



WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

Coverage of

11 Dec. - 17 Dec., 2024

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11th DECEMBER 2024

Sanjay Malhotra: New RBI Governor

- **Context:** The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet, headed by Prime Minister, approved IAS officer Sanjay Malhotra's appointment as the next governor of the Reserve Bank of India.



Key Facts

- Sanjay Malhotra succeeded Shaktikanta Das as the 26th Governor of the Reserve Bank of India.
- The RBI Governor is appointed under the provisions of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934.
- The Governor shall hold office for such term not exceeding five years as the Central Government may fix when appointing them, and shall be eligible for re-appointment.
- The RBI Act, of 1934 does not mention any specific qualification for the governor and people with different educational backgrounds were selected to head the institution.
- **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC):** It is headed by the RBI governor, and is entrusted with the task of fixing the benchmark policy interest rate (Repo Rate) to contain inflation within the specified target level.

About Reserve Bank of India (RBI)

- It is the central bank of India whose primary function is to manage and govern the financial system of the country. It was set up on the basis of the Hilton Young Commission recommendations.
- The Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 (II of 1934) provides the statutory basis of the functioning of the Bank, which commenced operations on April 1, 1935.

World Solar Report, 2024

- **Context:** The World Solar Report 2024 was released by the International Solar Alliance (ISA).

Key Findings

- From 1.22 GW in 2000, the world's solar capacity has surged to 1,419 GW in 2023, charting a CAGR of about 36%.
- Solar capacity represents three-quarters of all renewable capacity additions globally in 2023.
- Solar PV sector employed 7.1 million people globally in 2023.
- China dominates with 43% of global installed solar capacity. Other Major Players: U.S. (10%), Japan, Germany, and India (5-6% each).
- Emerging markets like Brazil, Australia, and Spain each contribute 2%.

New Solar Technologies

- Quantum Dot Solar Cells achieved a record efficiency of 18.1%, enhancing energy capture and enabling atmospheric water harvesting.
- Integration of solar technology into infrastructure, including transparent solar panels for light transmission and visibility.
- Solar-Powered Phyto-Mining uses plants to extract valuable metals sustainably, powered by solar energy.

India Skills Report, 2025

- **Context:** As per the recent "India Skills Report 2025," nearly 55% of Indian graduates are projected to be globally employable by 2025, an increase from 51.2% in 2024.

Key Highlights

- The report was prepared by the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) with Wheebox and the All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE).
- Management graduates lead with an employability rate of 78%, followed by engineering (71.5%), MCA (71%), and science graduates (58%).

- Key states like Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Delhi are emerging as talent hubs, with cities such as Pune, Bengaluru, and Mumbai providing a skilled workforce.
- The men's employability is expected to rise to 53.5% in 2025 from 51.8% in 2024, while women's employability is projected to decline from 50.9% to 47.5%.

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UN Champions of the Earth Award, 2024

- **Context:** The United Nations recognised ecologist Madhav Gadgil with the annual Champions of the Earth award for his seminal work in the Western Ghats, a global biodiversity hotspot.

Key Facts

- UN Champions of the Earth Award was launched in 2005 by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
- The award recognizes outstanding figures from the public and private sector as well as civil society, whose actions have brought about a positive impact and a transformation on the environment.
- The award is presented – Lifetime Achievement, Policy Leadership, Action and Inspiration, Entrepreneurial Vision and Science & Innovation categories.
- Madhav Gadgil has been honoured in the “lifetime achievement” category.
- **Past Indian recipients:** Narendra Modi (2018), Cochin International Airport (2018) and Afroz Shah (2016).

India's First Hyperloop Test Track

- **Context:** IIT Madras has completed a 410-meter Hyperloop test track, marking a milestone in futuristic transportation. The Mumbai-Pune corridor will be the first full-scale Hyperloop project in India.

