intellectual property rights that come under the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property.
- GI registration is administered by the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act of 1999.
- Agricultural products, foodstuffs, wine and spirit drinks, handicrafts, and industrial products.
- For a period of 10 years, it can be renewed from time to time for a further period of 10 years each.
- The first GI tag in the country was given to the famous Darjeeling tea.
 - Uttar Pradesh retains its position as the state with the most GI-tagged products in India, reaching a total of 75.
 - Tamil Nadu follows behind with 58 GI products.

Benefits of GI Tag

- It confers legal protection to Geographical Indications in India which in turn boost exports.
- Prevents unauthorised use of a Registered Geographical Indication by others.
- It promotes economic prosperity of producers of goods produced in a geographical territory.

Deep Ocean Mission

- **Context:** India is preparing to deploy its first human-operated underwater submersible as part of the Deep Ocean Mission.

About Submersible

- The submersible will initially operate at depths of up to 500 meters, with future plans to extend its reach to 6,000 meters.
- It aims to explore underwater resources, enhance understanding of deep-sea ecosystems, and boost India's blue economy.
- Key objectives include identifying critical minerals, rare metals, and new marine biodiversity, contributing to sustainable fisheries and conservation.

About Deep Ocean Mission

- The Deep Ocean Mission, launched on September 7, 2021, by the Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- It is a Central Sector Scheme approved by the Cabinet.
- A key project under this mission, Samudrayaan, focuses on developing the MATSYA 6000 manned submersible.
- The mission also includes the deployment of the Ocean Mineral Explorer (OMe 6000), an Autonomous Underwater Vehicle (AUV) used for deep-sea mineral exploration.

25th JANUARY 2025

National Voters' Day

- **Context:** India is observing the 15th National Voters' Day on January 25, 2025, marking 75 years of the Election Commission of India's (ECI) dedicated service to the nation.

About National Voters' Day

- **Historical Background:** Established in 2011 to mark the foundation of the Election Commission of India (January 25, 1950).
- **15th National Voters' Day (2025):** Theme: "Nothing Like Voting, I Vote for Sure", emphasizing the critical role of voting in democracy.

Key Activities:

- Presentation of the 'Best Electoral Practices Awards' to outstanding state and district officials.

- Special initiatives to commemorate 75 years of the ECI, including:
 - A commemorative postal stamp.
 - A nationwide essay competition on "Democracy and India's Future".

Importance of National Voters' Day

- **Promotes Voter Awareness:** Educates citizens about their right to vote and the importance of participation in elections.
 - Reinforces the idea that every vote matters.
- **Encourages Voter Registration:** Focus on enrolling first-time voters, especially young individuals.
 - Provides Electoral Photo Identity Cards (EPIC) to new voters.
 - All citizens aged 18 or above on January 1 of the concerned year, irrespective of caste, creed, religion, or gender, are eligible to vote.
- **Raises Electoral Literacy:** Organizes campaigns to explain the voting process and the impact of every vote.
- **Honors Contributions:** Recognizes individuals and organizations for spreading voter awareness and ensuring smooth electoral processes.
- **Strengthens Democracy:** Encourages active participation to strengthen India's democratic fabric.
- **Digital Innovations:** Enhanced use of mobile apps like the Voter Helpline App and initiatives like Remote Voting Pilots for migrant workers.

About Election Commission of India

- **Constitutional Authority:**
 - Articles 324–329 empower the Election Commission of India (ECI) to conduct elections for Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies, and the offices of the President and Vice President.
- **Composition:** Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and two Election Commissioners (ECs).
- **Appointment Process (as per the 2023 Act):**
 - A Search Committee, chaired by the Union Law Minister, prepares a panel of names.

- The Selection Committee (Prime Minister, a Cabinet Minister, and Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha) finalizes the appointments.
- Appointed by the President of India.
- **Tenure:** Six years or up to 65 years of age (whichever is earlier).
- **Removal:** The CEC can only be removed like a judge of the Supreme Court.
 - ECs can only be removed on the recommendation of the CEC.

