

28 December 2024

PM Modi Chairs 45th PRAGATI Meeting

Key Points:

- ❖ On December 26, 2024, Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired the 45th PRAGATI meeting, reviewing eight major projects worth over Rs 1 lakh crore across sectors like urban transport, road connectivity, thermal power, and renewable energy.
- ❖ The meeting focused on ensuring timely project execution. Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired the 45th PRAGATI meeting on December 26, 2024, focusing on the review of eight key projects and public grievances.



India's Defence Exports Reach Rs. 21,083 Crore In 2023-24

Key Points:

- ❖ In the fiscal year 2023-24, India reached a major milestone in its defence sector, with defence exports soaring to Rs 21,083 crore (USD 2.63 billion), marking a 32.5% growth from the previous year.
- ❖ Additionally, indigenous defence production also hit a record value of Rs 1,26,887 crore. In the fiscal year 2023-24, India achieved a significant milestone in its defence sector. The country's defence exports reached a record high value of Rs 21,083 crore (around USD 2.63 billion), marking a 32.5% growth over the previous year.



US Declare Bald Eagle As National Bird After 250 Years

Key Points:

- ❖ On Christmas Eve 2024, President Joe Biden signed a landmark law officially recognizing the bald eagle as the national bird of the United States. Though the bald eagle has symbolized the country since 1782 on the Great Seal, it was never formally designated as the national bird until now. On Christmas Eve 2024, President Joe Biden signed a historic law officially designating the bald eagle as the national bird of the United States.



- ❖ The bald eagle is a bird of prey found in North America. A sea eagle, it has two known subspecies and forms a species pair with the white-tailed eagle, which occupies the same niche as the bald eagle in the Palearctic.



President Murmu Confers Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar on 17 Children

Key Points:

- ❖ President Droupadi Murmu conferred the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar on 17 children -ten girls and seven boys - at a ceremony held at the Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre, New Delhi on 26 December 2024. The award was announced and conferred on the occasion of the Veer Baal Diwas.

- ❖ The winner of the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar is awarded a Medal, a Certificate, and a Cash prize of Rs. One Lakh. Since 2022, December 26 has been observed in the country as Veer Bal Diwas to honour and recall the sacrifice of the tenth Sikh guru Guru Gobind Singh's youngest sons Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh.



- ❖ Which Ministry administers the Award? The Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar is administered by the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development. The award was instituted by the government of India in 1996.
- ❖ About the Award and its Category It is awarded to children aged between 5-18 years for their exceptional performance! abilities and outstanding achievements. In a year a maximum of 25 children are honoured.
- ❖ Category of Award The award is given in seven categories broadly divided into Child Bravery and Child Excellence. The Child Excellence Award is given to children with exceptional abilities and outstanding achievements in : (i) innovation (ii) Arts & Culture (iii) Science & Technology (iv) Environment (v) Social Service (vi) Sports.

Award Winners of 2024 Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar

- ❖ Following are the 17 children who were honoured with the 2024 Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar. Child Bravery

- ❖ **Kisen Wanniang** (15 years old), from Meghalaya- saved four children from drowning in the Maweitksar River.
- ❖ **Saurav Kumar** (9 years old) Bihar -saved three young girls from drowning in the pond in Sheikhpaura, Bihar.
- ❖ **Miss Karina Thapa** (17 years old) from Maharashtra - rescued 36 flat residents during a fire.

Child Excellence Award

- ❖ **Miss Sindhoora Raja** (15 years old) of Manguluru, Karnataka. She developed selfstabilizing devices for Parkinson's patients and affordable prosthetics
- ❖ **Risheek Kumar** (17 years old), of Jammu and Kashmir. An entrepreneur in cybersecurity who has founded Hackers Pathshala and created the "Prarthana" app to promote cultural practices.
- ❖ **Sports**
- ❖ **Hembati Nag** (15 years old) of Chhattisgarh. A judo player who won a silver medal at the 3rd Khelo India National Games in 2022.
- ❖ **Priteesmita Bhoi** (15 years old) of Odisha. She is a weightlifter. First Indian to set a world record in the clean and jerk category with a gold medal at the IWF World Youth Championships in 2024.
- ❖ **Saanvi Sood** (9 years old) of Punjab. She is the youngest Asian girl to summit Mount Kilimanjaro (Tanzania) and to reach Everest Base Camp in Nepal. By the age of 8, she had already conquered some of the world's most challenging peaks, including Mount Elbrus (Russia), Mount Kosciuszko (Australia), and Mount Damavand (Iran).
- ❖ **Jessy Raj Mathrapu** (14 years old) of Andhra Pradesh. She is an artistic skater who has won over 43 medals including a gold medal at the prestigious World Skate Oceania Artistic Championship.
- ❖ **Goldi Kumari** (16 years old), of Bihar. She is a Divyang shot-put player, who excelled in national and state competitions, earning numerous top honours.

