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## Current Affairs - 01 January 2025

### BHOPAL TOXIC WASTE DISPOSAL BEGINS IN PITHAMPUR



A step has been taken to remove hazardous waste from the former **Union Carbide** factory in Bhopal. This action follows a stern directive from the Madhya Pradesh High Court, which urged authorities to act swiftly to clear the site. The toxic gas methyl isocyanate leaked from the factory in December 1984, resulting in thousands of deaths and long-term health issues for many residents.

#### **Court Mandate and Timeline**

The High Court has imposed a four-week deadline for the waste's removal, citing a history of inaction. Authorities have indicated that the transfer process may commence soon, with potential completion by January 3.

#### **Incineration Procedures**

The waste will undergo incineration at Pithampur, with initial burning monitored for harmful residues. If tests indicate safety, the incineration will proceed rapidly; otherwise, it may extend to nine months.

#### **Environmental Safeguards**

To prevent **air pollution**, emissions from the incinerator will pass through four-layer special filters. Continuous monitoring will ensure compliance with environmental standards. The ash will be securely buried to prevent contamination of soil and water.

#### **Key Facts About Bhopal Gas Tragedy**

- On December 2, 1984, Union Carbide India Ltd. in Bhopal leaked 40 tons of methyl isocyanate (MIC) gas, causing immediate death and widespread health issues.
- **Causes:**
  - Inadequate safety measures, poor design of the plant, and cost-cutting led to the leak.
  - Failure of refrigeration, shutdown of safety systems, and negligent management.



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## Current Affairs - 01 January 2025

- **Impacts:**

- Thousands died, and many suffered from respiratory issues, burns, and blindness.
- Soil and water contamination caused long-term environmental damage.

1. **Methyl Isocyanate (MIC):** Methyl isocyanate is a highly toxic chemical. It was responsible for the Bhopal gas tragedy in 1984, causing thousands of deaths and long-term health issues.
2. **Pithampur:** Pithampur is an industrial town in Madhya Pradesh. It houses about 1,250 units and is located 30 km from Indore, playing role in local industry.
3. **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** PPE is essential for worker safety in hazardous environments. It includes gear like gloves, masks, and suits to protect against toxic substances during waste disposal.
4. **Green Corridor:** A green corridor is a traffic management strategy. It allows for the expedited transport of hazardous materials, reducing transit time and minimising risks associated with transportation.

### UTTRAKHAND FOREST DEPARTMENT ESTABLISHES MAHABHARATA VATIKA

The **Uttarakhand** Forest Department has established two gardens in Haldwani, showcasing plant species referenced in ancient Indian epics. These gardens, named Ramayana Vatika and Mahabharata Vatika, aim to highlight the ecological wisdom embedded in these texts.

#### **Mahabharata Vatika Overview**

Mahabharata Vatika spans one acre and features 37 plant species mentioned in the epic. Chief Conservator of Forests Sanjeev Chaturvedi emphasised the research behind selecting these species. The garden features important plant species such as:

- **Khair** (*Acacia catechu*)
- **Kovidar** (*Bauhinia variegata*)



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School of Research Based Learning & Competition



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## Current Affairs - 01 January 2025

- **Bargad** (*Ficus benghalensis*)
- **Peepal** (*Ficus religiosa*)
- **Dhak** (*Butea monosperma*)
- **Harsringar** (*Nyctanthes arbor-tristis*)
- **Baheda** (*Terminalia bellirica*)
- **Aam** (*Mangifera indica*)
- **Kala Sirs** (*Albizia lebbek*)

### Ecological Significance

The garden puts stress on the importance of forests as depicted in the Mahabharata. It references the Vana Parva, which discusses tree planting and [wildlife conservation](#). The epic highlights the mutual dependence of tigers and forests, a concept vital to contemporary conservation efforts.

### Cultural Connections

Chaturvedi brought into light that the Mahabharata teaches the spiritual significance of planting trees. He mentioned Bhishma's advice to Yudhishtira about the legacy of tree planting, connecting ancestors and descendants. This wisdom reinforces the cultural importance of environmental stewardship.

### Ramayana Vatika Overview

Ramayana Vatika features around 70 species associated with Lord Rama, drawn from approximately 139 species mentioned in Valmiki's Ramayana. The garden highlights the association of plants with Lord Ram's journey, with species linked to various forests like Chitrakoot (tropical deciduous), Dandakarnanya (tropical), Panchavati (tropical dry), and Kishkindha (moist deciduous), as well as Ashok Vatika and Dronagiri (associated with Sita and Hanuman).

### GKToday Notes:

1. **Ramayana Vatika:** This garden showcases 70 plant species from Valmiki's Ramayana. It illustrates the ecological wisdom in ancient texts, denoting Lord Rama's journey through diverse forest types.