Fiscal Health Index (FHI) Report

- **Context:** NITI Aayog has released the first Fiscal Health Index (FHI) report.

Key Highlights

- The report titled “Fiscal Health Index 2025” ranked States for 2022-23.
- It covers 18 major States that drive the Indian economy in terms of their contribution to India’s GDP, demography, total public expenditure, revenues, and overall fiscal stability.
- It will be an annual publication and offers a systematic approach to assess the state’s fiscal health, identify areas for improvement, and promote best practices across states.
- **Sub-Indices:** Quality of Expenditure, Revenue Mobilisation, Fiscal Prudence, Debt Index, and Debt Sustainability.

Major Findings

- **Top Performing:** Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Jharkhand and Gujarat have emerged as top-performing ‘achievers’ among the States.
 - It displays strong fiscal health, excelling in revenue mobilization, expenditure management, and debt sustainability.
- **Aspirational States:** Haryana, Kerala, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, and Punjab.
 - These states face high debt, large interest payments, weak revenue generation, and inefficiencies in capital expenditure, with reliance on non-tax revenue impacting their fiscal health and rankings.

SANJAY

- **Context:** Defence Minister flagged-off ‘SANJAY – The Battlefield Surveillance System (BSS)’.

Key Highlights

- It has been indigenously & jointly developed by the Indian Army and Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL).
- These systems will be inducted to the Indian Army in three phases in 2025.
 - Year 2025 has been declared as the ‘Year of Reforms’ in the Ministry of Defence (MoD).
- SANJAY is an automated system which integrates the inputs from all ground and aerial battlefield sensors.
 - The BSS is equipped with state-of-the-art sensors and cutting-edge analytics.
- It will monitor the vast land borders, prevent intrusions, assess situations with unparalleled accuracy and prove to be a force multiplier in Intelligence, Surveillance & Reconnaissance
 - It will enhance battlefield transparency and transform the future battlefield through a Centralised Web Application.
 - It will provide inputs to Command & Army Headquarters, and the Indian Army Decision Support System.

26th JANUARY 2025

76th Republic Day Parade

- **Context:** During the 76th Republic Day parade, India showcased its military strength and cultural heritage.

Key Highlights

- This parade is presided over by the President of India, who is the supreme commander of the Armed Forces.
- Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto was the chief guest at the event.
- A contingent of 342 members from the Indonesian National Armed Forces also participated in the parade, marking the first-time troops from Indonesia joined a foreign parade.

- Foreign soldiers took part in the parade for the first time in 2016 with the participation of the French army contingent.
- **Sanjay and Pralay:** The Army's battle surveillance system "Sanjay" and the Defence Research and Development Organisation's (DRDO) surface-to-surface tactical missile "Pralay" were featured for the first time.
- **Joint Tri-Services:** For the first time, a tri-services tableau, highlighting enhanced synergy among the country's armed forces was showcased.
 - It depicted a coordinated battlefield scenario, featuring land, air, and naval operations.
- **Key Military Assets:** BrahMos, Pinaka, and Akash systems.
- **Indian Navy:** It showcased indigenous warship design and included models of vessels such as INS Surat, INS Nilgiri, and INS Vaghsheer, underlining the country's progress in maritime security.

Showcasing Women Empowerment

- Dimple Singh Bhati of the Indian Army created history by becoming the first woman officer to present a salute to the President.
- An all-women marching contingent from the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).
- The Delhi Police All-Women Band, included four women Sub-Inspectors and 64 women constables from the Brass and Pipe Band units.
- The ministry of rural development's tableau on the "Lakhpati Didi Initiative," which promotes women's economic empowerment through entrepreneurship and self-reliance.