About Hyperloop Technology

- A Hyperloop is a high-speed transportation system where pods, functioning as pressurized vehicles, move at extraordinary speeds through low-pressure tubes.

Key Features:

- Hyperloop pods can reach up to 1200 km/h with an operational speed of around 360 km/h.
- It operates within a vacuum-sealed environment, minimizing resistance and energy consumption.
- It provides direct, point-to-point travel without intermediate stops.
- Due to reduced air resistance and friction, Hyperloop systems are expected to be highly energy-efficient.
- Hyperloop could drastically reduce travel times between cities, making long-distance commutes more feasible.

IPC Section 498A

- **Context:** The Supreme Court raised concerns over the misuse of Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) (now Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita), which penalises cruelty against married women by their husbands and in-laws.

About Section 498A (Section 84 of Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023)

- It deals with the offense of cruelty by a husband or his relatives towards a married woman.
- This section was introduced to address the rising instances of cruelty and harassment faced by married women in the context of dowry.
- **It defines cruelty as:**
 - Any wilful conduct which is of such a nature as is likely to drive the woman to commit suicide or to cause grave injury or danger to life, limb or health (whether mental or physical) of the woman; or
 - Harassment of the woman where such harassment is with a view to coercing her or any person related to her to meet any unlawful demand for any property or valuable security.

• Punishment:

- Whoever the husband or the relative of the husband of a woman, subjects her to cruelty shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years and shall also be liable to fine.
- A complaint must be filed within three years of the alleged incident.
- The offence is cognizable and non-bailable, which means that immediate custody of the accused is possible.

13th DECEMBER 2024

World Malaria Report

- **Context:** According to the World Malaria report, released by the World Health Organization (WHO), India has seen significant progress in reducing malaria incidence and mortality rates.

Key Highlights

- The malaria caseload in India was reduced by 69 percent from 6.4 million in 2017 to two million in 2023.
- In 2023, India accounted for half of all estimated malaria cases in the WHO South-East Asia Region, followed by Indonesia, which accounted for just under one-third.
- The Region had eight malaria endemic countries in 2023, accounting for 4 million cases and contributing 1.5 per cent of the burden of malaria cases globally.
- Bhutan and Timor-Leste reported zero malaria deaths since 2013 and 2015, respectively, while Sri Lanka was certified malaria-free in 2016.

Desert Knight Exercise

- **Context:** India, France, and the UAE have launched "Desert Knight, defence exercise.

Key Facts about Desert Knight Exercise

- **Nations Involved:** India, France, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

- **Location:** Conducted over the Arabian Sea, approximately 350-400 km southwest of Karachi.
- **Objectives:** Strengthen trilateral defence cooperation and enhance combat skills and interoperability among the air forces of the three nations.
- Desert Knight aligns with India's broader Indo-Pacific strategy, which emphasizes cooperation with like-minded nations to ensure a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific region.

Nirdeshak

- **Context:** The Indian Navy is set to commission the latest survey ship, Nirdeshak, at Naval Dockyard, Visakhapatnam.

Key Highlights

- Nirdeshak is the second ship of the Survey Vessel (Large) Project and is built at GRSE Kolkata.
- It is designed to conduct hydrographic surveys, aid in navigation, and support maritime operations.
- This 110-meter-long vessel, with a displacement of approximately 3800 tons, is powered by two diesel engines and is equipped with state-of-the-art Hydrographic and Oceanographic Survey Equipment.
- The ship has an endurance of over 25 days at sea and a top speed exceeding 18 knots.

14th DECEMBER 2024

Rajmarg Saathi

- **Context:** National Highways Authority of India has updated specifications for new Route Patrolling Vehicles (RPVs) named 'Rajmarg Saathi'.

Key Highlights

- The Route Patrolling Vehicles conduct inspection of National Highway stretches to monitor and respond to emergency situations.
- Rajmarg Saathi has the Provision for dashboard camera equipped with 'AI video analytics' to capture and identify cracks & potholes.

