

February Edition

Monthly

CURRENT AFFAIRS

NEWS FROM JANUARY, 2025



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More than 18 marching contingents, 31 tableaux, and around 5000 artistes participated at the Republic Day Parade 2025 held at Kartavya Path on January 26, 2025. The parade began after President Droupadi Murmu unfurled national flag, followed by salute from parade commander Lt General Bhavnish Kumar. In a rare coincidence, parade commander Lt General Bhavnish Kumar took part in the R-day parade with his son Lieutenant Ahan Kumar who led the contingent of the iconic 61 Cavalry on Kartavya Path. The parade also included mind-blowing stunts by daredevils, and spectacular aerial formations by the Indian Air Force aircraft. The parade concluded with grand celebration after national anthem. Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto is the Chief Guest, with military contingents from the country also participated in a march-past. The Republic Day parade started at 10:30 am. The 90-minute ceremony commenced with the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the National War Memorial, where he led the nation in paying solemn tributes to the fallen heroes by laying a wreath.



The Mahakumbh Mela in Prayagraj commenced with its first amrit snan on January 14, 2025. This ritual bath, known as shahi snan, marks event in Hindu traditions and draws thousands of devotees. The Kumbh Mela occurs every 12 years at four sacred locations, with Prayagraj being one of them. The first dip is reserved for sadhus from various akhadaas, who are considered the royalty of this religious gathering. Thirteen akhadaas participate in the Mahakumbh. Shri Panchayati Akhara Mahanirvani led the first dip. Makar Sankranti marks the Sun's transition to Capricorn. Uttarayan signifies the gods' daytime in Hindu beliefs. Shani, the lord of Capricorn, is the Sun's son. As the Mahakumbh Mela progresses, it will culminate in various rituals and celebrations. Several auspicious bathing dates occur during the Kumbh Mela. Makar Sankranti on January 14, Mauni Amavasya falls on January 29, and Vasant Panchami on February 3. The final date is Shiv Ratri on February 26, marking the conclusion of the Kumbh Mela.



As millions of pilgrims gathered to take a dip at Prayagraj's Sangam on Mauni Amavasya, considered the most auspicious day of Kumbh Mela, on January 29, 2024, the rush of devotees flocking towards a spot called the Sangam's nose, turned fatal in the pre-dawn dark. The stampede happened between 1 am and 2 am as devotees rushed towards the Sangam for the Amrit Snan. A barrier collapsed, causing panic and chaos. Reports indicated that misinformation exacerbated the situation, leading to a surge in the crowd. Many devotees were injured, prompting immediate medical assistance. At least 30 pilgrims were killed, dozens injured and many separated from their families as a sea of devotees broke through barriers to make their way towards the nose at the Triveni Sangam. Following the stampede, Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath appealed to the devotees to not flock to the Sangam Nose, suggesting they take dips at ghats near them.



Mr. Prabowo Subianto paid a State Visit to India from January 23-26, 2025. He also attended the celebrations of the 76th Republic Day of India as the Chief Guest. He was accompanied by a high-level delegation including several Ministers as well as Senior Officials of the Indonesian government and a business delegation. This was the first visit of President Prabowo to India in his current capacity as President and coincided with the 75th Anniversary of India-Indonesia Diplomatic Relations, a milestone that reflects the enduring friendship and deep-rooted historical ties between the two countries. President Prabowo was accorded a ceremonial reception at the Rashtrapati Bhavan and he paid tributes to Mahatma Gandhi at Raj Ghat. This was followed by bilateral talks between Prime Minister Modi and President Prabowo. Thereafter, the two leaders witnessed the exchange of bilateral documents. President Prabowo attended the luncheon hosted by Prime Minister Modi in his honour.



