



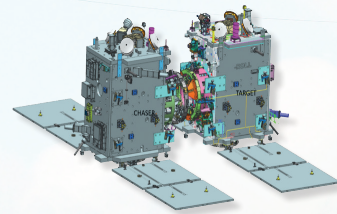
WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

Coverage of

25 Dec. - 31 Dec., 2024

★★ Useful for ★★

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



Space Docking Experiment mission developed by ISRO

25th DECEMBER 2024

Ken-Betwa River Linking Project

- **Context:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone of the interstate Ken-Betwa River linking project.

Key Highlights

- In 2021, a memorandum of agreement was signed among the Ministry of Jal Shakti and the governments of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh to implement the Ken-Betwa Link Project.
- The project will transfer water from the Ken River to the Betwa river, both tributaries of the Yamuna.
- The Ken-Betwa Link Canal will be 221 km in length, including a 2-km tunnel.
- It has two phases. Phase-I will involve building the Daudhan Dam complex and its subsidiary units.
- Phase-II will involve three components — Lower Orr Dam, Bina Complex Project and Kotha Barrage.
- The project lies in Bundelkhand, which spreads across 13 districts of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.
- The project will be of immense benefit to the water-starved region.
- It is proposed to be implemented in eight years.

Significance of River Linking Projects

- It helps transfer surplus water from water-rich regions to water-deficient areas, addressing water scarcity issues.
- It increased water availability in dry regions to enhance agricultural productivity.
- Interlinking rivers help distribute excess water during periods of heavy rainfall, reducing the risk of floods in specific regions.
- The construction of reservoirs and canals for interlinking projects create opportunities for hydropower generation.

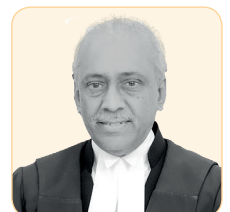
- The construction and maintenance of interlinking infrastructure create job opportunities, contributing to economic development.
- River interlinking projects potentially reduce interstate disputes over water resources by providing a more equitable distribution of water.

Concerns with the River Linking Projects

- Altering natural river courses and diverting water can disrupt ecosystems, leading to habitat loss, changes in biodiversity, and potential extinction of species.
- The construction of dams, reservoirs, and canals for river interlinking result in the displacement of communities, leading to social and economic hardships for affected populations.
- River interlinking projects often involve multiple states, and disagreements arise over water sharing, leading to inter-state disputes.
- The construction of large-scale infrastructure for river interlinking projects can be economically challenging, with costs often exceeding initial estimates.
- Areas prone to earthquakes face increased risks due to the construction of large dams and other infrastructure.
- Neglecting maintenance can lead to system failures and adverse consequences.
- Local communities and environmental activists often oppose river interlinking projects due to concerns about their impact on the environment, livelihoods, and cultural heritage.

V. Ramasubramanian

- **Context:** The President of India appointed retired Supreme Court Justice V. Ramasubramanian as the Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).



About NHRC

- It was established on 12 October 1993 under the Protection of Human Rights Act (PHRA), 1993. The Act was amended by the Protection of Human Rights (Amendment) Act, 2006.
- NHRC is in conformity with the Paris Principles, which were adopted at the first international workshop on national human rights institutions in Paris in October 1991, and endorsed by the UN General Assembly in Regulation 48/134 of 20 December 1993.
- The Commission consists of a Chairperson, five full-time Members and seven deemed Members.
- The Chairperson and Members of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) are appointed by the President of India based on recommendations from a Committee. This Committee includes the Prime Minister (Chairperson), the Speaker of Lok Sabha, the Home Minister, the leaders of the opposition in both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, and the Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha.
- NHRC is responsible for promoting human rights awareness at both national and international levels, encouraging stakeholders in human rights literacy.

Good Governance Day

- **Context:** Good Governance Day is observed annually on December 25 to commemorate the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

About Good Governance Day

- The day was first celebrated in 2014 and is also known as Sushasan Diwas.
- This day aims to promote awareness among citizens about government accountability and administration while also instilling “good governance” as a practice for Indian civil servants.
- **The theme for the 2024 Good Governance Day is “India’s Path to a Viksit Bharat: Empowering Citizens through Good Governance and Digitalisation.”**

26th DECEMBER 2024

Dr. Manmohan Singh

- **Context:** Former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh passed away recently at the age of 92.



Key Facts

- Born on September 26, 1932, in undivided Punjab, India.
- He served as Prime Minister of the country for two consecutive terms 2004-09 and 2009-14.