- The data/ video footage shall be collected on weekly basis by NHAI and shall be integrated with NHAI One application for more efficient maintenance of roads.
- Equipped with the advanced communication and safety tools, these vehicles will be useful in minimizing traffic disruptions, improving road safety and enhancing overall road user experience along the National Highways.

About National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)

- It was constituted by an Act of Parliament in 1988 under the administrative control of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.
- NHAI has been set up as a Central Authority to develop, maintain and manage the National Highways.
- The authority, however, became operational in 1995.

National Energy Conservation Day

- **Context:** December 14 is designated as the National Energy Conservation Day in India.

Key Facts

- It was introduced in 1991, by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) under the Ministry of Power.
- This day serves as a reminder of the vital role energy plays in our lives and the urgency of conserving it.
- **National Energy Conservation Awards (NECA):**
 - Instituted in 1991.
 - These awards honour the efforts of industrial units, and establishments that have significantly reduced energy consumption while maintaining their operational efficiency.
 - Each year the Awards are presented on 14th December.

Sportswashing

- **Context:** Saudi Arabia, the sole bidder, has secured the hosting rights for the 2034 FIFA World Cup, but it has also sparked concerns over Sportswashing.

About the term "Sportswashing"

- Sportswashing is a term used to describe the practice of nations, individuals, groups, or the corporations using sports to improve their reputations that have been damaged by misconduct or controversy.
- It can be accomplished through hosting sporting events, purchasing or sponsoring sporting teams, or participating in a sport.
- **Examples of sportswashing includes:**
 - **The 1936 Berlin Olympics:** Hitler used the Olympics to improve Germany's international image.
 - **The 1978 FIFA World Cup:** Argentina hosted and won the World Cup while its military junta threw dissidents out of planes.
 - **The 2022 Winter Olympics** held in China and the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar.

Competition Commission of India (CCI)

- **Context:** The Competition Commission of India (CCI) passed an order under the Competition Act, 2002 (Act) against the Table Tennis Federation of India (TTFI) and its affiliate bodies.

Key Issue

- The Commission found that the TTFI and its affiliates violated the Act by restricting table tennis tournaments and preventing players from participating through WhatsApp advisories, public notices, and anti-competitive bye-laws.

About Competition Commission of India (CCI)

- Competition Commission of India is a statutory body established in 2003 by the Government of India under the Competition Act, 2002.
- The composition of the Commission consists of a Chairperson and not less than two and not more than six other members.
- It operates under the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) with the following objectives:
 - Eliminate practices having adverse effect on competition,

- Promote and sustain competition,
- Protect the interests of consumers
- Ensure freedom of trade in the markets of India
- Establish a robust competitive environment.

15th DECEMBER 2024

Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)

- **Context:** Britain became the 12th member of the CPTPP (formerly known as Trans-Pacific Partnership), marking its most significant trade deal since Brexit.

Key Facts

- Britain joins Japan, Australia, Canada, and eight other nations in this trade pact.
- Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership was originated as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a U.S.-led trade pact.
- Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) was renamed the CPTPP after the U.S. withdrew from this in 2017 under the then President Donald Trump.
- This agreement now includes 12 members and aims to foster economic cooperation across the Pacific. These countries were – Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam.
- CPTPP requires countries to eliminate or significantly reduce tariffs and make strong commitments to opening services and investment markets.
- It also has rules addressing competition, intellectual property rights and protections for foreign companies.
- This grouping accounts for about 15% of global GDP and provides trade access to a market of more than 500 million people.

Most Favoured Nation (MFN)

- **Context:** Switzerland to suspend the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) clause in its double taxation avoidance agreement (DTAA) with India starting January 1, 2025.

