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A Weekly Current Affairs Initiative

**KAS, FDA/SDA/PDO/ GROUP C,
PSI/PC, TEACHER'S EXAMS**

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January 1st Week 2025

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- RBI Financial Stability Report
- Himachal Pradesh Moves Towards Regulated Cannabis Cultivation
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INSTA ವಿದ್ಯಮಾನ
WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS
JANUARY 1ST Week 2026

PM chairs 50th meeting of PRAGATI
Syllabus: GS2/Governance



Context

- The Prime Minister chaired the 50th meeting of PRAGATI.

PRAGATI (Pro-Active Governance And Timely Implementation)

- It is a **technology-driven governance and monitoring platform** launched by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) in 2015.
- **Aim: To improve public administration and accelerate implementation** of government programmes and projects.

Objectives -

- **Project Monitoring:** Track progress of high-value and critical infrastructure projects and resolve delays or bottlenecks.
- **Programme Implementation:** Ensure timely and efficient execution of government schemes and missions.
- **Grievance Redressal:** Address persistent public grievances by integrating with systems like **Centralised Public Grievance Redressal and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS)** for citizen complaints.

Key Achievements

- 377 projects have been reviewed under PRAGATI, and across these projects, 2,958 out of 3,162 identified issues – i.e. around **94% have been resolved.**
- Several projects that had **remained stalled for decades were completed or decisively unlocked** after being taken up under the PRAGATI platform.

RBI Financial Stability Report
Syllabus: GS3/ Economy

Context

- The Reserve Bank of India's December 2025 Financial Stability Report (FSR) assesses systemic risks to India's financial sector and evaluates the resilience of banks amid domestic strength and global uncertainties.

Financial Stability Report (FSR)

- It is a **biannual publication** by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)
- **Aim -** It assesses the **stability and resilience of the Indian financial system.**
- **Significance -** It offers insights into the **health of** various components of the financial sector, including **banking, non-banking financial institutions (NBFCs), mutual funds, insurance companies, and financial markets.**

Himachal Pradesh Moves Towards Regulated Cannabis Cultivation

Syllabus: GS3/ Agriculture



Context

- Himachal Pradesh is finalising a policy to legalise and regulate cannabis cultivation for medicinal and industrial purposes.

Cannabis/Marijuana

- It is a generic term used to denote the several psychoactive preparations of the plant **Cannabis sativa**.
- The major psychoactive constituent in cannabis is **tetrahydrocannabinol (THC)**.

Side-effects Cannabis use

- Its immediate effects include **impairments in memory and in mental processes, including ones that are critical for driving**.
- Persistent cognitive deficits, and mental health problems like **schizophrenia, depression and anxiety**.
- **Exposure to cannabis in adolescence can alter brain development**.

Legal Status in India

- **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (NDPS Act) of 1985:** Classifies cannabis as a Schedule I drug, meaning it has high potential for abuse.
 - **Possession and consumption:** Punishable with imprisonment for up to **6 months or a fine of ₹10,000 or both**.

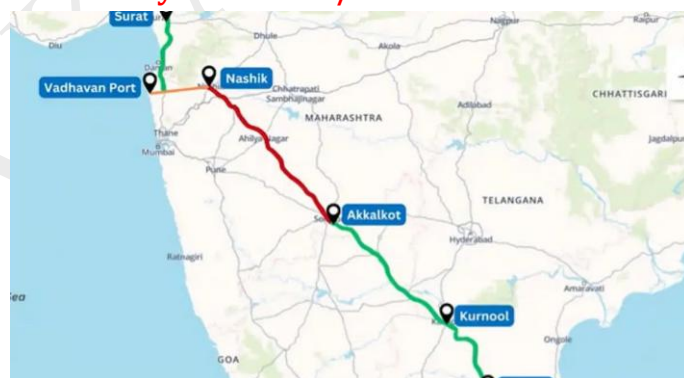
- **Cultivation and sale:** More severe penalties, including **imprisonment for up to 10 years** and fines.
- **Exclusions:** **Bhang, which is made with the leaves of the plant, is not mentioned in the NDPS Act.**

● Recent changes

- **2020:** CBD (cannabidiol) extracted from hemp plants legalized for medical purposes.
- **2023:** **Uttarakhand High Court ruled that the NDPS Act does not prohibit the cultivation of cannabis for research purposes.**

Key Six-lane Green Corridor in Maharashtra Approved

Syllabus: GS3/Infrastructure



Context

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by the Prime Minister, has approved the **construction of a six-lane, access-controlled greenfield corridor connecting Nashik, Solapur and Akkalkot in Maharashtra**.

