



WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

Coverage of

18 Dec. - 24 Dec., 2024

★★ Useful for ★★

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



Prime Minister Narendra Modi was awarded Kuwait's highest honour 'The Order of Mubarak Al Kabeer'

18th DECEMBER 2024

Search and Rescue Aid Tool (SARAT)

- **Context:** The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services has developed a newer version of its own Search and Rescue Aid Tool (SARAT).

Key Facts about SARAT

- SARAT was first launched in 2016.
- SARAT 2.0 improves accuracy and usability based on feedback from extensive Coast Guard operations.
- Significance
 - Enhances efficiency in search and rescue operations.
 - Supports the Coast Guard and other agencies in saving lives by reducing search areas.
 - Incorporates feedback from real-life operations for improved reliability.

About INCOIS

- INCOIS operates as an autonomous organization under the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) in India.
- It is headquartered in Hyderabad, Telangana.
- It monitors the Indian Ocean using a network of buoys, tide gauges, and satellites. This data is used to provide a range of oceanographic information and forecasts.

International Solar Alliance

- **Context:** Moldova has officially joined the International Solar Alliance (ISA) by signing its Framework Agreement.

Key Facts about International Solar Alliance (ISA)

- It is a joint initiative between India and France, established at COP21 in Paris in 2015 to combat climate change through solar energy solutions. Following a 2020 amendment, all UN member states can now join

- Over 100 countries are signatories, with 90+ ratifying full membership.
- Its mission is to secure US\$1 trillion in solar investments by 2030, reduce technology and financing costs, and promote solar energy use in agriculture, health, transport, and power generation.
- It is headquartered in Gurugram, Haryana.

Science and Heritage Research Initiative (SHRI)

- **Context:** Recently, fifth anniversary of the Science and Heritage Research Initiative (SHRI) was observed.

About Science and Heritage Research Initiative (SHRI)

- It is a program which focuses on heritage research, aimed at engaging experts from various fields to address cultural heritage issues through data capture, analysis, and technological solutions.
- Its objectives include building capacity in human resources, promoting scientific research and development (R&D) for heritage conservation, safeguarding cultural knowledge and practices, and applying advanced technologies in preservation.
- Key focus areas include the study of heritage materials, remote sensing for archaeological detection, non-invasive imaging techniques, innovations in textile conservation, and the development of new materials and tools for conservation.
- The program also aims to advance research in tribal arts and conservation technologies.

19th DECEMBER 2024

India: Top Recipient of Remittances

- **Context:** India is the largest recipient of remittances in 2024, with an estimated inflow of \$129 billion, followed by Mexico, China, Philippines, and Pakistan.

Key Highlights

- The growth rate of remittances in 2024 is estimated at 5.8%, up from 1.2% in 2023.
- Official remittances to low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) are expected to reach \$685 billion in 2024.
- South Asia is expected to see the highest increase in remittances (11.8%), driven by strong flows to India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.
- Remittances continue to outpace other financial flows, including Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).
- FDI has declined by 41% over the past decade, while remittances have increased by 57%.
- The recovery of job markets in high-income OECD countries, especially the United States, has been the key driver, with foreign-born worker employment increasing by 11% above pre-pandemic levels.
 - This recovery has particularly boosted remittances to Latin America and the Caribbean.

NOTE:

- Remittances refer to the money sent by individuals working abroad back to their families and communities in their home country.
- These funds are typically transferred through banks, online platforms, or money transfer services.

Ganges River Dolphin

- **Context:** The Ganges River Dolphin (*Platanista Gangetica*) has been satellite-tagged for the first time by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII).

Key Facts

- The satellite tagging aims to gather critical data on the dolphins' seasonal and migratory patterns, range, distribution, and habitat utilization, especially in fragmented or disturbed river systems.
- This information is vital for formulating effective conservation strategies.

About Ganges River Dolphins

- **Scientific Name:** *Platanista Gangetica*
- **Discovery:** Officially discovered in 1801.
- It is also called Susu.
- **Habitat and Distribution:** Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers & their tributaries in India, Bangladesh and Nepal.
- **Characteristics:** Only live in freshwater & does not have a crystalline eye lens, rendering it effectively blind.
 - Navigation and hunting through a highly developed 'sonar system', using echolocation (ultrasonic sounds).
 - The body is a brownish colour and stocky in the middle.
- **Significance:**
 - Indicator of the health of the entire river ecosystem.
 - Controlling and maintaining healthy fish and crustacean populations
 - GOI declared National Aquatic Animal in 2009
- **Threats:** Habitat degradation via pollution, construction etc.
 - Accidental deaths via entanglement in the nets (bycatch), Poaching.

First Diabetes Biobank

- **Context:** India has established its first biobank for diabetes in Chennai.