- ❖ Arav Bhardwaj (12 years old) of Delhi. He completed a 1,251 km journey from the Kargil War Memorial to India Gate to commemorate Kargil Vijay Divas in 2024 on a cycle. On a cycle, he undertook a 2,612 km ride from the INA Memorial in Manipur to Delhi in 2022.
- ❖ Anish Sarkar (3+), from West Bengal. He is the youngest FIDE-ranked chess player in the world with a rating of 1,555.

Art and Culture

- ❖ Keya Hatkar (14 years old) from Maharashtra. Suffering from Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA) disease, she is the author of "Dancing on My Wheels" and "I'm Possible".
- ❖ Ayaan Sajad (12 years old) from Kashmir. He is a Sufi singer, gaining widespread popularity on YouTube and other social media.
- ❖ Janane Narayanan (14 years old) from Tamil Nadu. She is a Harikatha artist and dedicated Carnatic music student and has received the prestigious Kala Illamani Award from the Government of Tamil Nadu (2023-2024).
- ❖ Vyas Om Jignesh (17 years old) from Gujarat. Despite suffering from cerebral palsy, he has memorized over 5,000 Sanskrit shlokas, including the Sundarkand and the Bhagavad Gita.
- ❖ Sanchi Aggarwal (8 years old) from Maharajgang, Uttar Pradesh. She is an expert in Kathak, semi-classical dance, Shastri dance, and Sanskrit shlokas. She holds two international records - completing 80 rounds in 1 minute in semi-classical dance and reciting 13 Sanskrit shlokas in just 1 minute.

India Concerned as China to Construct World's Largest Dam in Tibet

Key Points:

- ❖ The Chinese government has given its green signal to the construction of the world's largest dam on the river Yarlung Zangbo/Tsangpo (known as the Brahmaputra in India) on the eastern rim of the Tibetan plateau. The project has raised concerns among environmentalists as it will lead to the displacement of millions of people and the destruction of the natural ecosystem in Tibet. It could seriously affect millions of people downstream in India and Bangladesh.



About the Proposed Dam

- ❖ The construction of a dam on the Yarlung Zangbo River was announced by China in 2020. It will be the world's largest dam in the world overtaking the Three Gorges Dam built on the Yangtze River in China.
- ❖ The total investment in the dam is over 1 trillion yuan (US\$137 billion), making it the single largest infrastructure project in the world.
- ❖ The project is expected to generate nearly 300 billion kilowatt-hours (kWh) of electricity annually which is expected to meet the electricity needs of 30 crore people per year. Currently, the world's largest installed hydel power capacity is the Three Gorges Dam which was designed to produce 88.2 billion kWh.

Concern about the Project

- ❖ The Dam is being built along a tectonic plate boundary where there is a high probability of earthquakes. It may endanger the dam and the population living in the downstream areas. The dam will lead to the displacement of people and the destruction of the natural ecosystem in Tibet.

- ❖ Many people see it as the continuous exploitation of the natural resources of Tibet which is tightly controlled by China. Four to six 20 km long tunnels will be built through the Namcha Barwa mountains to divert half of the river's flow at about 2,000 cubic meters per second. This is of concern to India.

Concern of India

- ❖ The Yarlung Zangbo(Tsangpo) River enters India through the Namcha Barwa mountains.
- ❖ There is a concern that China will block or divert the flow of the river away from India.
- ❖ China by building the dam on the river could use it as a weapon against India.
- ❖ China by storing water can cause water scarcity in India. By suddenly releasing the water, China can create massive floods in Arunachal, Assam, and Bangladesh.
- ❖ The Yarlung Zangbo River enters India in Arunachal Pradesh and China claims that Arunachal Pradesh is part of its territory.

