

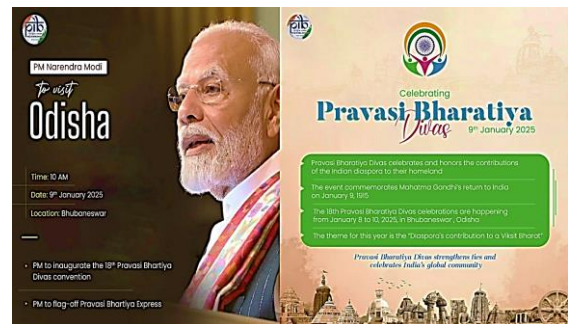
Brazil announces Indonesia's full membership in BRICS

Brazil, the presiding country of BRICS, announced on Monday that Indonesia has been admitted as a full member of the bloc of developing economies.

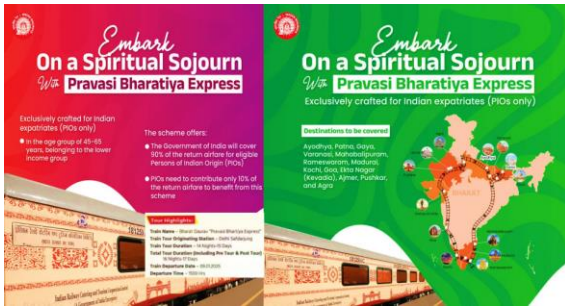
- ❖ However, Indonesia, the world's fourth-most populous nation, decided to formally join the bloc only after its newly elected government was formed last year. "The Brazilian government welcomes Indonesia's entry into the BRICS," the government said in a statement.
- ❖ BRICS was formed in 2009 by Brazil, Russia, India, and China, with South Africa joining in 2010. Last year, the bloc expanded to include Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, and the United Arab Emirates.
- ❖ Saudi Arabia has been invited but has not yet joined. Turkey, Azerbaijan and Malaysia have formally applied to become members, and a few others have expressed interest.
- ❖ BRICS is an intergovernmental organization consisting of ten countries – Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates.
- ❖ It is an investment strategies group, as well as a counterpart and alternative to the G7 bloc of the world's largest economies.
- ❖ The New Development Bank (NDB), formerly referred to as the BRICS Development Bank, is a multilateral development bank established by the BRICS states (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa).

Membership	 Brazil
	 Russia
	 India
	 China
	 South Africa
	 Egypt
	 Ethiopia
	 Indonesia
	 Iran
	 United Arab Emirates

In Odisha, PM Narendra Modi flags off Pravasi Bharatiya Express



- ❖ The Pravasi Bharatiya Express is a special state-of-the-art tourist train, exclusively designed and built for the Indian diaspora, and that too for the age group between 45 and 65 years.
- ❖ Starting from its launch day, January 9, the train will travel to multiple destinations across the nation, including prominent tourist and religious places, for a period of three weeks.
- ❖ The travel destinations of the Pravasi Bharatiya Express include Ayodhya, Patna, Gaya, Varanasi, Mahabalipuram, Rameswaram, Madurai, Kochi, Goa, Ekta Nagar (Kevadia), Ajmer, Pushkar, and Agra.
- ❖ Additionally, the train can accommodate 156 passengers. According to an official release, all the expenses for the tour are being covered by the government, while 90% of return airfare for the eligible participants from their countries of origin to India was also being taken care of by the concerned ministry, leaving them to pay for only 10% of their airfare costs.
- ❖ As outlined in the tour itinerary, the participants are being accommodated in 4-star or equivalent hotels. This specially conducted tour is being organized under the Pravasi Teerth Darshan Yojana (PTDY) scheme of the Ministry of External Affairs in collaboration with the M/s Indian Railways Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) aiming to connect the Indian Diaspora to their roots.



Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)

- ❖ Celebrated annually on **9th January** to honor the contributions of the Overseas Indian community to India's development.
- ❖ **Significance of 9th January:** Marks Mahatma Gandhi's return from South Africa in 1915, leading India's freedom struggle and transforming Indian lives.

Uttar Pradesh has the highest number of hospital registrations under Ayushman Bharat

Uttar Pradesh has achieved the highest number of hospital registrations in the country under the Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, both at government and private hospitals, Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak said on Monday. The beneficiaries of the health insurance scheme are receiving free treatment up to ₹5 lakh, Mr. Pathak said, as he directed authorities to ensure maximum coverage for the eligible patients. The State boasts a total of 5,834 hospitals operating under Ayushman Bharat scheme, of which 2,949 are govt.run and 2,885 are private facilities, the highest in India, Mr. Pathak said.