Six-lane Green Corridor in Maharashtra

- The **374-kilometre-long project** will be developed on a Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) toll mode.
- A **Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) model** is a project framework where a **private company builds, finances, and runs a large project for a set period, recovers**

costs/makes profit, and then transfers ownership back to the government.

- **Significance** - This will improve regional and inter-state **connectivity while strengthening India's integrated transport infrastructure under the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan.**

PM GatiShakti National Master Plan (PMGS-NMP)

- **It was launched in 2021**
- **Objective** - It provides **multimodal connectivity infrastructure** to various economic zones and **improves logistics efficiency across India.**
- It is not under a single ministry but is **coordinated by** the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) under the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry.**
- **Significance** - The plan will provide seamless and efficient connectivity for the movement of people, goods, and services.
- **PM GatiShakti is driven by seven engines: Railways, Roads, Ports, Waterways, Airports, Mass Transport and Logistics Infrastructure.**

DRDO Conducts Salvo Launch of Two Pralay Missiles

Syllabus: GS3/ Defence

Context

- **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** successfully conducted a salvo **launch of two 'Pralay' missiles off Odisha coast** in quick succession.

Pralay

- **Type** - It is an **indigenous surface-to-surface short-range quasi-ballistic missile.**
- **Range and Payload:** Pralay has an operational range of approximately **400 km**

and carries a payload capacity of **500 to 1,000 kg.**

- The missile is equipped with a state-of-the-art navigation system and integrated avionics, ensuring precision targeting even in challenging terrains.
- **It is capable of carrying multiple types of warheads to engage a wide range of targets.**

Additional Information - Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP)

- **Launched in** - 1983
- **Conceived by** - IGMDP was conceived by Dr. APJ. Abdul Kalam in the 1980s.
- **Objective** - To enable India to attain self-sufficiency in the field of missile technology.

The missiles developed under IGMDP are

- **Short-range surface-to-surface ballistic missile - Prithvi**
- **Intermediate-range surface-to-surface ballistic missile - Agni**
- **Short-range low-level surface-to-air missile - Trishul**
- **Medium-range surface-to-air missile - Akash**
- **Third generation anti-tank missile - Nag**

Indian missile systems

Missile	Type	Range
Astra	air-to-air	80 km
Trishul	surface-to-air	9 km
Akash		30 km
Prithvi Air Defence (PAD)		2000 km

Nag	surface-to-surface missile	Anti-tank	4 km
Prahaar	surface-to-surface	SRBM	150 km
BrahMos	land, naval, air	Supersonic Cruise Missile	300 km
Nirbhay	land, naval, air	Subsonic Cruise Missile	1000 km
K-15 Sagarika	underwater-to-surface	SLBM	700 km
Dhanush	sea-to-sea/surface	SRBM	350 km
Shaurya	surface-to-surface	SLBM	1900

Sub-marine launched ballistic missile

Missile	Features
Astra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Astra is a beyond-visual-range (BVR) air-to-air missile (AAM). ● In terms of size and weight, the Astra is the smallest missile developed by the DRDO. ● It was envisaged to intercept and destroy enemy aircraft at supersonic speeds.
Trishul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Used as anti-sea skimmer (to fly low to avoid radar) from ships against low-flying attacks.
Akash	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It has the capability to “neutralize aerial targets like fighter jets, cruise missiles and air-to-surface missiles” as well as ballistic missiles.

PAD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Anti-ballistic missile developed to intercept incoming ballistic missiles outside the atmosphere (exo-atmospheric).
Nag	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 3rd generation anti-tank ‘fire and forget’ guided missile (lock-on before launch system) where the target is identified and designated before the weapon is launched.
Prahaar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● High manoeuvrability. ● Primarily a battlefield support system for the Army.
BrahMos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It is a supersonic cruise missile developed as a joint venture between Indian and Russia. ● It is the fastest supersonic cruise missile in the world. ● It is the world’s fastest anti-ship cruise missile in operation.
Nirbhay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Subsonic missile which is ancillary (providing necessary support) to the BrahMos range.
K-15 Sagarika	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It forms the crucial third leg of India’s nuclear deterrent vis-à-vis its submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) capability. ● It was subsequently integrated with India’s nuclear-powered Arihant class submarine.
Dhanush	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It is capable of carrying nuclear warheads. ● It carries forward the legacy of the K-15 Sagarika.

