



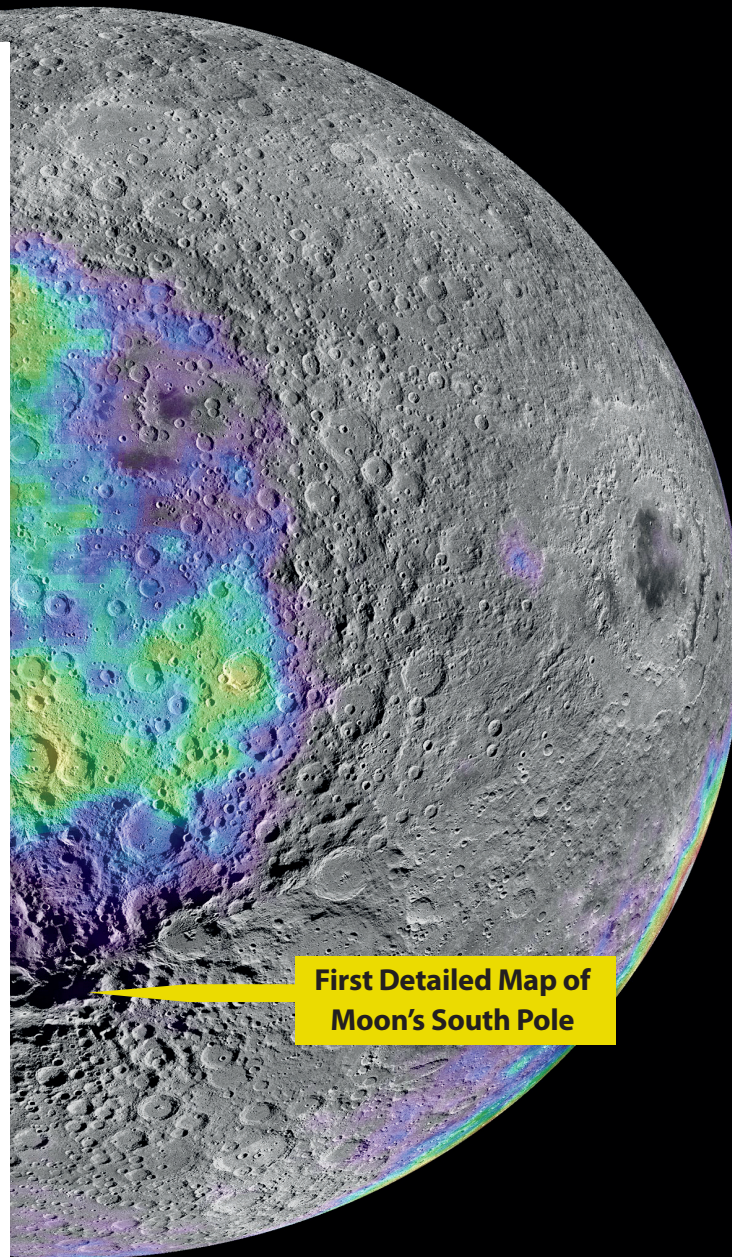
# WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

*Coverage of*

**19 Feb. - 25 Feb., 2025**

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



**First Detailed Map of  
Moon's South Pole**

19<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2025

## PM-AASHA

- **Context:** The Union Government has approved the continuation of the Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA) Scheme during the 15th Finance Commission Cycle up to 2025-26.

### About PM-AASHA Scheme

- The scheme was launched in 2018 as an umbrella scheme to ensure Minimum Support Price (MSP) to farmers, particularly for pulses, oilseeds, and copra.
- It aims to ensure remunerative prices for farmers and price stability in the agricultural sector.

### Components of PM-AASHA

- **Price Support Scheme (PSS):** The government procures pulses, oilseeds, and copra at MSP.
  - The Central Nodal Agencies (CNAs) conduct procurement in collaboration with state agencies.
  - Only produce meeting Fair Average Quality (FAQ) standards is procured.
- **Price Deficiency Payment Scheme (PDPS):** It directs compensation payments to pre-registered farmers for the difference between MSP and the market price.
  - There is no physical procurement of produce.
  - It applies to oilseeds and requires transactions through a transparent auction process in notified market yards.
- **Private Procurement & Stockist Scheme (PPSS) (Pilot Basis):** It allows states to involve private stockists for oilseed procurement.
  - It is implemented in selected Agricultural Produce Market Committees (APMCs) or districts.