Key Facts

- A biobank is a facility that collects, processes, stores, and distributes biological samples, such as blood, tissues, and DNA.
- The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), in collaboration with the Madras Diabetes Research Foundation (MDRF), has launched this diabetes biobank.
- This initiative aims to advance scientific studies on diabetes, focusing on its causes, variations, and complications in the Indian population.

- It will enable researchers to access a diverse range of biospecimens from individuals with various types of diabetes, including Type 1, Type 2, and gestational diabetes.
- The biobank can help in the discovery of novel biomarkers for early diagnosis of diabetes. Biomarkers are critical for developing personalized treatment and management strategies.
- India is known as the diabetes capital of the world, with over 10 crore diabetes cases and around 13.6 crore pre-diabetes cases.
- **The report identifies several benefits of S.A.F.E.:**
 - Proximate and well-designed housing improves workers' quality of life, reduces commute times, and enhances overall productivity.
 - High-quality accommodations demonstrate India's commitment to international standards, thereby making the country a preferred destination for manufacturing investments.
 - Adherence to international labour standards enhances India's reputation and competitiveness in the global market.

20th DECEMBER 2024

S.A.F.E. Accommodation

- **Context:** NITI Aayog released a report on "S.A.F.E. Accommodation – Worker Housing for manufacturing growth".

Key Highlights

- The report explores the crucial role of secure, affordable, flexible, and efficient (S.A.F.E.) accommodations for industrial workers in boosting India's manufacturing sector.
- It identifies key challenges, offers actionable solutions, and highlights the pivotal interventions required to scale up such housing facilities across the country.
- In the Union Budget 2024-25, the Union Finance Minister emphasized the importance of rental housing for industrial workers. This initiative, to be executed under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model with Viability Gap Funding (VGF).
- India is poised to elevate its manufacturing sector's contribution to GDP from the current 17% to 25% as part of achieving Viksit Bharat by 2047.
 - This goal is aligned with the country's objectives of becoming a global manufacturing hub.

About S.A.F.E.

- The S.A.F.E. accommodation initiative offers a comprehensive framework by aligning regulatory and financial frameworks.

Kisan Kavach

- **Context:** The Union Minister of State for Science and Technology launched "Kisan Kavach".

About Kisan Kavach

- It is India's first anti-pesticide bodysuit designed to protect farmers from harmful pesticide exposure.
- Kisan Kavach was developed by BRIC-inStem, Bangalore, in collaboration with Sepio Health Pvt. Ltd.
- The suit uses advanced fabric technology that deactivates harmful pesticides upon contact through nucleophilic mediated hydrolysis, providing protection against pesticide toxicity.
- The bodysuit is priced at 4,000, lasts up to a year, and is washable and reusable.
- It aims to safeguard farmers from pesticide-induced toxicity, which can lead to serious health issues such as breathing disorders, vision loss, and even death.

Impeachment of Vice President

- **Context:** Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha, rejected the Opposition's no-confidence motion against Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar.

Key Facts

- No-Confidence Motion is a formal proposal or resolution moved in a legislative body to express disapproval of a particular individual or the government.

- The move was initiated under Article 67(b) of the Constitution, which provides for the removal of the Vice President, who also serves as the ex-officio Rajya Sabha.

Constitutional Provisions for Removal

- Under Article 67(b), the Vice President can be removed through a resolution passed by a majority in the Rajya Sabha and subsequently agreed upon by the Lok Sabha. A 14-day notice is mandatory before such a resolution can be moved.
- Article 92 of the Constitution bars the Chairman or Deputy Chairman from presiding over proceedings during the consideration of a resolution for their removal. However, they are permitted to participate in the debate, but not vote on the resolution.

21th DECEMBER 2024

Yuga Yugeen Bharat National Museum

- **Context:** India and France signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the development of the new National Museum named Yuga Yugeen Bharat.

Key Highlights

- The project is an integral part of the Central Vista Redevelopment Project and is set to be developed at the North and South Blocks of Parliament.
- **Features:**
 - It will be developed through Adaptive Reuse, in collaboration with France, renowned for its expertise.
 - Its development will renew the historic North and South Blocks, preserving their unique architectural features.
 - It is expected to be the largest museum in the world, surpassing The Louvre in Paris, which is the world's biggest.

About Central Vista Redevelopment Project

- It was announced in 2019, and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs is its nodal ministry.

- The plan included the construction of a new parliament, prime minister and vice-president's residences along with 10 building blocks that will accommodate all government ministries and departments.

Travel and Tourism Development Index (TTDI), 2024

- **Context:** India is ranked 39th among 119 countries in the 2024 Travel and Tourism Development Index (TTDI) report by the World Economic Forum (WEF).

Key Highlights

- Introduced in 2022, TTDI is an evolution of the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI), which has been published biennially since 2007.
- It serves as a strategic benchmarking tool for businesses, governments, and organizations to develop the Travel & Tourism (T&T) sector.
- It allows for cross-country comparison and benchmarking on T&T development, informing policies and investment decisions for the sector.