Shaurya

- Surface-to-surface ballistic missile (SSM) variant of the K-15 Sagarika.
- The nuclear capability of the missile enhances India's second-strike capability.
- It reduces the dependence on the K-15 which was built with Russian assistance.

National Technology Readiness Assessment Framework (NTRAF)

Syllabus: GS3/Science and Technology

In News

- Recently, Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA) to the Government of India launched the National Technology Readiness Assessment Framework (NTRAF).

National Technology Readiness Assessment Framework (NTRAF)

- **Objective** - to assess the maturity of technologies from early laboratory research to full commercial deployment using 9 Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs).
- **Significance** - It aims to serve as the operational backbone for various R&D funds launched under National Missions.

Amazonian Stingless Bees To Get Legal Rights

Syllabus: GS3/Environment



In News

- Stingless bees have become the **first insects in the world to be granted legal rights**

considering the bees' ecological and cultural importance.

Stingless bees

- They are **native to the Peruvian part of the Amazon rainforest**, who have **no sting unlike their European counterparts**.
- **Ecological Role:** They are key rainforest pollinators, sustaining biodiversity and ecosystem health.
- They are the **oldest bee species on the planet** and are responsible for **pollinating over 80 per cent of Amazonian flora**, including globally cherished crops like coffee, chocolate, avocados, and blueberries.
- **Threats:** They face a deadly confluence of climate change, deforestation and pesticides, as well as **competition from European bees**.
- **Rights granted:** The Declaration of Rights for Native Stingless Bees recognizes their **right to exist, thrive, maintain healthy populations, live in pollution-free habitats, regenerate natural cycles, and be legally represented if harmed**.

Additional Information - Amazon rainforest



- The Amazon rainforest, often **Amazon rainforest**
- It is home to about **10% of all known plant and animal species**.
- The Amazon spans 8 countries and one overseas territory: **Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname, Venezuela, and French Guiana (a French overseas territory)**.
- It stores around **250–300 billion tonnes of carbon, equivalent to 15–20 years of global greenhouse gas emissions**, and generates rainfall that supports some of the world's largest cities and most vital agricultural regions.
- It is home to over **47 million people, including 2.2 million Indigenous and traditional communities**, whose cultures and livelihoods are deeply tied to the forest.

National Investigation Agency (NIA) **Syllabus: GS3/ Security Agencies**

Context

- In 2025, the NIA achieved a conviction rate of over **92%**, secured the extradition of 26/11 accused **Tahawwur Rana**, and intensified its crackdown on terrorism and organised crime across the country.

National Investigation Agency (NIA)

- **Established under:** NIA Act, 2008 after 26/11 Mumbai attacks.
- **Function:** Central counter-terrorism law enforcement agency.
- **Mandate:** Investigates offences affecting India's sovereignty, security, international treaties, etc.
- **NIA (Amendment) Act, 2019:**
 - **Jurisdiction extended:** Can investigate scheduled offences committed outside India involving Indian citizens/interests.
 - **Expanded mandate:** Covers offences under **Explosive**

Substances Act, 1908 Human Trafficking, Cyber Terrorism Arms Act, 1959.

- **Governing body:** Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi
- **Special Courts:** Total NIA Special Courts: 51
 - **Exclusive NIA Courts: 2 (Ranchi & Jammu)**

Village Defence Guards (VDG) **Syllabus: GS3/Internal Security**



Context

- Amid growing focus of terrorists on the **Chenab Valley in the Jammu region**, the Army provided a step-by-step **training to local civilians who offered to work as Village Defence Guards (VDG)**.

Village Defence Guards (VDG)

- **Aim:** Enhancing their operational readiness and coordination with security forces.
- **Training:** The VDG were provided basic training in self-defence and taking position in bunkers. They were also trained in mountain combat.
- VDGs were also trained to enhance their operational capabilities, with a focus on **weapon handling, firing practices and basic battle drills**.