### Key Changes in the scheme

- In 2024 the Government converged the Price Support Scheme (PSS) & Price Stabilization Fund

(PSF) schemes in PM AASHA to serve the farmers and consumers more efficiently.

- It will help in protecting consumers from extreme volatility in prices of agri-horticultural commodities by maintaining strategic buffer stock of pulses and onion for calibrated release; to discourage hoarding, unscrupulous speculation; and for supplies to consumers at affordable prices.
- The Market Intervention Scheme (MIS) was made a component of the integrated scheme of PM-AASHA.
  - The scheme is for perishable agricultural and horticultural commodities like onions, potatoes, and tomatoes.
  - It is implemented when prices fall by at least 10% from the previous normal season.

## India's first Vertical Bifacial Solar Plant

- **Context:** Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs inaugurated India's first vertical bi-facial solar plant installation at Okhla Vihar Metro station.

### Key Highlights

- The inauguration was done in the 5th International Conference on Green Metro Systems – The Future of Urban Mobility here.
  - It was organised by the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC), under the banner of i-Metro in association with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Indian Green Building Council (IGBC).
- The bi-facial panels can capture sunlight from both sides. It will take advantage of the metro's elevated structure for solar energy generation without occupying any additional land.
- **Significance:** Transitioning from thermal to renewable energy, utilising solar rooftops, and implementing regenerative braking in metros exemplify the shift toward a greener future.
- The innovation can help metro rail operations be more sustainable and contribute to renewable energy goals.

## Soil Health Cards

- **Context:** The Soil Health Card Scheme, introduced on February 19, 2015, in Rajasthan, has completed 10 years in operation.

### Soil Health Cards Scheme

- **Objective:** Soil health card provides information to farmers on nutrient status of their soil along with recommendations on appropriate dosage of nutrients to be applied for improving soil health and its fertility.
  - The scheme assists State Governments to issue soil health cards to all farmers in the country.
- **The Soil Health Card contains status of the soil with respect to 12 parameters that determine soil health:**
  - **Macro-nutrients:** Nitrogen (N), Phosphorus (P), Potassium (K), Sulfur (S).
  - **Micro-nutrients:** Zinc (Zn), Iron (Fe), Copper (Cu), Manganese (Mn), Boron (Bo).
  - **Other Indicators:** pH level (Acidity or Basicity of soil), Electrical Conductivity (Indicates the presence of salts in soil), Organic Carbon (OC).
- Soil Health Card scheme has been merged in Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) scheme as one of its components under the name 'Soil Health & Fertility' from the year 2022-23.

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## International Organization of Aids to Marine Navigation (IALA)

- **Context:** India is elected to the Vice Presidency of the International Organization of Aids to Marine Navigation (IALA) in Singapore.

### Key Facts

- It was the first General Assembly of IALA and also marks its transition from a non-governmental organization (NGO) to an inter-governmental organization (IGO).

- This underscores India's strong leadership and contributions to maritime affairs, reaffirming its commitment to sustainable and secure marine navigation.

International Organization of Aids to Marine Navigation (IALA)

- IALA was established in 1957 as an NGO.
- **New IGO Status:** Expands IALA's role in harmonizing global maritime navigation systems, promoting safety, and addressing emerging challenges in safety and environmental protection.
- India will host the IALA Council meeting in December 2025 and the IALA Conference & General Assembly in September 2027 in Mumbai.
- **Significance for India:** India's election highlights its commitment to maritime safety, navigational aids, and international cooperation in the maritime sector.

## Digital Brand Identity Manual (DBIM)

- **Context:** The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) launched DBIM and held the first Chief Information Officer (CIO) Conference 2025 in New Delhi.

### About Digital Brand Identity Manual (DBIM)

- It creates a consistent digital brand for the Government of India through standardized design elements.
- It is aimed at "Minimum Government, Maximum Governance" and "Uniform Governance."
- It ensures a standardized, cohesive digital presence across all ministries and platforms.