About Brahmaputra River

- ❖ Brahmaputra River is one of the largest rivers in the world and originates in the Chemayungdung glacier of the Kailash range near the Mansarovar lake, Tibet.
- ❖ It is known as the Yarlung Zangbo(Tsangpo) River in Tibet and covers a distance of 1200 km in Tibet.
- ❖ It enters Arunachal Pradesh near Namcha Barwa mountain foothills and is known as Siang or Dihang.
- ❖ In Assam, the Dibang or Sikang and Lohit rivers join Siang and then it is called Brahmaputra.
- ❖ The Brahmaputra enters Bangladesh near Dhubri.
- ❖ In Bangladesh, the Teesta River joins it and it is known as Jamuna.
- ❖ It finally merges with the river Padma (Ganga in Bangladesh) and forms the world's largest delta before falling into the Bay of Bengal.

Jallikattu: The Pride of Tamil Nadu

Key Points:

- ❖ The Tamil Nadu government has issued a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for safe Jallikattu events in 2025, guided by the Animal Welfare Board of India. Events must adhere to Section 3(2) of the Tamil Nadu Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Conduct of Jallikattu) Rules, 2017, allowing Jallikattu only at notified locations with permissions, ensuring bull safety and cruelty prevention.
- ❖ Tracing back over 2,000 years, Jallikattu, a traditional sport of Tamil Nadu was originally held to select a suitable bridegroom. It is celebrated on Mattu Pongal Day (3rd day of Pongal), where a bull is released, and participants tame a bull to win coins tied to its horn. The sport uses the Pulikulam or Kangayam breed of bulls, which are highly valued for breeding and market sales.



- ❖ A seal representing Jallikattu was found at the Indus Valley site preserved in the National Museum, New Delhi. A 1500-year-old cave painting near Madurai also depicts the sport. Different Jallikattu versions, like Vadi manjuviraṭṭu, Vēli viraṭṭu, and Vaṭam manjuviraṭṭu, have varying rules on the duration of holding the bull or the distance to cover.
- ❖ **Controversy:** Animal Rights: Activists argue that it involves cruelty to animals, leading to injuries and sometimes death.
- ❖ **Legal Battles:** Jallikattu has faced bans and legal challenges from organizations like PETA. In 2017, the Tamil Nadu government passed a law to protect the tradition after widespread protests.

- ❖ **Safety:** The sport is dangerous and can result in injuries to both the bulls and participants. Safety measures are often minimal despite rules and regulations.
- ❖ **Global Attention:** Jallikattu has been recognized internationally for its cultural and social significance, sparking debates about tradition versus animal rights.

Odisha State Law Commission Formed

Key Points:

- ❖ The State Law Department Friday announced the appointment of members to the Odisha State Law Commission. The appointed members include Justice Biswanath Rath as the Chairperson, and other members such as Pitambar Acharya, Advocate General, Odisha, and senior advocates Surya Prakash Mishra, and Soura Chandra Mohapatra.



ଓଡ଼ିଶା ରାଜ୍ୟ ଆଇନ କମିଶନ ଗଠନ କଲେ ସରକାର ଜଷ୍ଟିସ୍ ବିଶ୍ଵନାଥ ରଥ କମିଶନର ଅଧ୍ୟକ୍ଷ ନିଯୁକ୍ତ ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟପ୍ରକାଶ ମିଶ୍ର ଓ ସୌଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ମହାପାତ୍ର ସଦସ୍ୟ ଆର୍ତ୍ତବୋଧେନ୍ଦ୍ର ଶତ୍ଟେନରାଜ ପାତ୍ରଙ୍କୁ ଆଚାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ସ୍ଥାନୀ ସଦସ୍ୟ ଆଇନ ବିଭାଗ ପ୍ରମୁଖ ସଚିବ ସ୍ଥାନୀ ସଦସ୍ୟ ନିଯୁକ୍ତ ଜଣେ ଅତିରିକ୍ତ ସଚିବ ରହିବେ କମିଶନର ସଚିବ

- ❖ "(a) Chairperson who has been a Judge of the Supreme Court or the Chief Justice of the High Court or Judge of the High Court."

Functions of the State Law Commission shall be---

- ❖ "(i) to review the existing State laws as well as the laws pertaining to the State in the Concurrent List, examine the necessity of continuance of the same and recommend withdrawal, substitution and modification in part or in whole;"
- ❖ "(ii) to invite informations from other States where such laws are prevailing and examine those laws on receipt of the required information;"

- ❖ The Right to Information Act (RTI) of 2005 is a law that gives citizens the right to access information held by public authorities. The act was created to promote transparency and accountability in the government.