JIVA Programme

Syllabus: GS3/ Environment/ Agriculture

Context

- The JIVA programme in drought-prone Nanded district of Marathwada has been beneficial for small and marginal farms.

JIVA programme (Joint Initiative for Village Advancement)

- Launched in - 2022
- Launched by - National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD),
- Aim - It is an agroecology-based initiative to promote natural farming in India.

Objectives of the Programme:

- Promote long-term sustainability of farming systems using natural and low-cost inputs.
- Strengthen resilience against climate variability and drought through ecological methods.
- Enhance soil health, biodiversity, and food security in rural landscapes.
- Facilitate a shift from input-intensive to ecosystem-based agriculture for small and marginal farmers.

Natural Farming

- It is a **chemical free farming, involving livestock** (preferably local breed of cow) integrated natural farming methods and **diversified crop systems** rooted in the **Indian traditional knowledge**.
- It is largely based on on-farm biomass recycling with major stress on **biomass mulching, use of on-farm cow dung-urine formulations**; maintaining soil aeration and **exclusion of all synthetic chemical inputs**.

Additional Information- National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF)

- Launched in - November 2024
- It is a centrally sponsored Scheme

- Objective - to promote chemical-free, ecosystem-based natural farming rooted in traditional knowledge.

Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) **Syllabus: GS2(IR)/GS3/Environment**

In News

- The European Union has begun rolling out the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), which will significantly impact steel and aluminium exporters.

Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)

- It is a carbon tariff on carbon intensive products, such as cement and some electricity, imported by the European Union.
- **Significance** - As a price on carbon, it discourages emissions. As a trade-related measure, it affects production and exports.

3 Years of India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (Ind-Aus ECTA)

Syllabus: GS2/ International Relations

In News

- The **India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (Ind-Aus ECTA) has completed three years of operation** since its implementation in December 2022.

Ind-Aus ECTA

- The Ind-Aus ECTA is a **bilateral free trade agreement between India and Australia**, signed on 2 April 2022 and implemented from December 2022.

Key Features of the Ind-Aus ECTA

- Tariff Liberalisation in Goods:

- **Australia's commitments:** Duty-free access for Indian exports on over 95% of tariff lines from day one.
- **India's commitments:** Gradual tariff reduction on Australian exports, with sensitivity for sectors such as agriculture, dairy, and wine.

India–Australia Relationship

- Strategic and Geopolitical Significance: **India and Australia share a common vision of a free, open, and rules-based Indo-Pacific.**
- Cooperation under initiatives like the **Australia–India Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative Partnership (AIPOIP)** strengthens maritime governance and regional stability.
- **Strategic Alliances:** Both are core members of the **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD)** along with the US and Japan.
- **Joint military exercises** between both nations like **Malabar (naval, QUAD countries), AUSINDEX (bilateral naval exercise)** enhances interoperability, maritime security, and trust.
- **Multilateral Alignment:** India and Australia work closely in global and regional forums such as **G20, East Asia Summit (EAS) & Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA).**
- **Critical Minerals Partnership:** Australia is a major **global supplier of lithium, cobalt, and rare earth elements.** The 'Water Guardians' Initiative
- se minerals are essential for **India's Electric Vehicle (EV) mission, battery manufacturing, and clean energy transition.**

Water Guardians: A Local Fight Against Desertification
Syllabus: GS3/ Environment



Context

- A group of local farmers and **volunteers, called water guardians, are attempting grassroots water restoration** in the semi-arid **Homokhátság region in Hungary.**
- Parts of Central Europe, particularly **Hungary's Great Hungarian Plain (Homokhátság), are witnessing rapid desertification, driven by climate change, falling groundwater levels, and unsustainable land and water management.**
- The initiative aims to **retain and redistribute water locally, rather than allowing it to drain away unused.**

Desertification

- **Definition - It is a gradual process of soil productivity loss and the thinning out of the vegetative cover because of human activities and climatic variations such as prolonged droughts and floods.**

Reasons for the Rise in Desertification

- **Climate Change:** Increasing global temperatures intensify evaporation, reducing soil moisture and drying surface layers.
- **Declining Groundwater Levels:** Excessive extraction of groundwater for agriculture and urban use leads to falling water tables. Further channelisation of rivers and

drainage of wetlands disrupt natural flooding and recharge cycles.