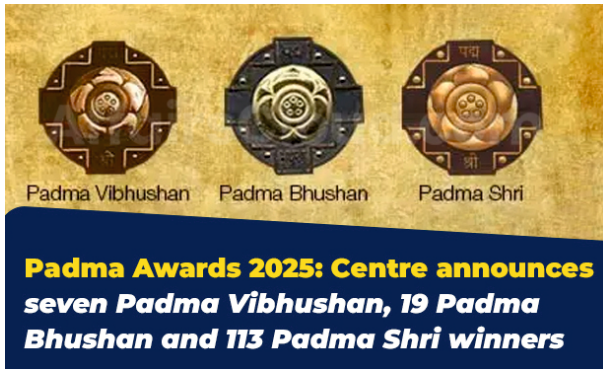
The second of the two Multi Purpose Vessels, being built by M/s L&T Shipyard for the Indian Navy, was launched in the presence of Rajesh Kumar Singh, Defence Secretary on 13 Jan 25 at L&T, Kattupalli, Chennai. The ship has been named ‘Utkarsh’ which means ‘Superior in Conduct’ and is synonymous to the multi-dimensional role envisaged for the platform. These Multi Purpose Vessels will be capable of towing ships, launch and recover various targets, operate unmanned autonomous vehicles and act as a trial platform for various indigenous weapons and sensors under development. The 106 m vessels are designed to achieve a maximum speed of 15 knots. This endeavour is in line with Indian Navy efforts towards indigenous shipbuilding and the launch of this vessel by a private Indian shipyard showcases the country’s strides in indigenous shipbuilding, in consonance with Govt. of India vision for Aatmanirbhar Bharat and Make in India initiative.



The Indian Navy, with destroyer INS Mumbai, along with eight other Indo-Pacific nations, has been deployed in the Malacca, Sunda and Lombok straits between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean on January 16, 2025, as part of the fifth edition of the multinational naval exercise La Perouse 25. The exercise, which began on January 16, continued till January 24. The Indo-Pacific nations participating in this major exercise include Australia with the destroyer HMAS Hobart, Canada with the destroyer HMCS Ottawa, the US with the LCS USS Savannah, France with its French CSG, India with the destroyer INS Mumbai, Indonesia providing base support on land for the Atlantique 2 maritime patrol aircraft of French CSG, Malaysia with the destroyer FFG Lekir and its embarked helicopter and the vessel Gagah Samudera, the UK with the offshore patrol vessel HMS Spey, and Singapore with the patrol vessel RSN Independence.



On January 14, 2025, Indian space startup Digantara achieved milestone with the successful launch of its Space Camera for Object Tracking (SCOT) mission. This marks an important step in enhancing space situational awareness and tracking capabilities in Low Earth Orbit (LEO). The mission was launched aboard SpaceX's Transporter-12 rocket, showcasing India's growing presence in the global space industry. The SCOT satellite was launched on SpaceX's Transporter-12 mission from Vandenberg Space Force Base in California. The mission successfully established contact with its ground station shortly after launch. The mission is backed by Aditya Birla Ventures and SIDBI. It aims to boost national security and enhance space operations through improved tracking capabilities. Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated Digantara on the success of SCOT, emphasising its contribution to India's space industry.



The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on January 25, 2025, announced the names of the awardees who will receive the highest civilian awards, Padma Awards, for the year 2025. This year, President Droupadi Murmu has approved the conferment of 139 Padma Awards. Among the awardees, 23 are women, and the list includes 10 individuals categorised as foreigners, NRIs, PIOs, or OCIs, as well as 13 posthumous awardees. Thirty awardees will be given Padma Awards under the Literature and Education category in ceremonial functions which will be held at Rashtrapati Bhawan usually around March or April. This year, 7 people will get the highest award which is given for exceptional and distinguished service to the country. Under the Education category, MT Vasudevan Nair from Kerala will be awarded the Padma Vibhushan Posthumously. He was affectionately called by his admirers, as MT, and died on December 25, 2024.