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri Met acting Afghan Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi with their teams in Dubai

The Taliban had been calling for a more active engagement with India ever since they ousted the Ashraf Ghani government and seized control of Kabul in the middle of August 2021. Days later, US troops made a chaotic exit from Afghanistan.

- ❖ The meeting between Misri and Muttaqi wasn't just a meet-and-greet. The two held talks on various issues — ranging from humanitarian assistance programmes to cricket. According to the MEA statement following the talks, New Delhi has agreed to provide material support to the health sector and for the rehabilitation of refugees.



This is in continuance to India's stance so far; New Delhi has already shipped 50,000 metric tonnes of wheat, 300 tonnes of medicines, 27 tonnes of earthquake relief aid, 40,000 litres of pesticides, 100 million polio doses, 1.5 million doses of COVID Vaccine, 11,000 units of hygiene kits for the drug de-addiction programme, 500 units of winter clothing and 1.2 tonnes of stationery kits to Kabul.

- ❖ During Misri's talks with the Taliban minister, it was also agreed upon that trade and commerce would be promoted, including through the Chabahar Port.
- ❖ "It was also agreed to promote the use of Chabahar port for supporting trade and commercial activities, including for the purpose of humanitarian assistance for Afghanistan," MEA said.

But why is New Delhi engaging with the Taliban despite not recognising them officially? One of the main reasons is Pakistan

India's engagement with Afghanistan comes at a time when the Taliban's ties with Pakistan are strained. Kabul's ties with Islamabad have lately been strained over allegations that the Taliban harbour and support fugitive terrorists linked to the outlawed Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, or TTP, in carrying out "terrorist" attacks against Pakistani civilians and security forces.

- ❖ Last month, the Pakistani military allegedly carried out airstrikes against suspected TTP hideouts in an Afghan border province, drawing strong condemnation from the Taliban.
- ❖ Kabul claimed the bombardment took the lives of nearly 50 “refugees” from Pakistan. Noticeably, India condemned the strikes, saying it was Islamabad’s “old practice” to blame its neighbours for its internal failure.

US to lift sanctions on Indian entities for civil nuclear cooperation

The United States National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan has announced that the United States will lift the sanctions imposed on certain Indian entities to promote close cooperation in civilian nuclear programmes. The sanctions were imposed by the United States after India conducted a series of nuclear test in Pokhran, Rajasthan in 1998.

- ❖ Jake Sullivan was on a two day visit to India on 5 & 6 January 2025 to attend the 3rd meeting of the India-US initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET) with the Indian National Security Advisor Ajit Doval. The meeting was held in New Delhi on 6 January 2025.
- ❖ Jake Sullivan is the last official of the Joe Biden administration to visit India as the term of the American President Joe Biden Administration comes to an end on 19 January 2025.
- ❖ During his visit, Jake Sullivan said that cooperation in the next generation of semiconductor technologies, cutting-edge research and space exploration will be the area of focus of the cooperation between the two countries.”



India-US initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET)

- ❖ India and the United States agreed to set up the India-US initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET) in 2022 during Prime Minister Narendra Modi visit to the United States.
- ❖ The iCET focuses on deepening and expanding strategic cooperation between the two countries in semiconductors, space, artificial intelligence, advanced telecommunications, quantum technology, biotechnology, and clean energy.
- ❖ The first iCET meeting was held in Washington, USA, in January 2023 and the second was held on 17 June 2024 in New Delhi.

India US Nuclear Ties

The United States imposed sanctions on over 200 Indian entities in response to India's nuclear test in Pokhran in 1998. Later on sanctions on some entities were removed and at present

- ❖ some entities of the Department of Atomic Energy — Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research, Indian Rare Earths Limited, nuclear reactors, nuclear power plants not under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards, production facilities and their collocated ammonia are still under sanctions.
- ❖ In 2007 during President George Bush administration an agreement was signed between India and the United States which allowed the United States to sell civilian nuclear technology to India.
- ❖ In 2019, India and the U.S. agreed to build six U.S. nuclear power plants in India.

Problem in implementation

- ❖ One main reason no reactor has been built in India is India's liability rules.
- ❖ Under the Indian liability rules the liability in case of nuclear accident is borne by the maker of the nuclear reactors.