- **Unsustainable Agricultural Practices:** Overgrazing removes protective vegetation cover, exposing soil to wind erosion.
- **Deforestation:** Clearing forests for agriculture, infrastructure or mining reduces root systems that bind soil. Also Loss of tree cover increases surface runoff and accelerates land degradation.

Impacts of Desertification

- **Environmental Impacts:** Decline in biodiversity as grasslands, wetlands and forests degrade. It also leads to increased soil erosion, dust storms and reduced ecosystem services.
- **Economic Impacts:** Reduced agricultural yields affect farmer incomes and rural livelihoods leading to rising costs of irrigation, land reclamation and drinking water supply.
- **Social Impacts:** Food insecurity and nutritional stress, especially among marginal farmers.
- **Climate Change:** Loss of vegetation reduces carbon sequestration, accelerating climate change. Dry soils intensify heatwaves, creating a vicious cycle of warming and degradation.

Steps Taken to Combat Desertification

United Nations Convention to combat Desertification (UNCCD)

- **Established in** - 1994
- **Objective** - To combat desertification and It is the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment to sustainable land management.
- **Significance** - To maintain and restore the land and soil reproductively.
- **June 17** - It is observed as the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought (WDCDD).

CoP 14

- **Note** - This was the first time that India hosted an edition of the UNCCD COP.
- **Held in** - Greater Noida
- **Theme of the Conference** - 'Restore land, Sustain future'.
- **Significance** - In 2019 the conference adopted the 'Delhi Declaration'. The country parties have agreed to make the Sustainable Development Goal target of achieving land degradation neutrality by 2030.

UNCCD Conference of the Parties (COP)

- **Decision-making body** - The UNCCD Conference of the Parties (COP) was established by the Convention as its main decision-making body.
- **Objective** - It is made up of governments and organizations such as the European Union and is responsible for guiding the Convention so that it can respond to global challenges and national needs.
- **Biennial meeting** - The COP has been meeting biennially since 2001 and has held 14 sessions.
- **Note** - India had hosted the **14th session of the Conference of Parties** of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in **2019 in New Delhi**.
- **16th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP16)** to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) took place from December 2 to 13, 2024, in **Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**

'Fake Rabies Vaccine' in India Syllabus: GS2/Issues Related Health; GS4/Ethics

Context

- **Recently countries like the UK, US, and Australia have issued an advisory about the counterfeit batch of Abhayrab, a rabies vaccine manufactured by**

government-owned Indian Immunologicals Limited (IIL).

Abhayrab Counterfeit Controversy

- Abhayrab is a cell-culture **rabies vaccine manufactured by Indian Immunologicals Limited (IIL)**, in use since 2000 in India and over 40 countries.

Additional Information - **Rabies**

- It is a **zoonotic viral disease** (Disease Transmitted from Animals to Humans).
- **Pathogen** - It is caused by the Rabies virus, of the **Lyssavirus genus, within the family Rhabdoviridae**.
- It is a **Ribonucleic Acid (RNA) virus that is present in the saliva of a rabid animal (dog, cat, monkey, etc)**.
- **Rabies is 100% fatal but 100% vaccine-preventable**.
- 33% of global rabies deaths are recorded in India.

Common Vectors/ Reservoirs of Virus

- Most mammals can carry the virus and hence can cause the disease.
- In South Asia and Africa, the most common reservoir of the virus is the **domestic/street dog**.
- In developed nations like the USA, animals that transmit rabies are bats, foxes, raccoons, and skunks.

Symptoms

- **Anxiety, Confusion, salivation, seizures, hallucinations and paralysis.**

National Action Plan for dog Mediated Rabies Elimination by 2030 (NAPRE)

- Under this, the union will encourage all the States and UTs to make Rabies a **notifiable Disease**.

- A **notifiable disease is any disease that is required by law to be reported to government authorities.**
- "Joint Inter-Ministerial Declaration Support Statement" for Elimination of Dog mediated Rabies from India by 2030 was also launched.

World Rabies Day

- **Celebrated on 28 September which marks the anniversary of Louis Pasteur's death.**
- **Louis Pasteur was a French chemist and microbiologist, who developed the first rabies vaccine.**
- He also discovered Pasteurisation, Vaccines for Anthrax and Cholera and Chamberland filters.