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## Current Affairs - 01 January 2025

2. **Mahabharata Vatika:** Spanning one acre, this garden features 37 species from the Mahabharata. It puts stress on ecological themes and the mutual dependence of tigers and forests, vital for conservation.
3. **Vana Parva:** A section of the Mahabharata, Vana Parva discusses the importance of forests. It contains hymns on tree planting and wildlife conservation, emphasising environmental stewardship.
4. **Shami Tree:** The Shami tree holds cultural significance in the Mahabharata. It is linked to the Pandavas' weapons retrieval and is associated with Vijayadashami, symbolising prosperity and well-being.

### WHAT IS SANSKRITI UTSAVA?



The **Uttar Pradesh** government has announced the 'Sanskriti Utsava' from January 2 to January 26, 2025. This event celebrates the state's foundation day and aims to promote talent in various art forms. The festival will include competitions at different levels across the state, providing a platform for emerging artists.

#### **Event Overview**

The Sanskriti Utsava will commemorate 'Uttar Pradesh Diwas.' The event's theme is 'Uttar Pradesh Parv – Hamari Sanskriti-Hamari Pehchaan.' The festival aims to explore and showcase the rich cultural heritage of Uttar Pradesh.

#### **Competition Structure**

Competitions will take place from January 2 to January 24, 2025. They will be held at various levels, including state, block, tehsil, district, and divisional headquarters. Participants will compete in classical, semi-classical, and folk arts. The event will highlight the importance of preserving these cultural genres.

#### **Categories of Competitions**



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## Current Affairs - 01 January 2025

The festival will feature competitions in classical singing, including Khayal and Dhrupad. Semi-classical singing will include Thumri, Dadra, and various other forms. Folk singing competitions will showcase Kajri, Qawwali, and more. Light music categories will include Geet, Ghazal, and patriotic songs.

### Key Facts About Uttar Pradesh Statehood Day

- On **24th January 1950**, the **United Provinces** was officially renamed **Uttar Pradesh**.
- In **May 2017**, the **Uttar Pradesh Government** decided to celebrate **Uttar Pradesh Day** annually to honor this occasion.
- The initiative to celebrate UP Day was introduced by **Governor Ram Naik**.
- Since **2018**, UP Day has been celebrated as a **three-day event**, highlighting the state's **history, culture, and achievements**.

### NOVEMBER 2024 – RECORD WARMTH IN INDIA



November 2024 marked climatic event for India, as it became the second warmest November in 123 years. The average maximum temperature reached  $29.37^{\circ}\text{C}$ , exceeding the normal by  $0.62^{\circ}\text{C}$ . This unusual warmth has raised concerns about **food security** and ecological stability.

### Causes of Elevated Temperatures

- The primary reason for the high temperatures in November 2024 was the absence of strong western disturbances. These disturbances typically bring cooler air and precipitation during this season.
- The India Meteorological Department (IMD) reported a 55% reduction in rainfall, with only 13.5 mm recorded against the long-term average of 29.7 mm.

### Role of Western Disturbances

**Western disturbances** are low-pressure systems originating from the Mediterranean region. They travel eastward and deliver moisture to northwestern India. These disturbances are crucial for





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School of Research Based Learning & Competition



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## Current Affairs - 01 January 2025

winter precipitation, particularly for Rabi crops like wheat and mustard. They are most active between November and March, providing essential moisture for agricultural productivity.

### Impact on Agriculture and Ecosystems

The lack of sufficient rainfall due to diminished western disturbances poses a threat to Rabi crops. The absence of moisture can lead to reduced yields and food insecurity. Additionally, prolonged dry spells can disrupt local ecosystems, affecting biodiversity and water resources.

### Global Context of Warming Trends

November 2024 also saw global temperature anomalies, with the month being the second warmest worldwide. The Copernicus Climate Change Service reported an average [global temperature](#) of 14.10°C, indicating a broader trend of climate change. The Antarctic and Arctic regions experienced reductions in sea ice, further illustrating the impacts of warming.

- Western Disturbances:** These are low-pressure systems from the Mediterranean, crucial for winter precipitation in India. They enhance Rabi crops by delivering essential moisture during November to March.
- Rabi Crops:** Rabi crops are winter-sown crops in India, including wheat and mustard. They rely heavily on winter precipitation, primarily from western disturbances, for optimal growth and yield.
- Copernicus Climate Change Service:** This European Union programme monitors climate change. It provides vital data on global temperature anomalies, helping to understand and address the impacts of climate change.
- Albedo Effect:** The albedo effect refers to the reflectivity of Earth's surface. Changes in snow cover and ice levels can alter this effect, influencing climate patterns and the onset of monsoons.