### Key Features of DBIM

- DBIM Toolkit ensures uniformity in digital identity.
- gov.in CMS Platform streamlined website management.
- Central Content Publishing System (CCPS) for centralized content governance.
- Social Media Campaign Guidelines standardizes digital communication.

- **MeitY Website:** First DBIM-compliant website unveiled.

### Importance

- It strengthens the integrity of government data and improves the user experience across websites, mobile apps, and social media platforms.
- It supports the “Reform, Perform, and Transform” vision, focusing on accessibility, inclusivity, and a citizen-centric approach to digital governance.

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## Ayushman Bharat Scheme

- **Context:** Delhi Cabinet approved the implementation of Ayushman Bharat scheme in the National Capital.

### Ayushman Bharat Scheme

- It was launched in 2018 with the aim of achieving universal health coverage. It has two key components:
  - Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri- Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY)
  - Ayushman Arogya Mandir

### Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri- Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY)

- AB PM-JAY is the largest publicly funded health assurance scheme in the world which provides health cover of Rs. 5 lakhs per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization.
  - The Scheme will apply to all aged 70 and above, irrespective of their socio-economic status
- **Coverage:** It covers up to 3 days of pre-hospitalization and 15 days of post – hospitalization expenses such as diagnostics and medicines.
  - The beneficiary can visit any empanelled public or private hospital in India to avail cashless treatment.
  - There is no restriction on the family size, age or gender.
- **Eligibility:** The inclusion of households is based

on the deprivation and occupational criteria of the Socio-Economic Caste Census 2011 (SECC 2011) for rural and urban areas, respectively.

- This number also includes families that were covered in the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) but were not present in the SECC 2011 database.
- **Funding:** The funding for the scheme is shared by the Centre and the state in a 60:40 ratio.
  - However, for North-Eastern states, Himalayan states (such as Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh), and Union Territories, the ratio is 90:10.

### Ayushman Arogya Mandir

- The component led to creation of 1,50,000 Health and Wellness Centres (AB-HWCs), renamed as Ayushman Arogya Mandir.
- They are created by upgrading the Sub Health Centres (SHCs) and rural and urban Primary Health Centres (PHCs), to bring health care closer to the community.
- The aim is to provide Comprehensive Primary Health Care (CPHC) along with the provision of follow-up care to the patients in the community.
- The essential health services along with the provisioning of essential medicines and diagnostics are provided closer to the community through these centers.

## Technology Adoption Fund (TAF)

- **Context:** The Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe), an indigenous arm of the Department of Space (DoS), has launched the 500 crore Technology Adoption Fund (TAF).

### Key Highlights

- **Aim:** To accelerate the development of indigenous space technology, reducing reliance on imported solutions.
- **Features:** Provide financial support up to 60% for startups/MSMEs in space tech and 40% for larger industries, with a cap of Rs 25 Crores per project.

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- Encourage creation of intellectual property and new space products.
- Open to all eligible Non-Government Entities (NGEs) with commercial potential.
- Offers partial funding and technical guidance/mentoring for product development.
- **Significance:**
  - Invest in domestic R&D and foster collaboration between government and private sector.
  - Position India as a global leader in the space industry.
  - Enhance technology, production processes, and meet market demands.
  - Contribute to job creation and economic growth.

## REITs and InvITs

- **Context:** The SEBI proposed a framework for undertaking fast-track follow-on offers by real estate investment trusts (REITs) and infrastructure investment trusts (InvITs) to make fundraising more efficient.

### About REITs

- Real Estate Investment Trusts or REITs are investment trusts (like mutual funds) that pool funds from investors to own and operate income-generating real estate properties.
- They pool funds from investors offering them a liquid way of entering the real estate market while helping them diversify their portfolio and earn regular income plus long-term capital appreciation.

### About InvITs

- Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs) are investment vehicles that pool funds from investors to own and operate infrastructure assets like highways, pipelines, and power plants.
- They offer regular income through dividends and long-term capital appreciation while helping monetize assets and attract private investment in public infrastructure.

## Purnima Devi Barman

- **Context:** A biologist from Assam, Purnima Devi Barman, was featured on the Time's Women of The Year 2025 list.