Indian Culture

- The Republic Day parade featured 31 tableaux from 16 states and union territories, as well as central ministries and organizations.
- **Theme:** Swarnim Bharat: Virasat aur Vikas.
- Uttar Pradesh's tableau highlighted the ongoing Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj, showcasing scenes of

'Samudra Manthan,' 'Amrit Kalash,' and holy bathing at the Sangam.

- **Cultural performance:** It spanned the entire Kartavya Path for the first time, over 5,000 folk and tribal artists performed 45 dance forms.
 - The 11-minute performance, titled "Jayati Jaya Mamah Bharatam," was curated by the Sangeet Natak Akademi.

Significance

- It marks the adoption of the Indian Constitution on January 26, 1950.
 - January 26 is chosen to honour the declaration of Purna Swaraj made by the Indian National Congress on January 26, 1930.
- It honors the martyrs who have sacrificed their lives for the country and to bestow bravery awards upon military personnel and citizens.
- It also pays tribute to the Constitution's principles and the democratic framework it established, highlighting values such as justice, equality, and fraternity.

SEBI's Sachetisation Plan

- **Context:** The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has proposed promoting financial inclusion through "sachetisation" of mutual fund investments.

About Sachetisation

- Sachetisation refers to the process of offering financial products and services in smaller, more affordable packages, making them easier to access and manage.
- The initiative proposes offering small-ticket investments, starting at just 250, to encourage low-income groups to begin their investment journey in mutual funds.
- SEBI aims to make mutual funds accessible by promoting small, periodic investments through Systematic Investment Plans (SIPs), helping individuals develop a habit of systematic savings.

- The proposal focuses on reaching underserved sections of society, particularly those in rural areas with limited means to invest.

Fentanyl

- **Context:** The U.S. is proposing a 10% tariff on Chinese imports, accusing China of failing to stop fentanyl trafficking into the U.S. via Mexico and Canada.

About Fentanyl

- It is a powerful synthetic opioid primarily used in medicine to treat severe pain, especially after surgery or for chronic pain in patients with tolerance to other opioids.
 - Opioids are a class of drugs that bind to opioid receptors in the brain and body, reducing the perception of pain.
- It is approximately 50-100 times more potent than morphine.
- However, fentanyl is also illegally manufactured and sold for recreational use. It is often mixed with heroin, cocaine, or methamphetamine and pressed into pills designed to look like prescription opioids, significantly increasing the risk of overdose.

27th JANUARY 2025

Global List of Accredited Wetland Cities

- **Context:** Indore and Udaipur have become the first two Indian cities to join the global list of accredited wetland cities.

Key Highlights

- Sirpur Lake, a Ramsar Site in Indore, has been recognised for water bird congregation and is being developed as a bird sanctuary.
- Udaipur in Rajasthan is surrounded by five major wetlands, namely, Pichola, Fateh Sagar, Rang Sagar, Swaroop Sagar, and Doodh Talai.

About Wetland City Accreditation Program

- It is part of the Ramsar Convention, and was approved during COP12 held in the year 2015.
- Accreditation is granted to only those cities which satisfy all the six international criteria including adopting measures for conservation of wetlands and their ecosystem services.
- **Aim:** To promote conservation and wise use of urban and peri-urban wetlands.
- **Validity:** It is valid for 6 years, after which it must be renewed, providing that it continues to fill each of the 6 criteria.
- The global list of 74 accredited wetland cities comprises the highest 22 from China followed by nine from France.
- Ramsar Convention is an international convention on wetlands, adopted in 1971 in the Iranian city of Ramsar.
 - It provides a framework for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources across its 172-member countries including India.
 - At present, 85 wetlands in India are protected under the treaty.

Unified Pension Scheme

- **Context:** The Finance Ministry notified the Unified Pension Scheme (UPS) for workers covered by the National Pension System (NPS), effective from April 1, 2025.