Siliguri Corridor

- **Context:** The Union Home Minister highlighted the significance of the Siliguri corridor as a crucial link to Northeast India.

About Siliguri Corridor

- It is also referred to as the Chicken's Neck, is a narrow strip of land in West Bengal that connects the Northeastern States to the rest of the country.
- It is a very important strategic area of eastern India, located between Mahananda and Teesta River.
- It holds critical military significance due to its proximity to international borders with China, Nepal, and Bangladesh.

Significance of Siliguri Corridor

- It connects the Indian mainland to the northeastern states, serving as the only land link between them and the rest of India.

- Control over this corridor is vital for defense purposes and mobility of armed forces.
- The corridor is a key route for trade and transportation of goods between India and its northeastern states, as well as for connecting with neighboring countries.
- Its narrowness makes it vulnerable to blockages, which could sever the connection between the northeast and the rest of India, making it a focus of strategic and infrastructural development.

22th DECEMBER 2024

Masali

- **Context:** Masali village has become India's first solar-powered border village.

About Masali

- It is situated in Banaskantha district of Gujarat.
- It is located 40 km from the Pakistan border
- The village of 800 people now has 119 houses with solar rooftops, generating over 225 kilowatts of electricity.
- This initiative, part of the PM Suryaghar Yojana, was carried out under the Border Development Project.
- Masali is the second solar village in Gujarat, after Modhera, and the first in a border area in India.

Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore Campaign

- **Context:** The Prime Minister highlighted the importance of the "Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore" campaign during Good Governance Week, emphasizing its role in bringing effective governance to rural areas and strengthening grassroots democracy.

About Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore Campaign

- It is the Nation-wide campaign for Redressal of Public Grievances and Improving Service Delivery.
- The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances is coordinating the 2024 campaign
- It is being conducted in all North Eastern States including Assam, Manipur, Tripura, Meghalaya,

Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh. It is also being conducted in all the Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Andaman & Nicobar, Lakshadweep, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, and Daman and Diu.

Phewa Dialogue

- **Context:** Recently, Nepal and China launched the "Phewa Dialogue" series, aimed at fostering regional prosperity, peace, and economic integration in South Asia.

Key Highlights

- The Phewa Dialogue derives its name from the renowned Phewa Lake, one of Nepal's largest lakes, located in the Pokhara Valley. The lake is fed by perennial springs, including Harpan Khola and Seti Khola, adding to its scenic and ecological significance.
- The dialogue aims to foster cooperation and understanding among South Asian nations, which is crucial for addressing shared challenges and promoting peace and prosperity in the region.
- A key focus is on enhancing economic integration within South Asia, which could lead to increased trade, investment, and economic growth for participating countries.
- The dialogue provides a platform for discussing critical issues facing the region, such as industrial changes, emerging technologies, and sustainable development.
- The involvement of academic institutions like Sichuan University and Tribhuvan University highlights the role of Track II diplomacy in fostering dialogue and shaping policy discussions.

23th DECEMBER 2024

India State of Forest Report 2023

- **Context:** The Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, released the India State of Forest Report 2023 (ISFR 2023) at Forest Research Institute, Dehradun.

Key Facts

- It is published every two years by the Forest Survey of India under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change. The first survey was published in 1987, and ISFR 2023 is the 18th such report in the series.
- The report contains information on forest cover, tree cover, mangrove cover, growing stock, carbon stock in India's forests, instances of forest fire, Agroforestry, etc.

Major Findings of ISFR 2023

- The Forest and Tree cover of the country is 8,27,357 sq km which is 25.17 percent of the geographical area of the country, consisting of 7,15,343 sq km (21.76%) as forest cover and 1,12,014 sq km (3.41%) as tree cover.
- 19 states/UTs have above 33 percent of the geographical area under forest cover.
 - Out of these, eight states/UTs namely Mizoram, Lakshadweep, A & N Island, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Manipur have forest cover above 75 percent.
- There is an increase of 1445 sq km in the forest and tree cover of the country which includes 156 sq km increase in the forest cover and 1289 sq km increase in tree cover.
 - **Top four states showing maximum increase in forest and tree cover:** Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha and Rajasthan.
 - **Top three states showing maximum increase in forest cover:** Mizoram, Gujarat and Odisha.
 - **Area wise top three states having largest forest and tree cover:** Madhya Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, and Maharashtra.
 - **Area wise top three states having largest forest cover:** Madhya Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.
- In terms of percentage of forest cover with respect to total geographical area, Lakshadweep (91.33 percent) has the highest forest cover followed by

Mizoram (85.34 percent) and Andaman & Nicobar Island (81.62 percent).