Indore and Udaipur have become the first two Indian cities to join the global list of accredited wetland cities under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands as notified on January 26, 2025. Prime Minister took to social media and congratulated the two cities for joining the list of 31 Wetland Accredited Cities globally. "This recognition reflects our strong commitment to sustainable development and nurturing harmony between nature and urban growth," he wrote. Earlier this month, the Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) submitted three nominations from India for Wetland City Accreditation (WCA) - Indore and Bhopal from Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan's Udaipur. 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.



On January 29, 2025, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) marked milestone by successfully completing its 100th launch from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota. The mission involved the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV-F15), which carried the NVS-02 satellite into orbit. This launch not only represents a technical achievement but also marks India's growing capabilities in space exploration and technology. The GSLV-F15 lifted off successfully placing the NVS-02 satellite in its intended orbit. This satellite is the second in the Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC) series, designed to provide precise navigation services across India and surrounding regions. NVS-02 has a lift-off mass of 2,250 kg and operates on the I-2K bus platform. This satellite employs a combination of indigenous and procured atomic clocks to ensure accurate time estimation, crucial for navigation services.



The collision of the Russian nuclear-powered icebreaker, 50 Let Pobedy, with a cargo vessel in the Kara Sea on January 26, 2025, has raised concerns about safety and navigation in the Arctic region. The impact caused damage to the icebreaker but did not compromise its seaworthiness or safety systems. This incident puts stress on the strategic importance of the Northern Sea Route (NSR) for Russia amid rising global temperatures and increasing shipping activity. The dramatic collision occurred on January 26, but it was notified on January 28. The icebreaker was escorting the Yaman Krechet cargo vessel and moving in close quarters when its bow struck the cargo's port side. The impact caused a gash on the icebreaker's bow above the waterline. Atomflot, the manufacturer of the nuclear-powered icebreaker, notified that the vessel continued operating in the Northern Sea route after its port-side edge plating was damaged and the two onboard reactors (located on the rear of the ship) were unharmed in the accident.



As part of the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav celebrations, the Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) of NITI Aayog has launched an inspiring initiative, EmpowHER Biz – Sapno Ki Udaan on January 8, 2025. This program, in collaboration with New Shop, India’s largest 24/7 convenience retail chain, aims to empower women entrepreneurs in the retail sector by providing essential skills, resources, and opportunities. The EmpowHER Biz initiative is part of WEP’s Award to Reward (ATR) program, focusing on mentorship, training, and financial support to help women succeed in organised retail. Participants will gain valuable insights into retail management, digital tools, financial literacy, and business development. The program seeks to address key challenges faced by women entrepreneurs, such as societal biases, limited access to financing, and lack of credible networks and mentorship. This initiative will select 50 women entrepreneurs and candidates will be chosen through an online application process based on specific criteria.



6 persons were killed and more than 20 critically injured in a stampede at Tirupati on January 8, 2025; as people jostled for tickets for the Vaikunta Ekadasi festival at the Tirumala temple on January 10, 2025. The TTD had set up around 90 counters at various locations in Tirupati and announced that tickets would be made available from 5 a.m. on January 9. The announcement drew tens of thousands of people, eager to ensure their place for darshan. However, the overwhelming crowd at the counters, led to chaos as the arrangements were reportedly not adequate. The police had a tough time controlling the crowd. The injured were rushed to the government-run Sri Venkateswara Ramnarain Ruia Hospital for treatment. Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu expressed shock over the incident and instructed the TTD and police officials to extend the best medical care. He called for strict action against the employees responsible for the incident.



The Indian Railways has unveiled a monumental engineering achievement with the completion of the Anji Khad Bridge, India's first cable-stayed rail bridge on January 9, 2025. Situated in the challenging terrain of the Reasi district in Jammu and Kashmir. Stretching 725.5 meters in length, the Anji Khad Bridge stands as a testament to cutting-edge engineering and innovation. Connecting Katra and Reasi, the bridge rises 331 meters above the riverbed, with its single main pylon towering 193 meters from its foundation. Its asymmetrical design, supported by 96 cables varying in length from 82 to 295 meters, ensures stability amidst the region's complex geological and seismic challenges. Designed for speeds of 100 km/h, the bridge integrates state-of-the-art construction techniques and advanced equipment, such as the DOKA jump form shuttering system and a 40-tonne tower crane imported from Spain. These innovations enhanced safety and efficiency.



The Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi laid foundation stone, inaugurated development works worth over Rs. 2 Lakh Crore in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh on January 8, 2025. The project, jointly developed by NGEL and the New & Renewable Energy Development Corporation of Andhra Pradesh (NREDCAP), will be located in Pudimadaka, Anakapalle district. It is the first Green Hydrogen Hub under the National Green Hydrogen Mission. The Visakhapatnam Green Hydrogen Hub will be developed with an investment of approximately Rs. 1.85 lakh crore. It will include the development of 20 GW of renewable energy projects and the production of 1,500 tonnes per day (TPD) of green hydrogen, along with 7,500 TPD of green hydrogen derivatives such as green methanol, green urea, and sustainable aviation fuel. These products are primarily aimed at export markets. Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu welcomed the initiative.



On January 7, 2025, a 7.1 magnitude earthquake struck the Tibetan region near the Nepal border. The quake's epicentre was approximately 80 km north of Mt Everest, located 10 km below the surface. By evening, reports indicated at least 95 fatalities and over 130 injuries in China, with extensive property damage. Tremors were felt as far away as Kathmandu and Kolkata. This event marks the seismic activity in the Himalayan region and raises concerns about future earthquakes. The earthquake's epicentre was in Tingry County, Shigatse, Tibet. This area is situated 4-5 km above sea level and is home to roughly 7000 residents. The region is for its spiritual heritage, being the seat of the Panchen Lama. Local authorities have restricted tourist access post-quake. The impact on infrastructure has been devastating, with hundreds of houses reported flattened.

Quick Reads...

A volcano located in Indonesia's eastern island of Halmahera erupted on January 15, 2025; spewing a four-km (2.5-mile) high ash cloud, forcing authorities to raise the alert level in surrounding areas to the highest. Clouds of thick grey ash billowed into the sky leaning towards the west. Mount Ibu also erupted on January 14, 2025, afternoon, spewing three-km (1.86-mile) high volcanic ash. There are around 13,000 residents living near the volcano.

The vibrant Boda Tyohar festival, the largest annual celebration for the Hatti tribes of the Trans-Giri region in Himachal Pradesh, kicked off on January 10, 2025; with much enthusiasm and traditional fervour. The festival, which holds immense cultural significance for the three lakh-strong Hatti community, is set to continue throughout the month and will culminating in the end of the 'Magha' month.

The 32.78 hectare area of Guneri village in Lakhtar tehsil of Kutch district, which is a natural inland mangrove site, has been declared as the first Biodiversity Heritage Site of Gujarat. The Gujarat government made the announcement on January 30, 2025 after considering a recommendation from the Gujarat Biodiversity Board. The announcement has been done under the provisions of The Biodiversity Act, 2002. The Act empowers the state government to notify an area as a BHS after consulting concerned local bodies.

Quick Reads...

Rishabh Pant made history as the most expensive player in IPL auction history during the 2025 mega auction held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia on November 24, 2024. The Indian wicketkeeper-batter was signed by the Lucknow Super Giants for an astonishing ₹ 27 crore. Earlier, the Delhi Capitals exercised its RTM (Right to Match) card at ₹ 20.75 crore to retain Pant, but Lucknow responded by raising the bid to ₹ 27 crore.

The Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath launched a special FM channel of All India Radio Kumbhvani (103.5 MHz), dedicated to Maha Kumbh 2025, at Circuit House, Prayagraj on January 10, 2025. On this historic occasion, the Union Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting, Dr. L. Murugan also joined the event online. CM Adityanath also inaugurated the Kumbh Mangal Dhvani on this occasion. The live commentary on Kumbhvani will be especially beneficial for those who would not be able to come to Prayagraj to participate in the Kumbh.