About Unified Pension Scheme (UPS)

- The UPS was recommended as an alternative to the NPS by a panel led by former Finance Secretary T.V. Somanathan.
- The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) will determine the mechanism for retirees opting for the UPS, addressing top-up amounts relative to their NPS payouts.
- It will offer employees an assured pension of 50% of their average basic pay over the last 12 months before retirement, for a minimum service of 25 years.

- **Additional Benefits:** The UPS includes a family pension of 60% of the government worker's pension upon their death, a lumpsum superannuation payout, and gratuity benefits.
 - A minimum pension of Rs.10,000/month is promised for those with at least 10 years of Union government service.

India's Forex Reserves

- **Context:** India's foreign exchange (forex) reserves have experienced fluctuations in recent weeks.

Key Highlights

- As of January 17, 2025, the reserves stood at \$623.983 billion, a decrease of \$1.88 billion from the previous week. This decline follows a larger drop of \$8.714 billion recorded in the week ending January 10.
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) attributes these changes to market interventions aimed at stabilising the Indian rupee and adjustments in asset valuations.

About Forex Reserves

- Forex reserves are assets held by a country's central bank in foreign currencies.
- These reserves are crucial for maintaining currency stability, facilitating international trade, and managing foreign debt.
- They typically include foreign currency assets, gold reserves, and Special Drawing Rights (SDRs).

Components of Forex Reserves

The main components of India's forex reserves include:

- **Foreign Currency Assets:** This is the largest part of the reserves, amounting to \$533.133 billion as of January 17. It reflects the value of currencies like the euro, pound, and yen.
- **Gold Reserves:** These increased to \$68.947 billion. Gold acts as a hedge against inflation and currency fluctuations.

- **Special Drawing Rights (SDRs):** These are international reserve assets created by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). India's SDRs rose to \$17.782 billion.
- **Reserve Position with the IMF:** This represents India's financial position with the IMF, which decreased to \$4.122 billion.

28th JANUARY 2025

Enhanced Certificate of Origin (eCoO) 2.0 System

- **Context:** The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) has launched the enhanced Certificate of Origin (eCoO) 2.0 system.

Key Facts

- This upgrade aims to simplify the certification process for exporters and improve trade efficiency.
- The new platform incorporates user-friendly features and mandatory electronic filing, marking advancement in India's trade facilitation efforts.

Key Features of eCoO 2.0

- The eCoO 2.0 system's multi-user access allows exporters to authorise multiple users under one Importer Exporter Code (IEC). This flexibility enhances collaboration among team members.
- Aadhaar-based e-signing is now supported, providing an additional method for verifying identities alongside digital signature tokens.
- The system includes an integrated dashboard that offers seamless access to various eCoO services. Exporters can easily find information on Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), upcoming trade events, and other essential resources. This centralised access streamlines the overall experience for users.

Temporary Identification Number (TIN)

- **Context:** The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has recently implemented changes to the Goods and Services Tax (GST) framework in India.

Key Facts

- These changes include the introduction of a Temporary Identification Number (TIN) for businesses that do not require mandatory registration.
- This move aims to streamline tax compliance and facilitate payments under the GST regime.
- Additionally, the CBIC has announced a waiver of excess late fees for the financial years 2017-18 to 2022-23 concerning annual returns.

Temporary Identification Numbers Under GST

- The GST Council has recommended a new rule enabling tax officers to issue Temporary Identification Numbers to entities not liable for registration.
- This provision allows businesses to make necessary payments even without a permanent GST registration.
- The notification clarifies that these TINs will be granted under specific conditions outlined in Part B of FORM GST REG-12.

Threshold Limits for Registration

- Under the GST framework, businesses must register if their turnover exceeds certain thresholds.
- For the manufacturing sector, the limit is 40 lakh.
- For the service sector, it is set at 20 lakh.
- Special Category States have different thresholds, with some like Jammu and Kashmir opting for a 40 lakh limit for commodities.
- Other states, such as Puducherry, have chosen a 20 lakh limit for goods.