His Major Contributions

- **Government Service:** Joined the Government of India in 1971 as Economic Advisor in the Commerce Ministry.
 - Appointed Chief Economic Advisor in the Ministry of Finance in 1972.
 - Held several important positions including Secretary in the Ministry of Finance, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, Advisor to the Prime Minister, and Chairman of the University Grants Commission.
- **Economic Reforms:** As Finance Minister in the 1990s, played a key role in liberalizing India’s economy, reducing trade barriers, privatizing state-owned enterprises, and implementing reforms that fostered rapid growth.
- **India’s GDP Growth:** India experienced robust economic growth, with the economy expanding at an average rate of 7-8% per year during his tenure as Prime Minister.
- **Fiscal and Banking Reforms:** He contributed to strengthening India’s banking sector and addressing inflation, while maintaining fiscal discipline.
- **Nuclear Deal (2008):** He was instrumental in the landmark U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Agreement, which strengthened India’s global standing and secured access to nuclear technology and fuel.

- **Social Welfare Programs:** His government introduced key social welfare programs, including the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) and the Right to Information Act (RTI).
- **Literary Work:** He also authored the book "India's Export Trends and Prospects for Self-Sustained Growth" (1964), critiquing India's inward-oriented trade policy.
- **Awards and Honors:** Received the Padma Vibhushan (1987), India's second-highest civilian honor.
 - Awarded the Asia Money Award and Euro Money Award for Finance Minister of the Year (1993, 1994).
 - Honored with the Adam Smith Prize (1956) and Wright's Prize (1955).

100 Years of Belagavi Session (1924)

- **Context:** The Indian National Congress (INC) observed 100th anniversary of Belagavi Session.

About the Belagavi Session of the INC (December 26-27, 1924)

- It was the 39th session of the INC that took place in Belagavi (then Belgaum), Karnataka. It was a period marked by intense political activity and growing momentum for India's freedom movement.
- It was presided over by Mahatma Gandhi, the only time he served as the Congress president.
- The session was attended by several senior Congress leaders including Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Sarojini Naidu, and Khilafat movement leaders Muhammad Ali Jauhar and Shaukat Ali, among others.

Veer Bal Diwas

- **Context:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi participated in the Veer Baal Diwas celebrations in New Delhi, where Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar (PMRBP) awardees were honoured.

About Veer Bal Diwas

- Translated as 'Day of Brave Children,' Veer Bal Diwas is observed annually on December 26. First observed in 2022, it commemorates the martyrdom of the younger sons of the tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh—Sahibzada Zorawar Singh (9) and Sahibzada Fateh Singh (7).
- The two young boys were bricked alive on December 26, 1705, on the orders of the Nawab of Sirhind Wazir Khan since they refused to give up their religion.
- After the brick wall fell, Khan ordered the executioners to slit the throats of both the young princes.

Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar (PMRBP)

- It is awarded annually to children in the age group of 5-18 years for their exceptional abilities and outstanding achievements in seven categories: Bravery, Art & Culture, Environment, Innovation, Science & Technology, Social Service and Sports.
- This award is the highest civilian honor for children in India.

27th DECEMBER 2024

Bald Eagle

- **Context:** The bald eagle is officially declared as the national bird of the United States.

Key Facts

- The bald eagle is indigenous to North America.
- The Bald Eagle has a distinctive white head and tail with dark brown body and wings. Its yellow beak is large and hooked, and it has powerful talons.
- They are carnivorous birds, mainly feeding on fish, but will also hunt waterfowl or scavenge carrion.
- The Great Seal of the United States is a national symbol used in official documents such as treaties and commissions since 1782.
- The Bald Eagle symbolizes strength, freedom, and independence.

- It breeds in Canada, USA, Mexico, and the French island territories of Saint Pierre and Miquelon
- The bald eagle is also protected under the National Emblem Act of 1940, which makes it illegal to sell or hunt the creature.
- It is listed as Least Concern species in IUCN Red List status.

World's Largest Hydropower Dam

- **Context:** China has approved the construction of the world's largest hydropower dam close to the Indian border, raising concerns in riparian countries — India and Bangladesh.

Key Facts

- It will be constructed at a massive gorge in the Himalayan region, where the Yarlung Zangbo River (the Tibetan name for the Brahmaputra) takes a sharp U-turn before flowing into Arunachal Pradesh (India) and then Bangladesh.
- The project, costing over one trillion yuan (\$137 billion), is expected to generate over 300 billion kWh of electricity annually, enough to meet the yearly energy needs of more than 300 million people.
- This capacity would significantly surpass the 88.2 billion kWh of the Three Gorges Dam in central China, currently the world's largest hydropower project.
- This project is part of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) and National Economic and Social Development and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035 adopted by Plenum, a key policy body of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) in 2020.
- However, the dam also presents enormous engineering challenges, as the site is located on a tectonic plate boundary prone to earthquakes.