- ❖ Globally the liability is of the operator of the nuclear reactors.
- ❖ In India the Nuclear Power plants are operated by the government owned Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited.

PM Modi lays foundation stone of 1st Green Hydrogen Hub in Andhra

Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone of the country's first Green Hydrogen Hub Project under the National Green Hydrogen Mission at Pudimadaka near Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh on 8 January 2025.

- ❖ The Prime Minister who was on a visit to Vishakhapatnam also laid the foundation stone of various projects worth over Rs. 2 lakh crore in the state. Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N.Chandrababau Naidu was also present on the occasion.

Following are the projects whose foundation stone was laid down by the Prime Minister during his visit to Visakhapatnam.

- ❖ The first Green Hydrogen Hub at Pudimadaka near Visakhapatnam is being set up by NTPC Green Energy Limited.
- ❖ The Hub will be India's largest integrated green hydrogen production facility.
- ❖ The Hub will produce 1500 tonnes per day of Green Hydrogen and 7500 tonnes per day of Green Hydrogen derivatives like Green Methanol, Green Urea, and Sustainable Aviation Fuel.
- ❖ Total investment - around Rs 1,85,000 crore.
- ❖ The hub will also include establishing 20 gigawatts of renewable energy capacities.
- ❖ The Green Hydrogen Hub will help in achieving the National National Green Hydrogen Mission target of 5 MMT (Million Metric Tonne) per annum of Green Hydrogen and the addition of 125 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2030.

- ❖ Green hydrogen refers to the splitting of water into hydrogen and oxygen molecules through electrolysis. The energy that is needed for electrolysis is produced through a renewable source of energy like water, sun, wind, etc.

Bulk Drug Park at Nakkapalli in Anakapalli District

- ❖ The bulk drug facility in Anakapalli district is one of the three bulk drug parks in the country to be set up for manufacturing bulk drugs in the country to minimise dependence on imports.
- ❖ The other bulk drug parks are in Tehsil Haroli, District Una, Himachal Pradesh, and in Tehsil Jambusar, and District Bharuch, Gujarat.

Foundation Stone of Krishnapatnam Industrial Area (KRIS City)

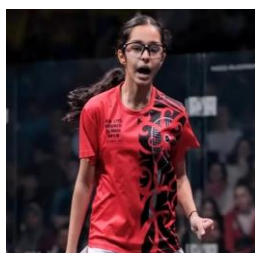
- ❖ The foundation stone of the Krishnapatnam Industrial Area (KRIS City) was laid by Prime Minister Modi.
- ❖ Kris City is located in the Tirupati district of Andhra Pradesh and is part of the Chennai Bengaluru Industrial Corridor.
- ❖ The corridor is a constituent of the National Industrial Corridor Development Programme.
- ❖ Kris City is a greenfield industrial smart city.
- ❖ It is expected to attract investment of around Rs 10,500 crore.

South Coast Railway Headquarters at Visakhapatnam

- ❖ The proposed South Coast Railway Zone headquarters foundation stone was laid in Visakhapatnam.
- ❖ In 2019 the Railway Minister announced the setting up of a new Railway Zone in Visakhapatnam but the Ministry has yet to issue a notification.
- ❖ At present the Indian Railways has 17 Zones and 69th division. Jammu is the latest railway division.

Anahat Singh wins Under 17 British Junior Open 2025 Squash Tournament

Indian Squash prodigy Anahat Singh defeated Egypt's Malika Elkaraksy to win the women's Under 17 British Junior Open 2025 Squash tournament in Birmingham, England. Last year Anahat lost in the final to Egypt's Nadien Elhammamy in the Under 17 category.



Chirag Paswan inaugurates 8th edition of Indusfood in Noida

The Union Minister for Food Processing Industries Chirag Paswan inaugurated the 8th Indusfood 2025 at Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh on 8 January 2025.

- ❖ The first Indusfood was held in 2017 and it has been held annually since 2019 in Greater Noida.
- ❖ The 8th Indusfood trade exhibition is being held in Noida from 8-10 January 2025. During the inauguration ceremony Mohit Singla, Chairman Trade Promotion Council of India, Abhishek Dev, Chairman Agriculture & Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), and other industry leaders and buyers from the food and beverage segments and buyers from all over the world were present.
- ❖ The Indusfood trade exhibition exhibits India food and cuisines and seeks to boost India's export of food and beverage.
- ❖ It provides a platform for the producers and international buyers in the food and beverage segments, facilitating global trade and fostering international partnerships. India is currently the seventh largest food exporter in the world.