Key changes that will impact India's middle class from January 1

Key Points:

- ❖ On January 1, 2025, oil marketing companies will revise the prices of LPG cylinders used for cooking and commercial purposes. While the prices of 19 kg commercial LPG cylinders have been fluctuating recently, the 14 kg kitchen cylinders have remained stable.
- ❖ There may be a price hike or change in these rates. Additionally, aviation fuel prices might also see a revision. Starting from January 1, 2025, a major change will be introduced for EPFO pensioners.
- ❖ The new rule allows pensioners to withdraw their pension from any bank across India without the need for additional verification. This rule is expected to make pension withdrawal easier and more accessible for all pensioners.
- ❖ UPI 123Pay, which allows feature phone users to make online payments, will see an increase in its transaction limit from January 1, 2025.
- ❖ The new limit will be Rs 10,000, up from the previous Rs 5,000. This change will make it easier for users to make larger transactions using UPI on their feature phones.

- ❖ The expiry dates for Sensex, Sensex-50, and Bankex will change starting January 1. Instead of expiring on Fridays, these will now expire on Tuesdays every week. Quarterly and half-yearly contracts will now expire on the last Tuesday of the respective months.
- ❖ Additionally, the Nifty 50 monthly contracts will expire on Thursdays as per the new rule. From January 1, 2025, farmers will be eligible for loans up to Rs 2 lakh without any guarantee, thanks to a new rule by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- ❖ This change increases the previous limit of Rs 1.6 lakh, providing farmers with easier access to larger loans for agricultural activities. Businesses will be required to adopt multi-factor authentication from January 2025 to access the GST portal.
- ❖ This is an enhanced security feature which involves additional verification using a one-time password or OTP.

Why Trump wants to buy Greenland

Key Points:

- ❖ US President-elect Donald Trump has once again expressed interest in buying Greenland, and Greenland has again stated it is not for sale. In recent weeks, Trump has threatened to take over the Panama Canal and said Canada should be the USA's 51st state. While his claims have earned flak for displaying "territorial ambitions", Trump is not the first US president to want Greenland, nor is buying new territories unheard of for the US. Why is the huge Arctic island important for the US? When did the US last buy territories, and what efforts has it made in the past to acquire Greenland? We explain in three points.



- ❖ Broadly, there are three reasons, related to geostrategy and geography.
- ❖ Greenland was once a Danish colony and is now an autonomous province of Denmark. It is located in the North Atlantic Ocean, between Europe and North America, across the Baffin Bay from Canada. Its strategic importance rose during the Cold War, and the US has a large air base there, the Pituffik Space Base, earlier the Thule Air Base. From Greenland, the US can monitor and prevent any missile coming towards it from Russia, China, or even North Korea. Similarly, it can launch missiles and ships towards Asia or Europe more easily from Greenland.



- ❖ Second, Greenland is rich in rare earth minerals, which are used in mobile phones, electric vehicles and other consumer electronics, but also in bombs and other weapons.
- ❖ At present, China is a major supplier of these minerals. In 2021, Greenland passed a law banning uranium mining.

- ❖ Third, as global warming leads to melting of ice, new waterways can open in the Arctic region, and all major powers are keen to boost their presence here. The US would want to pre-empt a larger Russian or Chinese role in Greenland and its neighbourhood.



Defence Secretary launched Rashtraparv Website & Mobile App on Good Governance Day

Key Points:

- ❖ Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh has launched the Rashtraparv Website along with its Mobile App on Dec 25, 2024 on the occasion of 'Good Governance Day' commemorating the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee. The website will facilitate access to information related to organization of national events such as Republic Day, Beating Retreat Ceremony, Independence Day etc., live streaming, purchase of tickets, provide information related to seating arrangements & route-maps of events etc.



Defence Secretary launched Rashtraparv Website & Mobile App on Good Governance Day

- ❖ The website and mobile application have been a result of consultative process adopted by Ministry of Defence. The states had suggested for a portal for management of tableaux designs data. Similarly, viewers of Republic Day event in the feedback had suggested to have information regarding events, parade, tableaux with them.

Martina Devi wins silver in women's junior +87kg at Asian Junior Weightlifting Championships

Key Points:

- ❖ Indian lifter Martina Devi clinched a silver medal in the women's junior +87kg category at the Asian Junior Weightlifting Championships. The 18-year-old from Manipur lifted a total of 225kg (96kg+129kg) to finish second in the three-lifter field. She also won a silver medal for her clean and jerk effort and a bronze for her snatch.