Key Facts

- In 2023, Swiss company Nestlé sought a refund on withholding tax, claiming the benefit of the MFN clause under the India-Switzerland tax treaty.
- The Supreme Court of India ruled that the MFN clause does not automatically apply without formal notification, which led to Switzerland re-evaluating its tax treaty with India.
- The Supreme Court also ruled that automatic adjustments in tax rates under the MFN clause require formal notification under Section 90 of the Indian Income Tax Act.

About MFN Status

- The MFN status ensures equal treatment in international treaties, requiring countries to extend favorable tax rates or conditions to all other parties under the treaty.
- It guarantees that no country is treated less favorably than any other in trade or taxation matters.

About Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA)

- A Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) is a treaty signed between two or more countries to prevent income earned in one country from being taxed twice.
- It aims to provide relief to taxpayers, ensure tax fairness, and foster international trade and investment.

Jalvahak Scheme

- **Context:** The Union Government launched the 'Jalvahak' scheme to incentivise cargo movement via inland waterways, across National Waterways-1 (Ganga River), National Waterways-2 (Brahmaputra River), and National Waterways-16 (Barak River).

Key facts about Jalvahak scheme

- The scheme offers direct incentives to cargo owners for transporting goods via inland waterways for distances exceeding 300 km. Reimbursement of up to 35% of total operating expenditure incurred during cargo transportation is provided.
- The scheme is a joint effort of the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) and the Inland & Coastal Shipping Limited (ICSL).
- Cargo owners are encouraged to hire vessels owned or operated by organisations outside IWAI or ICSL to boost private participation in inland waterways transportation.
- The duration of this scheme is three years.

Current Status of Inland Waterways in India

- India has an extensive inland waterways network of 20,236 km, comprising 17,980 km of rivers and 2,256 km of canals suitable for mechanised crafts.
- India currently has 111 National Waterways (NWs), as declared under the National Waterways Act, 2016.
- Cargo transported on national waterways increased from 18.07 Million Metric Tonnes (MT) in 2013-14 to 132.89 Million MT in 2023-24 — a growth of over 700%.
- India aims to achieve 200 Million MT of cargo movement via waterways by 2030 and 500 Million MT by 2047.

16th DECEMBER 2024

SAMARTH Udyog Bharat 4.0

- **Context:** The Ministry of Heavy Industries has set up four Smart Advanced Manufacturing and Rapid Transformation Hub (SAMARTH) Centres.

About SAMARTH Udyog Bharat 4.0

- SAMARTH Udyog Bharat 4.0 is an initiative of the Ministry of Heavy Industry & Public Enterprises.

- It is aimed at promoting smart and advanced manufacturing technologies, boosting digital transformation, and strengthening India's manufacturing sector.

Objectives:

- Organizing awareness seminars, workshops, and knowledge-sharing events on Industry 4.0 technologies.
- Providing training programs to industries, including MSMEs, for capacity building.
- Offering consultancy in IoT hardware, software development, and data analytics.

SAMARTH Centres

- Centre for Industry 4.0 (C4i4) Lab, Pune
- IITD-AIA Foundation for Smart Manufacturing, IIT Delhi
- I-4.0 India at IISc, Bengaluru
- Smart Manufacturing Demo & Development Cell, CMTI, Bengaluru

About Industry 4.0

Industry 4.0 refers to the fourth industrial revolution, characterized by the integration of technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), robotics, and data analytics into manufacturing processes.

NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) Mission

- **Context:** The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will launch the NISAR satellite in March 2025.

Key Highlights

- NASA and ISRO officially launched the NISAR programme in 2014.
- NISAR represents a collaborative effort between India and the United States, culminating in a 5,000-crore project initiated in 2009.