Sabarimala Temple Opens for Makaravilakku Festival

Syllabus: GS1/ Culture

Context

- The Sabarimala Ayyappa temple will **reopen on 30 December for the Makaravilakku festival**, marking the second phase of the annual pilgrimage season.

Makaravilakku Festival

- Makara Vilakku is **one of Kerala's most sacred festivals**, celebrated annually at the Sabarimala Ayyappa Temple.
- It is observed on the **first day of Makara Masam in the Malayalam calendar, coinciding with Makara Sankranti**.
- On this divine day, devotees gather to witness two powerful events:
- **Makara Jyoti:** The **bright celestial star (Sirius) appearing in the eastern sky**.
- **Makara Vilakku:** The **sacred light that appears thrice from the forests of Ponnambalamedu**.

- These **two sightings** are considered **spiritually transformative**, symbolizing the presence, blessings, and grace of Lord Ayyappa.
- The key rituals during the Makaravilakku festival include Kalamezhuthu Pattu, Nayattu Vili, and Guruthi, performed before the closing of the shrine doors.

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose **Syllabus: GS1/History**

In News

- **Prime Minister of India paid tribute to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose on the historic occasion of December 30, 1943, when Netaji unfurled the tricolor at Port Blair with unmatched courage and valor.**

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose

- **Early Life:** He was an **Indian nationalist leader** who played a pivotal role in India's struggle for independence against British rule.
- He was **born on January 23, 1897, in Cuttack, Odisha**
- He studied at the **University of Calcutta and later went to England for the Indian Civil Services (ICS) exam.**
- **Political career :** He abandoned ICS aspirations to join the **Indian National Congress (INC)**, advocating for complete independence rather than moderate reforms.
- He was **Elected INC President in 1938 and 1939** but resigned due to **differences with Mahatma Gandhi** and other leaders over non-violent strategies.
- **Contributions in Freedom struggle:** Bose's vision for India's freedom was to **leverage the support of Axis powers during World War II.**
- **He escaped from house arrest in India in 1941, travelling through Afghanistan to**

Germany,

where he sought support from Adolf Hitler.

- **In 1943, he went to Japan, where he took command of the Indian National Army (INA)**, which had been formed by Indian prisoners of war and expatriates.
- The INA's actions and post-war trials had a strong psychological impact, weakening British authority.
- **Death: He died in a plane crash in Taiwan in August 1945; circumstances remain mysterious and controversial.**
- **Legacy:** He is remembered as a **symbol of courage and determination**; numerous institutions, monuments, and awards are named after him.

INSV Kaundinya

Syllabus: GS1/Ancient History



Context

- **Indian Naval Sailing Vessel Kaundinya, sailed on her maiden overseas voyage from Gujarat to Oman.**

INSV Kaundinya

- It is a **stitched sail ship**, based on a **5th century CE ship depicted in the paintings of Ajanta Caves.**
- It is named after Kaundinya, the Indian mariner who sailed across the Indian Ocean to Southeast Asia.
- It has been constructed using traditional stitched shipbuilding techniques, employing

natural materials and methods that date back centuries.

- The project was undertaken through a tripartite agreement between the Ministry of Culture, the Indian Navy and Hodi Innovations as part of India's efforts to rediscover and revive indigenous knowledge systems.
- The voyage retraces ancient maritime routes that once connected the western coast of India with Oman.
- Significance: The expedition is expected to significantly enhance bilateral relations between India and Oman by reinforcing shared maritime heritage and strengthening cultural and people-to-people ties.
- Source: PIB

New BIS Standard for Incense Sticks **Syllabus: GS2/ Health/ Governance**

Context

- **The Union Minister for Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, released IS 19412:2025 - Incense Sticks (Agarbatti) — Specification, an Indian Standard developed by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS).**

About the notified standards

- The standard specifies **prohibited use of certain insecticidal such as Alethrin, permethrin, cypermethrin, deltamethrin, and fipronil**, as well as synthetic fragrance intermediates like **benzyl cyanide, ethyl acrylate, and diphenylamine**.

I

ncense Sticks Sector in India

- India is the **world's largest producer and exporter of agarbattis**, with the industry estimated at around **₹8,000 crore annually and exports of about ₹1,200 crore to more than 150 countries**.
- The sector supports a large ecosystem of **artisans, MSMEs and micro-**

entrepreneurs, providing substantial employment, particularly for women in rural and semi-urban areas.