The Government of India has implemented a new rule regarding the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-Kisan) scheme. As of January 1, 2025, new applicants must now obtain a farmer ID to register for this welfare programme. This initiative aims to streamline the application process and ensure that only eligible farmers receive benefits. The farmer ID serves as a unique digital identity linked to land records, thus simplifying verification.

Quick Reads...

Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation, Shri Amit Shah, today inaugurated the BHARATPOL portal developed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi on January 7, 2025. Shri Amit Shah also presented police medals to 35 award-winning CBI officers, who were honoured with the President's Police Medal for Distinguished Service and the Home Minister's Medal for Excellence in Investigation. On this occasion, several dignitaries, including the Union Home Secretary, the Director of CBI, and the Secretary of DoPT were present.

Indonesia has officially joined the BRICS as a full member, Brazil's government announced on January 6, 2025. The group, which brings together major emerging economies, now consists of Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, and Indonesia. Indonesia's journey to BRICS membership began with its long-standing interest in joining the bloc. The approval for its membership occurred at the 2023 summit, with Brazil's presidency facilitating the process.

Uttar Pradesh's Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath inaugurated 'Maa Ki Rasoi' on January 10, 2025. This community kitchen initiative aims to provide affordable meals for the economically weaker sections. The kitchen operates at Swaroop Rani Nehru Hospital in Prayagraj, managed by Nandi Sewa Sansthan. The initiative offers a full meal for just ₹9, making it accessible to many.

Quick Reads...

India and China on January 27, 2025, decided to resume Kailash Mansarovar Yatra and agreed in principle to restore direct flights as the two sides announced several measures to "rebuild" bilateral ties over two-and-a-half months after their militaries completed disengagement of troops in eastern Ladakh. The decisions were announced after Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri held wide-ranging talks with Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong in Beijing. The resumption of the yatra signifies a thaw in India-China relations.

India has conferred the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award on Christine Carla Kangaloo, President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, recognising her outstanding achievements in public affairs and her contributions to enhancing India's global prestige, the High Commission of India in Trinidad and Tobago announced on January 28, 2025. Kangaloo, an Indo-Trinidadian President, served as the chief guest for the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention held in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, from January 8-10, 2025.

Wing Commander Akshay Saxena has been awarded the Vayu Sena Medal (Gallantry) on January 25, 2025, for his exceptional contributions during anti-piracy operations in the Arabian Sea. The operation, conducted on March 16, 2024, was part of the Indian Navy's Operation Sankalp, aimed at ensuring maritime security in the region.

Quick Reads...

The Uniform Civil Code (UCC) was implemented in Uttarakhand on January 27, 2025. It makes Uttarakhand as the first state in India to enact the UCC post-independence. The UCC aims to establish a unified legal framework for all citizens, promoting equality across various personal laws. It applies to marriage, divorce, inheritance, and live-in relationships, ensuring that all communities are governed by the same legal standards. The UCC standardises several personal laws. It establishes a uniform legal age for marriage.

Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma announced Dibrugarh's elevation to a full-fledged city and the state's second capital on January 27, 2025. The decision, aimed at enhancing Ease of Living and connectivity, reflects the government's commitment to holistic development. Marking a significant infrastructure push, the Chief Minister laid foundation stones for four major flyovers in Dibrugarh. The announcement follows Sarma's two-nation trip to Japan for the Advantage Assam Roadshow, where he engaged with industry leaders to attract investments.

Brazil's government announced on January 17, 2025, Nigeria's acceptance as a partner country in the multinational bloc of nations known as BRICS. Brazil, which holds the bloc's presidency in 2025, said in a statement that the African country has been actively "strengthening cooperation in the Global South and reforming global governance", which has been a priority to Brazil.