About NISAR

- NISAR is a Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) satellite. Unlike traditional satellites that capture images with cameras, SAR satellites emit radio signals that bounce back to generate detailed images.
- This technology allows NISAR to operate effectively in darkness, adverse weather, and dense vegetation.
- NISAR is engineered to monitor subtle changes in the Earth's surface. It can detect shifts as minor as one inch, aiding in the assessment of infrastructure like dams and bridges.
- It will also assist in climate change research by tracking ice sheet movements and vegetation changes.
- NISAR incorporates digital beam forming (DBF) and dual-frequency radars – L-band from NASA and S-band from ISRO. The L-band penetrates vegetation and ice, while the S-band offers high-resolution images.
- The 2.8-tonne NISAR satellite will be deployed using the GSLV Mk-II rocket.

Mikheil Kavelashvili

- **Context:** Mikheil Kavelashvili has been elected as the new President of Georgia.

Key Facts

- Mikheil Kavelashvili, a former footballer and member of the ruling Georgian Dream party, was the sole candidate for the presidency and received overwhelming support from parliament.
- The election was marred by controversy as the four principal opposition groups chose to boycott the parliamentary process.
- Mikheil Kavelashvili's election comes amidst rising discontent regarding the government's decision to postpone the country's European Union accession until 2028.
- He secured 224 votes out of a possible 225, showcasing strong backing from his party.

- This election marked a departure from previous practices, as constitutional changes have eliminated direct presidential elections in Georgia.

17th DECEMBER 2024

One Nation, One Election

- **Context:** The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Ninth Amendment) Bill, 2024, popularly being referred to as the Bill on "One Nation, One Election", was introduced in the Lok Sabha by Union Minister of Law and Justice Arjun Ram Meghwal.

Key Facts

- The Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024, which seeks to align the elections of the Union territories of Jammu and Kashmir, Puducherry and the NCT of Delhi, was also introduced in the Lok Sabha.
- Simultaneous Elections (One Nation One Election) refer to the idea of holding Lok Sabha and State legislative assembly elections together, with the aim of reducing the frequency of elections and their associated costs.
- Simultaneous elections in India to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies were held in the years 1951-52, 1957, 1962 and 1967. Thereafter, the schedule could not be maintained and the elections to the Lok Sabha and the State legislative assembly have still not been realigned.

About Ram Nath Kovind Committee

- The High-Level Committee on Simultaneous Elections, headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind, was constituted by the Government of India on 2nd September 2023.
- Its primary objective was to explore the feasibility of conducting simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies.
- The Committee submitted its report to President of India Droupadi Murmu on 14th March 2024.

NAMO DIDI Drone Scheme

- **Context:** The Government has approved 'Namo Drone Didi' as Central Sector Scheme for providing drones to the Women Self Help Groups (SHGs) with an outlay of Rs. 1261 Crores for the period from 2023-24 to 2025-26.



Key Features of the Scheme:

- Central financial assistance covers 80% of drone cost, up to Rs. 8 lakhs.
- Additional funding options available through Agriculture Infra Financing Facility (AIF).
 - Comprehensive package includes a drone with essential accessories (batteries, spray equipment, tools) and a one-year warranty.
 - Mandatory 15-day training to be provided to one of the members of women SHGs as a drone pilot and additional training for agriculture purpose for nutrient and pesticide application.

SWIFT City

- **Context:** The Karnataka government has unveiled its ambitious plan to establish SWIFT City (Startups, Workspaces, Innovation, Finance, and Technology City) in Bengaluru, aiming to enhance the start-up ecosystem and making the city industrial hub.

Key Highlights

- The project follows the recent announcement of Knowledge, Wellbeing, and Innovation City (KWIN City), further emphasizing the government's focus on innovation and entrepreneurship.
- SWIFT City will cover over 1,000 acres and is designed to attract start-ups, aims to replicate the success of established industrial areas like International Tech Park (ITPL) and Electronic City. The project is set to become a central point for innovation and technology in Bengaluru.
- SWIFT City will offer 8 to 10 plug-and-play facilities, each spanning 20–25 acres. Start-ups can access land parcels ranging from 5,000 to 20,000 square feet. These options will be available through lease, sale, or equity-sharing agreements, providing flexibility for new businesses.