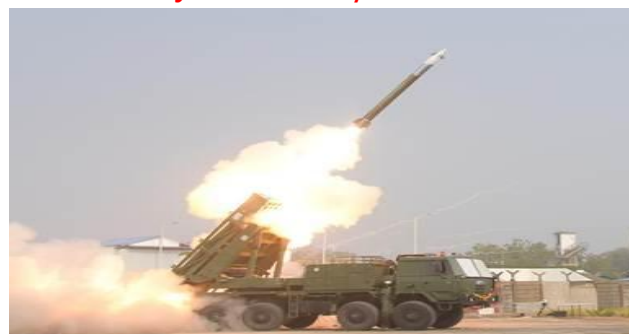
Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)

- **Established under - Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, Government of India.**
- It is established by the **Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 2016** which came into effect on 12 October 2017.
- **Headquarters: New Delhi.**

Functions:

- Formulation of **Indian Standards (IS)** across many sectors.
- **Product Certification Schemes**, both voluntary and compulsory.
- Release of **Quality Control Orders (QCOs)**: Making compliance with certain Indian Standards mandatory for some products.
- **The schemes operated by BIS are**, Product Certification (**ISI mark**), Management Systems Certification, **Hall Marking of Gold and Silver Jewellery/Artefacts** and Laboratory Services for the benefit of the industry and in turn aiming at consumer protection.

Maiden Flight Test of Pinaka Long Range Guided Rocket **Syllabus: GS3/Defence**



In News

- **The maiden flight test of the Pinaka Long Range Guided Rocket (LRGR-120) was**

successfully conducted at the Integrated Test Range (ITR) in Chandipur, Odisha.

Pinaka Long Range Guided Rocket (LRGR 120)

- **Developed by - DRDO**
- **Range - 120 kilometres.**
- It is an extended-range, precision-guided rocket developed for the Indian Army's **Pinaka Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS)**.

Additional Information - Pinaka Multi-Barrel Rocket Launch (MBRL) System

- **Developed by - Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) of India.**
- The system is named after "**Pinaka**," a **mythical weapon used by Lord Shiva**.
- It has the capability to hit targets at **75 kilometers and beyond**.
- The Pinaka MBRL is capable of launching a salvo of **12 rockets in 44 seconds**, which makes it an effective weapon for quickly overwhelming enemy defenses.
- **Armenia became the first export customer for the indigenously developed Pinaka** with interest expressed by several countries in the system.

Narasapuram Lace Craft Syllabus: GS3/ Economy



In News

- **The Prime Minister recently highlighted Narasapuram (Narsapur) lace craft as a powerful example of women's**

empowerment, self-reliance, and grassroots economic progress.

Narasapuram Lace craft

- **Location: Narasapur / Narsapur, West Godavari district, Andhra Pradesh**
- **Origin: Introduced in the 19th century by Christian missionaries**
- **Alternate Name: Crochet lace craft**
- **Technique & Material: Handcrafted using fine cotton threads**
- Made with crochet needles
- **Products: Bedspreads, table covers, cushion covers**
- **Curtains, mobile covers, decorative items**
- **Design Features: Intricate floral, geometric, and paisley patterns.**
- **Motifs inspired by nature and traditional art**
- **Social Significance: Around 60% artisans are women**
- **Promotes women's empowerment through home-based livelihoods**
- **Economic Importance: Source of supplementary income for rural households**
- **Supports traditional artisanal economy**
- **Recognition: Granted Geographical Indication (GI) tag**
- **Selected under One District One Product (ODOP) scheme.**

INS Vagsheer Syllabus: GS3/ Defence



In News

- **President Droupadi Murmu created history by undertaking a dive and**

operational sortie aboard the indigenous Kalvari-class submarine INS Vaghsheer.

INS Vaghsheer

- It is the **sixth and final submarine of the Indian Navy's Kalvari-class (Scorpène-class)** under **Project 75**, built by **Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited** with **French technology transfer**.
- Other submarines of this class are **Kalvari, Khanderi, Karanj, Vagir and Vela**.
- It is **named after the sandfish**, it enhances India's underwater **combat capabilities with advanced stealth features**.

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