### Key Facts

- Purnima Devi Barman is the only Indian woman on Time's 2025 Women of the Year list.
  - The list includes notable women such as actress Nicole Kidman and Gisele Pelicot, a survivor of sexual violence who became an advocate for the cause.
- In 2007, Barman's intervened to save a tree home to greater adjutant storks in Assam, inspired by the birds' vulnerability.
  - She found the Hargila Army, a group of 20,000 women who protect the storks' nests and educate about their conservation.
  - The population of greater adjutant storks in Assam grew from 450 in 2007 to over 1,800 in 2023, with the bird's conservation status improved from "endangered" to "near threatened."
- Time's Women of the Year is an annual recognition by Time magazine that highlights women making significant changes in the face of challenges like gender violence, climate issues, and women's rights.

## Bharat Tech Triumph Program

- **Context:** The Bharat Tech Triumph Program is a significant initiative aimed at fostering India's digital and online gaming industry.

### Key Highlights

- **Launched by:** Interactive Entertainment and Innovation Council (IEIC), in partnership with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB).
- **Objective:** To identify and showcase India's gaming talent on the global stage.

- **Significance:** Provides Indian innovators a global platform to highlight their expertise.
  - Expands India's presence in the international gaming industry.
  - Encourages technological advancements and innovations in the gaming sector.

## Jhumoir Binandini Dance

- **Context:** More than 8,000 artists from tea garden areas across Assam participated in a spectacular performance of the traditional Jhumoir dance.

### About Jhumoir Binandini Dance

- It is a traditional folk dance performed primarily by the Adivasi tea tribes during the harvest season.
- It is accompanied by traditional instruments like the Madal, Dhol, Taal and Flute.
- It involves performers standing in rows, holding each other's waists and swaying rhythmically while singing couplets and clapping hands.
- The dance is a celebration of community, culture and the rich heritage of the tea tribes.

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## BOBP-IGO

- **Context:** India Assumes Chairmanship of Bay of Bengal (BOB) Inter-Governmental Organisation at the 13th Governing Council in Male, Maldives.

### About Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation (BOBP-IGO)

- **Established:** 2003 to support sustainable coastal fisheries development in the Bay of Bengal.
- **Purpose:** Provides technical and management advice to member countries (Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Sri Lanka) on fisheries management.
- **Area of Competence:**
  - Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) of member states.
  - Contiguous areas beyond national jurisdiction.

### Mandate:

- Enhance cooperation among member states, third countries, and organizations.
- Focus on small-scale and artisanal fisheries.

## Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration

- **Context:** The Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration, 2024, received more than 1,500 nominations.

### About Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration

- It was instituted in 2006 and it recognizes extraordinary work by Districts/Organizations of the Central and State Governments.
- The scheme was restructured in 2014, 2020, and revamped in 2021 to focus on good governance, qualitative achievements, and last-mile connectivity.
- For 2024, the awards will recognize contributions in three categories:
  - Holistic Development of Districts
  - Aspirational Blocks Programme
  - Innovation

## Shaktikanta Das

- **Context:** Former Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das was appointed the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister.

### Key Highlights

- He is only the second RBI Governor to have a six-year tenure, apart from Bimal Jalan (1997-2003).
- The Principal Secretary is the administrative head of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and is considered the most important aide to the PM.
- He is tasked with preparing notes on matters to be discussed between the PM and foreign dignitaries, ensuring coordination among various ministries and departments, sharing important orders before the PM, and so on.

- The PMO also includes the National Security Advisor, Advisor to PM, Additional Secretaries, Joint Secretaries and other senior bureaucrats.

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## African-Asian Rural Development Organisation

- **Context:** India's commitment to rural development has gained renewed focus through the African-Asian Rural Development Organisation (AARDO).

### Key Highlights

- Recently, at an AARDO meeting, Indian officials brought into light the importance of collective vision and cooperation.
- They stressed the shared aspirations of communities in Asia and Africa for dignity, opportunity, and progress.
- This meeting highlighted the significance of food security, climate resilience, and digital empowerment as essential components of rural development.