Deep Sea Mission

- **Context:** The Government of India is preparing to send a human into the deep sea as part of its

ambitious 'Deep Sea Mission,' aligned with the country's first human space mission scheduled for early 2026.

About Deep Ocean Mission (DOM)

- DOM is implemented by the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) and was approved in 2021 at a cost of nearly Rs 4,077 crore over a five-year period in a phased manner.
- **The mission has six pillars:**
 - Development of technologies for deep-sea mining and a manned submersible to carry three people to a depth of 6,000 meters in the ocean;
 - Development of ocean climate change advisory services, involving an array of ocean observations and models to understand and provide future climate projections;
 - Technological innovations for the exploration and conservation of deep-sea biodiversity;
 - Deep-ocean survey and exploration aimed at identifying potential sites of multi-metal hydrothermal sulphides mineralisation along the Indian Ocean mid-oceanic ridges;
 - Harnessing energy and freshwater from the ocean;
 - Establishing an advanced Marine Station for Ocean Biology, as a hub for nurturing talent and driving new opportunities in ocean biology and blue biotechnology.

About Matsya6000

- The Matsya6000 is India's flagship deep-ocean human submersible that aims to reach the ocean bed at a depth of 6,000 m.
- Accompanied by three crew members, called "aquanauts", the submersible carries a suite of scientific tools and equipment designed to facilitate observations, sample collection, basic video and audio recording, and experimentation.
- Matsya6000 combines the best and most feasible features of remote operated vehicles (ROVs) and autonomous remote vehicles (AUVs).

28th DECEMBER 2024

PM CARES Fund

- **Context:** The Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund (PM CARES Fund) received Rs 912 crore in contributions during the financial year 2022-23.

Key Highlights

- The PM CARES Fund was registered as a Public Charitable Trust under the Registration Act, 1908 in 2020.
- It was established in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Dealing with any kind of emergency or distress situation, like posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and to provide relief to the affected.
- The Prime Minister is the ex-officio chairman of the PM CARES Fund, while the Defence Minister, Home Minister and Finance Minister are ex-officio trustees of the Fund.
- It is not a part of the government budget, and its workings are separate from the government's direct financial control.
- Donations to PM CARES Fund would qualify for 80G benefits for 100% exemption under the Income Tax Act, 1961.
- Donations will also qualify to be counted as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) expenditure under the Companies Act, 2013.

Current Account Deficit

- **Context:** India's Current Account Deficit (CAD) marginally moderated to \$11.2 billion, equivalent to 1.2% of gross domestic product (GDP), during the July-September 2024 quarter.

About Current Account Deficit (CAD)

- The current account deficit occurs when a country's imports of goods and services exceed its exports.
- It is a crucial indicator of a nation's economic health and reflects the balance of trade, net income from abroad, and net current transfers.

Significance of lower CAD

- It reduces vulnerabilities to global economic shocks, such as changes in commodity prices or interest rates in advanced economies.
- With a lower CAD, India borrows less from foreign sources to bridge its deficit, keeping the external debt-to-GDP ratio manageable.
- A low CAD boosts India's credibility in global financial markets, enhancing its credit rating.

29th DECEMBER 2024

Exercise Surya Kiran

- **Context:** The 18th edition of Exercise SURYA KIRAN will take place in Saljhandi, Nepal from 31st December 2024 to 13th January 2025.

About Surya Kiran

- It is an annual joint military exercise conducted alternately between India and Nepal.
- It aims to enhance interoperability in jungle warfare, counter-terrorism operations, and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) under the United Nations Charter.
- It focuses on operational preparedness, aviation aspects, medical training, and environment conservation.
- It aims to improve combat skills, coordination, and operational capabilities of troops to function effectively in challenging situations.

Parker Solar Probe

- **Context:** NASA scientists announced that the Parker Solar Probe survived the closest-ever approach to the Sun.

About Parker Solar Probe

- Parker Solar Probe was developed as part of NASA's Living With a Star program, which aims to explore the Sun-Earth system and its impact on life and society.

- The program is managed by NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland.
- The mission is named in honor of Dr. Eugene N. Parker, who first proposed the theory of the solar wind in the 1950s and revolutionized solar science.
- Parker has four instrument suites to study magnetic fields, plasma, energetic particles, and image the solar wind.
- The spacecraft is flying closer to the Sun than any previous probe, coming within about 4 million miles (6.5 million kilometers) of its surface, inside the orbit of Mercury.
- On Dec. 14, 2021, Parker became the first spacecraft to fly through the Sun's corona, sampling particles and magnetic fields.
- Parker Solar Probe aims to revolutionize our understanding of the Sun by studying its atmosphere, the solar wind, and the heating of the corona.
- Data from the probe will help better understand the Sun's impact on Earth, including space weather, which can affect satellites, electronics, and technology on Earth.