- The total annual potential production of timber from trees outside forest has been estimated as 91.51 million cum.
- The extent of bamboo bearing area for the country has been estimated as 1,54,670 sq km.
 - As compared to the last assessment done in 2021 there is an increase of 5,227 sq km in bamboo area.
- The total carbon stock in the country's forest is estimated to be 7,285.5 million tonnes.
 - There is an increase of 81.5 million tonnes in the carbon stock of the country as compared to the last assessment.
- India's mangrove cover has decreased. It is now 4,991.68 sq km, a decrease of 7.43 sq km.
- Gujarat, has lost the highest area under mangroves, when compared to the last assessment – 36.39 sq km.

About Forest Survey of India (FSI)

- FSI was established in 1981 and is under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
- It succeeded the Preinvestment Survey of Forest Resources (PISFR), initiated in 1965 with Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) support.
- It conducts surveys and research to monitor India's forest and land resources, providing data for national planning, conservation, and sustainable management.
- **Headquarters:** Dehradun

SMILE Programme

- **Context:** The Indian government and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have signed a \$350 million policy-based loan agreement for the Strengthening Multimodal and Integrated Logistics Ecosystem (SMILE) programme.

24th DECEMBER 2024

About SMILE Programme

- The SMILE program is a policy-based lending initiative comprising two subprograms aimed at expanding India's manufacturing sector and enhancing supply chain resilience.
- The reforms align with efforts to improve India's manufacturing sector and global competitiveness.
- The recent loan aims to improve logistics infrastructure, enhance manufacturing capabilities, and build resilient supply chains in India.

About Asian Development Bank (ADB)

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB), established in 1966, is dedicated to promoting a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while working to eliminate extreme poverty.
- It is owned by 69 members, with 49 from the region.

Order of Mubarak Al-Kabeer

- **Context:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi was awarded Kuwait's highest honour 'The Order of Mubarak Al Kabeer'.

Key Highlights

- It is the 20th international award bestowed upon him by a country.
- 'The Order of Mubarak Al Kabeer' or the Order of Mubarak the Great, is a knighthood order of Kuwait.
- The award was instituted in 1974, in the memory of Mubarak Al Sabah — also known as Mubarak al-Kabeer or Mubarak the Great — who ruled Kuwait from 1896 to 1915. Under his reign, Kuwait got more autonomy from the Ottoman Empire.
- It is awarded to Heads of State and foreign Sovereigns and members of foreign royal families in sign of friendship.
- It has been previously awarded to foreign leaders like Bill Clinton, Prince Charles and George Bush.

Dr. Ambedkar Samman Yojana

- **Context:** The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has introduced the Dr. Ambedkar Samman Yojana, aimed at supporting Dalit students pursuing higher education abroad.

Key Highlights

- The Dr. Ambedkar Samman Yojana intends to cover all educational expenses for Dalit students admitted to prestigious international universities. This includes tuition fees, travel costs, and other necessary expenditures.
- The scheme is designed to ensure that financial constraints do not hinder Dalit students from achieving their educational aspirations.
- This announcement aims to honour Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, advocating for the rights and education of Dalit communities.
- The new scholarship programme aligns with Ambedkar's vision of educational empowerment for Dalits, enabling talented individuals to pursue their dreams without financial stress.

Swarnim Bharat – Virasat aur Vikas

- **Context:** The Ministry of Defence has revealed the theme for the Republic Day celebrations in 2025, the theme is "Swarnim Bharat – Virasat aur Vikas," which aims to showcase India's cultural heritage and development.

Key Highlights

- The event will feature tableaux from various states and Union Territories, denoting the nation's diverse strengths.
- Fifteen states and Union Territories will present their tableaux during the Republic Day parade on Kartavya Path. The selected regions include Andhra

Pradesh, Bihar, Chandigarh, Dadar Nagar Haveli and Daman, Diu, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Jharkhand, and Karnataka. Each state will depict unique aspects of its culture and development.

- In addition to the states, eleven Ministries and Union government departments will also participate in Republic Day Parade 2025.
- The theme “Swarnim Bharat – Virasat aur Vikas” encapsulates the essence of India’s rich heritage and its journey towards development. The theme is designed to resonate with a global audience, reflecting India’s aspirations for a bright future.

India’s First Zero-Waste Airport

- **Context:** Indore, recognized as India’s cleanest city, became the first zero-waste airport in the country.

Key Highlights

- This recognition focuses on comprehensive waste management, recycling waste generated by both the airport and its aircraft.
- The airport has implemented a complete waste management system. This system will recycle waste from planes, shops, gardens, and toilets. Wet waste will be transformed into fertilizer, contributing to a circular economy.
- The project not only reduces waste but also promotes environmental sustainability.

4R Principle

- The zero-waste project adheres to the 4R principle – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Restore. This framework aims to minimize waste generation while maximizing resource recovery.