### About AARDO

- AARDO was established in 1962, recognising the need for collaboration among Asian and African nations. It was formed in response to the developmental challenges faced by these regions post-World War II.
- The organisation aims to promote coordinated efforts and exchange experiences in rural development.
- The primary objectives of AARDO include enhancing agricultural productivity and improving rural livelihoods. It seeks to facilitate knowledge sharing and cooperative action among member countries.
- AARDO also focuses on encouraging South-South cooperation to address common challenges in rural development.
- AARDO is an autonomous inter-governmental organisation comprising various countries from Africa and Asia. It operates as a non-political

body and has observer status with several UN agencies. This status allows AARDO to collaborate with international organisations like the FAO and UNESCO, enhancing its capacity to support rural communities.

## 27th Western Zonal Council Meeting

- **Context:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah led the 27th Western Zonal Council meeting in Pune, Maharashtra.

### Key Highlights

- The meeting included the Chief Ministers of Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Goa, the Administrator of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, and senior government officials from the state and central ministries.
- Zonal Councils remain vital for encouraging cooperative federalism in India. They facilitate dialogue between states, addressing issues of common interest and enhancing collaboration among regions.

### Composition of Zonal Councils

- Each Zonal Council comprises specific states and union territories.
  - The Northern Zonal Council includes Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, Delhi, and Chandigarh.
  - The Central Zonal Council consists of Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh.
  - The Eastern Zonal Council encompasses Bihar, Sikkim, Jharkhand, Odisha, and West Bengal.
  - The Western Zonal Council includes Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and the Union Territories of Daman & Diu, and Dadra & Nagar Haveli.
  - The Southern Zonal Council comprises Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Puducherry.
  - The North Eastern Council, established in 1972, includes Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram, Meghalaya, and Nagaland.

- The Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep are not part of any Zonal Council. However, they are currently special guests in the Southern Zonal Council.
- The Union Home Minister chairs all Zonal Councils. Each council has a rotating Vice-Chairman, typically the Chief Minister of a member state. This rotation occurs annually. Additionally, each council includes ministers from member states, representatives from union territories, and officials from the Planning Commission.
- Zonal Councils serve as forums for resolving disputes between the Centre and states, and among states. They discuss economic planning, social issues, border disputes, and transportation matters.
- The councils promote regional cooperation, addressing shared interests and challenges.
- The new geological map reveals a landscape of highlands and flat plains. Researchers traced secondary craters to determine the primary impact source, Schomberger.
- The region's age is estimated at around 3.7 billion years, coinciding with early microbial life on Earth. This suggests parallel evolutionary paths for both Earth and the moon.

## SWAYATT Initiative

- **Context:** Recently, the Government e Marketplace (GeM) celebrated six years of its SWAYATT initiative.

## Key Highlights

- Launched in 2019, SWAYATT aims to enhance participation of women and youth in public procurement. The initiative focuses on social inclusion and aims to make business easier for startups and Micro & Small Enterprises (MSEs).
- SWAYATT was designed to invigorate the involvement of women-led enterprises and youth in government procurement. It seeks to establish direct market linkages for these groups. The initiative promotes training for last-mile sellers and encourages small businesses to engage in public procurement.
- On its anniversary, GeM signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry Ladies Organisation (FICCI-FLO). This partnership aims to connect women entrepreneurs directly with government buyers. The goal is to eliminate intermediaries and ensure better pricing for products.
- Since its inception, SWAYATT has increased the number of women-led enterprises on the GeM platform. Initially, only 6,300 women-led enterprises and 3,400 startups were onboarded. Today, over 1,77,786 Udyam-verified women MSEs have registered. They have collectively fulfilled orders worth 46,615 Crore

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## First Detailed Map of Moon's South Pole

- **Context:** Researchers from Physical Research Laboratory (PRL) Ahmedabad, Panjab University Chandigarh, and ISRO's Laboratory for Electro-Optics Systems in Bengaluru created the first detailed map of the Moon's south pole. They used data from the Pragyan rover.

## Key Facts

- Chandrayaan-3's Vikram lander deployed the Pragyan rover for a nine-day mission. The rover analysed the chemical composition of the lunar regolith.
- This mission marked the first landing in a high-latitude polar region, providing unique vital information about the moon's geological history.
- Data collected by the Alpha Particle X-ray Spectrometer confirmed the presence of primordial magma beneath the lunar surface. This discovery supports earlier theories about an underground ocean of molten rock. Previous missions had indicated magma's existence but lacked detailed data from polar regions.