Jimmy Carter

- **Context:** Jimmy Carter, the 39th President of the United States, served from 20 January 1977 to 20 January 1981, passed away.

Key Facts

- Born on October 1, 1924, in Plains, Georgia, Carter grew up on a peanut farm. He graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy and later managed his family's farm.
- He served as the Governor of Georgia before winning the Democratic nomination for president in 1976.
- Carter's presidency began with a commitment to honesty and ethical leadership. His administration was marked by high inflation and energy crises.
- The Iran hostage crisis, which lasted 444 days, impacted his presidency.

- He successfully brokered the Camp David Accords, leading to a peace treaty between Israel and Egypt in 1979.
- After leaving office, Carter continued to promote peace and humanitarian causes. He founded the Carter Center, which monitors elections and advocates for human rights globally. His efforts earned him the Nobel Peace Prize in 2002 for his lifelong commitment to peace and humanitarian work.

30th DECEMBER 2024

SpaDex Mission

- **Context:** The SpaDeX (Space Docking Experiment) mission, developed by ISRO, marks a significant step in advancing India's space exploration capabilities. It was launched on December 30, 2024.

About the Mission

- SpaDeX is designed to test and demonstrate the technology required for docking two spacecraft in orbit.
- The mission involves two spacecraft – a “chaser” (SDX01) that will actively pursue and dock with a “target” (SDX02) spacecraft.
- **Objectives:**
 - To demonstrate the rendezvous, docking, and undocking of two spacecraft in low Earth orbit.
 - To test technologies like inter-satellite power transfer and composite spacecraft control, which are crucial for future robotic and human spaceflight missions.
- SpaDeX will utilize a low-impact androgynous docking system, enabling a safe and secure connection between the two spacecraft.
- Advanced sensors, including a Laser Range Finder (LRF) and Proximity and Docking Sensor (PDS), will ensure precise and controlled docking.
- An autonomous inter-satellite link will enable real-time communication and data sharing between the spacecraft.

FIDE Women's World Rapid Chess Championship 2024

- **Context:** Koneru Humpy has recently claimed her second women's title at the World Rapid and Blitz Championship held in New York, marking a milestone in her chess career, showcasing her exceptional talent and determination.



Key Facts

- Humpy scored an impressive 8.5 points over 11 rounds, defeating Indonesia's Irene Sukander in the final match.
- At 37 years old, she stands as the top-ranked Indian player and is only the second woman to achieve this title more than once.
- Humpy's win is historic as it establishes her as a leading figure in women's chess.
- She previously won the championship in 2019 in Georgia, making her a two-time champion.

World Audio Visual Entertainment Summit (WAVES) 2025

- **Context:** India is set to host the World Audio Visual Entertainment Summit (WAVES) in 2025, marking a milestone for the nation, and providing a platform to showcase its creative talents.

Key Facts

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasized the importance of young creators in this initiative, denoting their role in driving innovation within the creative sector.
- The World Audio Visual Entertainment Summit aims to bring together industry leaders and creators.
- It will serve as a global stage for discussing trends, challenges, and opportunities in the audio-visual sector. Hosting this summit aligns with India's vision of enhancing its cultural footprint on the world stage.

31st DECEMBER 2024

Kaamya Karthikeyan

- **Context:** Kaamya Karthikeyan, a 17-year-old student from Mumbai, has made history by becoming the youngest female in the world to conquer highest peaks of all seven continent.



Climbed Peaks

- **Africa:** Mount Kilimanjaro (Tanzania)
- **Europe:** Mount Elbrus (Russia)
- **Australia:** Mount Kosciuszko (Australia)
- **South America:** Mount Aconcagua (Argentina)
- **North America:** Mount Denali (USA)
- **Asia:** Mount Everest (Nepal)
- **Antarctica:** Mount Vinson (Antarctica)

Financial Stability Report (FSR)

- **Context:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), in its December 2024 Financial Stability Report (FSR), projected India's GDP growth at 6.6% for FY 2024-25.

Key Highlights

- RBI highlighted India's economic resilience, supported by sound macroeconomic fundamentals, improved asset quality in banks, and robust financial system indicators.
- Risks such as moderation in urban demand, global uncertainties, and protective trade policies were noted.
- Real GDP growth is forecasted at 6.6% for FY25, aided by government investment, rural demand recovery, and a boost in services exports.
- The gross non-performing assets (GNPA) ratio of Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs) hit a 12-year low of 2.6% in September 2024, while net NPAs dropped to 0.6%, showcasing improved asset quality.