### PROTESTS IN KATRA OVER PROPOSED ₹250-CRORE ROPEWAY PROJECT



Tensions in [Katra](#), Jammu and Kashmir, have escalated due to ongoing protests against a proposed Rs 250-crore ropeway project. The



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## Current Affairs - 01 January 2025

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protests, initiated by the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Sangharsh Samiti, have entered their seventh day and coincide with a peak pilgrimage season. Local businesses and livelihoods are at stake, prompting widespread demonstrations.

### Background of the Ropeway Project

The Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board announced the ropeway project to connect Tarakote Marg to Sanji Chhat. This initiative aims to ease the 13-km trek to the Vaishno Devi shrine, particularly benefiting senior citizens and children. The project is projected to cost around Rs 250 crore.

### Local Opposition and Concerns

Local residents, including pony and palanquin owners, fear the project will threaten their livelihoods. The protests began in November 2023, intensifying on December 25 when local business owners called for a 72-hour bandh. Protesters demand a reconsideration of the project, citing potential job losses.

### Recent Developments in Protests

Demonstrations have escalated since November 22, with instances of stone-pelting leading to police intervention. The situation prompted authorities to conduct a flag march to maintain order. The shutdown, initially for 72 hours, has been extended until January 1, 2025, suspending all commercial activities in Katra.

### Detentions and Hunger Strikes

Several protest leaders were detained during a march on December 25, inciting a hunger strike by eight youths demanding their release. One youth's health has deteriorated, necessitating hospitalisation. Concerns have been raised by Congress leaders regarding the treatment of detained protesters.

### Government's Response and Future Outlook

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha addressed the protests, assuring that local losses would be considered. He stated that the project is nearly complete and would enhance tourism in the region. Sinha emphasised that 90% of the work has been finalised, with expectations for completion by January 2025.



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School of Research Based Learning & Competition



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## Current Affairs - 01 January 2025

### Key Facts about Vaishno Devi Temple

- The Vaishno Devi Temple is dedicated to **Vaishno Devi**, a manifestation of **Mahakali**, **Mahalakshmi**, and **Mahasarasvati**.
- It is situated on the **Trikuta Mountain** in Katra, Jammu and Kashmir, at an elevation of **1,500 meters (5,000 feet)**.
- It is considered a **Shakti Pitha** in the Shakti tradition.
- This temple was mentioned in historical records as early as **1846**, when Maharaja Gulab Singh included it in the **Dharmarth Trust** to manage temples in his territory.
- After India's independence, the trust remained under the descendants of Gulab Singh until **1986**, when control was transferred to the Shrine Board through legislation by Governor **Jagmohan**.

### TAMIL NADU UNVEILS INDIA'S FIRST GLASS SEA BRIDGE



Tamil Nadu has recently inaugurated a groundbreaking glass bridge over the sea, enhancing connectivity between two landmarks. This development coincides with the silver jubilee celebrations of the Tiruvalluvar Statue, which has become a symbol of cultural pride.

#### Inauguration Details

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin officially opened the bridge, linking the Tiruvalluvar Statue and the **Vivekananda** Rock Memorial in Kanniyakumari. The event celebrated the statue's 25th anniversary, marking its significance in Tamil culture.

#### Bridge Specifications

The glass bridge spans 77 metres and is 10 metres wide, constructed at a cost of ₹37 crore. It allows visitors to walk between the two landmarks while enjoying views of the sea below. The bridge addresses previous transportation issues caused by rough seas and low tides, providing a reliable means of access.





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School of Research Based Learning & Competition



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## Current Affairs - 01 January 2025

---

### Key Facts About Tiruvalluvar Statue

- Unveiled on January 1, 2000, the statue stands at a height of 133 feet, representing the 133 chapters of the Tirukkural.
- The statue, installed on a rock in the sea, is an important identity for Tamil people and embodies the philosophy of social justice expressed in the Thirukural: “*Pirapokkum ella uyirkkum*” (Everyone is equal at birth).
- Designed by renowned sculptor V. Ganapathi Sthapathi, it weighs approximately 7,000 tonnes and has withstood [natural disasters](#), including the [2004 tsunami](#).
- Recently, it was officially renamed as the Statue of Wisdom.

### Key Facts About Vivekananda Rock Memorial

- The Vivekananda Rock Memorial is located on one of the two rocks, about 500 meters off the mainland of Vavathurai, at the southernmost tip of India in Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu. The rocks are surrounded by the Laccadive Sea, where the Bay of Bengal, Indian Ocean, and Arabian Sea meet.
  - The memorial was constructed in 1970 to honor Swami Vivekananda, who is believed to have attained enlightenment on the rock.
  - Its main structures are Vivekananda Mandapam (A hall dedicated to Swami Vivekananda) and Shripada Mandapam (built to enshrine the footprint of Devi Kanyakumari) and Dhyana Mandapam (Meditation Hall).
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