Organiser of the 8th Indusfood 2005

The Indusfood exhibition is organised by the Trade Promotion Council of India (TPCI), under the Market Access Initiative (MAI) scheme of the Union Ministry of Commerce.

Participants of the 8th Indusfood 2005

Since 2024, international exhibitors have been allowed to exhibit their products in the Indusfood. This year exhibitors from around 30 countries are participating in the 8th edition of the Indusfood. Apart from the international exhibitors around 1800 Indian exhibitors are also participating in the 8th edition of the Indusfood 2025.

Other events organised with the 8th Indusfood

The 8th Indusfood exhibition will focus on farm to fork. With this focus the trade exhibition is also organising various other exhibition. Three concurrent trade fairs – Indusfood Food & Beverage, Indusfood Agri-Tech and Indusfood Manufacturing are also being held which highlights the synergies across the farm to fork value chain.

World Chefs – Asia President's Forum 2025

For the first time India will be hosting the first Asian President's Forum in India in collaboration with the Indian Federation of Culinary Associations at the sidelines of the 8th edition of the Indusfood. Around 35 chefs from Asia and over 100 Indian chefs are participating. This conference will discuss the latest trends in hospitality, explore both traditional and modern culinary techniques, and uncover the potential of fusion cuisine.

Global Biosecurity & Standards Conclave 2025

The Global Biosecurity & Standards Conclave 2025 will also be held at the sidelines of the 8th edition of the Indusfood. The summit will see the participation of regulatory leaders from G-20 countries to formulate a comprehensive strategy for food biosecurity.

Sustainable Food Manufacturing Summit 2025

The Sustainable Food Manufacturing Summit 2025 will provide a platform for the policymakers, industry leaders, innovators, and stakeholders to explore, discuss, and promote sustainable practices in food manufacturing.

Tuhin Kanta Pandey appointed new Revenue Secretary

Just before the presentation of the Union Budget 2025-26 the government of India has reshuffled the top bureaucratic post in the Ministry of Finance. The recently appointed Revenue Secretary Arunish Chawla has been appointed as the Secretary, of the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM), Union Ministry of Finance.



- ❖ He will also hold the additional charge of secretary, Department of Public Enterprises, Union Ministry of Finance.
- ❖ Arunish Chawla, a 1992 batch Bihar cadre IAS officer was appointed as the Revenue Secretary by the Appointment Committee of the Cabinet in December 2024. Before being appointed as the Revenue Secretary, Arunish Chawla served as the Secretary in the Department of Pharmaceuticals in the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers.

Tuhin Kanta Pandey as Finance Secretary and Revenue Secretary

The Secretary, DIPAM Tuhin Kanta Pandey has been appointed by the government of India as the new Revenue Secretary, Union Ministry of Finance.

- ❖ Tuhin Kanta Pandey has also been designated as the Finance Secretary of India.
- ❖ Tuhin Kanta Pandey is a 1987 batch Orissa cadre IAS officer. He was the longest serving DIPAM Secretary .
- ❖ DIPAM looks after the disinvestment of the central public sector enterprises and during his tenure the disinvestment of Air India and Neelanchal Ispat Nigam Ltd took place.

Brijendra Pratap Singh new CMD of NALCO



- ❖ Brijendra Pratap Singh has assumed the charge as the Chairman-cum-Managing Director (CMD) of the central public sector enterprise National Aluminium Company Ltd (NALCO).
- ❖ Before joining NALCO, he was the director-in-charge of the Burnpur and Durgapur Steel Plants of the Steel Authority of India (SAIL).

About NALCO

- ❖ The National Aluminium Company Limited (NALCO) was founded in 1981 and it started its commercial operations in 1987.
- ❖ It is owned by the government of India and it was granted a Navaratna status in 2008.
- ❖ NALCO operates an Alumina refinery at Damanjodi, Koraput, Odisha, and an Aluminium Smelter & Captive Power Plant at Angul, Odisha.
- ❖ NALCO also holds the distinction of being the lowest-cost producer of Alumina and Bauxite in the world.
- ❖ It has consistently shown profit since its commercial operation started in 1987.
- ❖ It is the second-highest foreign exchange earner amongst the central public sector enterprises.
- ❖ Headquarters: Bhubaneswar, Odisha
- ❖ CMD: Brijendra Pratap Singh

