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## Current Affairs - 02 January 2025

### TOBACCO BOARD OF INDIA



- It is a statutory body established on 1st January 1976 by an Act of Parliament “**Tobacco Board Act, 1975** (Act 4 of 1975)”.
- The Board is headed by a chairperson and is responsible for the development of the tobacco industry.
- **Functions:**
  - The primary function of the Board is **export promotion of all varieties of tobacco and its allied products**, its functions extend to production, distribution (for domestic consumption and exports) and regulation of Flue Cured Virginia (FCV) tobacco.
  - It ensures the smooth functioning of the farming system and to ensure **fair and remunerative prices for tobacco** farmers and the promotion of exports.
  - Financial assistance is **extended to farmers through banks**, along with the necessary inputs for the production of quality tobacco.
  - The Board also engages in extension and developmental activities to promote sustainable tobacco cultivation practices.
  - The Board supports farmers by providing handholding assistance to produce tobacco of requisite quality to meet the standards of importing countries.
- **Headquarters:** Guntur, Andhra Pradesh
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Commerce and Industry

### **India's Tobacco Industry:**

- India is the **2nd largest producer of tobacco** in the world after China.
- India is the **4th largest producer of FCV tobacco** in the world after China, Brazil and Zimbabwe.
- India is the **2nd largest exporter of unmanufactured tobacco** (quantity terms) after Brazil.



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### NATIONAL E-GOVERNANCE AWARDS SCHEME



- It is recognized amongst the most competitive and **prestigious digital governance awards** schemes in the country.
- The **objective** of the Scheme is to **recognize and promote excellence in implementation of e-Governance initiatives.**
- The **NAeG Awards, 2025** will consist of Trophy, Certificate and an incentive of **Rs 10 lakh for Gold Awardees and Rs 5 Lakhs for Silver Awardees** to be awarded to the district/organization for being utilized for implementation of project/programme or bridging resources gaps in any area of public welfare.
- This year 16 Awards are being conferred under the NAeG 2025. Of these 10 will be Gold Awards and 6 will be silver Awards.
- For the year 2025, there are **six categories** under which the National Awards for e-Governance 2026 will be conferred:
  - Government Process Re-engineering by use of technology for Digital Transformation
  - Innovation by Use of AI and other new age technologies for providing Citizen-Centric Services,
  - Best e-Governance Practices/Innovation in Cyber Security
  - Grassroot Level Initiatives for Deepening/ Widening of Service Delivery with focus on initiatives by Districts/ULBs/Gram Panchayats
  - Replication and Scaling up of Successful National Awarded Projects like NAeG, Prime Minister Awards in Excellence, Awards conferred by other Central Ministries by State/UT/ District The NAeG 2024
  - Digital transformation by use of data analytics in digital platforms by Central Ministries/States/UTs
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions



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### WHAT IS BELLY LANDING?



Recently, as many as 179 people were killed when Jeju Air flight 7C2216 made a belly-landing in South Korea.

- Also known as **gear-up landing**, it is an **emergency landing technique** that involves an aeroplane landing **without extending its landing gear**.
- It is a **last resort for pilots** who are unable to deploy their landing gear owing to a technical or mechanical malfunction.
- Belly-landings are risky and carried out only in an emergency. It results in considerable damage to the plane, its engines and wings as the aircraft skids to a stop and can leave those onboard injured.
- The friction generated by the aircraft skidding on the runway can also create sparks or result in a fire.

A cockpit crew decides to land an aircraft on its **belly in the following situations:**

- Landing gear fails to deploy.
- A stricken aircraft cannot make it to an airport and landing is done in a field. The pilot considers skidding the aircraft to a stop safer than touching down on wheels.
- **Ditching:** when an aircraft makes an emergency landing on water.
- Any other situation a pilot considers a belly-landing safer than landing on wheels.

### **Other aviation terminology:**

- **Landing long and fast:** It is an aviation term that means an aircraft touches down far beyond the designated touchdown zone on the runway, leaving the crew with less runway length to stop the aircraft, and at a speed far exceeding the recommended landing speed.
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### WHAT IS THE CENTRAL GROUNDWATER BOARD (CGWB)?



- CGWB is a **multi-disciplinary scientific organization** of the Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, **Ministry of Jal Shakti**, Government of India.
- It is the **National Apex Agency** entrusted with the responsibilities of **providing scientific inputs for management, exploration, monitoring**, assessment, augmentation, and **regulation of groundwater resources** of the country.
- **Organization Setup:**
  - The Board is **headed by the Chairman** and **has five members**.
  - CGWB is a multi-disciplinary scientific organization consisting of **Hydrogeologists, Geophysicists, Chemists, Hydrologists, Hydrometeorologists, and Engineers**.
- **Headquarters: Bhujal Bhawan, Faridabad, Haryana.**

The **major activities** of the CGWB are:

- **National Aquifer mapping and Management (NAQUIM)** involving Preparation of Aquifer Maps and Management Plans.
- **Groundwater explorations** to delineate groundwater worthy areas and potential aquifers.
- **Geophysical surveys** to delineate groundwater bearing zones, etc.
- **Periodic assessment** of the country's groundwater resources.
- **Monitoring of groundwater levels and quality** through groundwater observation wells.
- **Dissemination of Ground Water Data** and knowledge.
- **Water conservation and artificial recharge** to groundwater.
- **Capacity building** and knowledge transfer.



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### WHAT IS DI-AMMONIUM PHOSPHATE (DAP)?

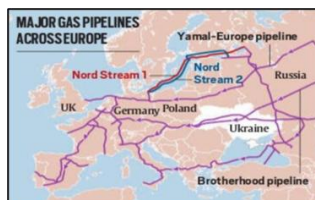


• It is one of the most widely used fertilizers globally, providing essential nutrients —nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P)—for plant growth.

- It is the **second most commonly used fertilizer in India** after urea.
- It is **high in phosphorus (P)** that stimulates **root establishment and development**-without which plants cannot grow to their normal size or will take too long to mature.
- It's **highly soluble** and thus **dissolves quickly in soil** to release plant-available phosphate and ammonium.
- DAP has **additional uses, including:**
  - As a **fire retardant**. For example, a mixture of DAP and other ingredients can be spread in advance of a fire to prevent a forest from burning.
  - In various industrial processes, such as **metal finishing**.
  - An **addition to wine to sustain yeast fermentation**.
  - An addition to milk to produce cheese cultures.
  - It proves as a **flux for soldering tin, copper, brass, and zinc**.

### RUSSIAN GAS EXPORTS TO EUROPE VIA UKRAINE HALTED AS TRANSIT DEAL EXPIRES

On New Year's Day, Russian natural gas exports to Europe via Soviet-era pipelines through Ukraine were stopped as the transit deal expired, with no agreement reached between Moscow and Kyiv. This marks the end of Russia's oldest gas route to Europe.



#### Urengoy-Pomary-Uzhgorod Pipeline Overview

- The pipeline transports gas from Siberia through Sudzha,



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located in Russia's Kursk region, now under Ukrainian military control.

- It flows through Ukraine to Slovakia, branching into the Czech Republic and Austria.
- Transdnistria, bordering Ukraine, receives Russian gas via Ukraine.

### Possible Impact

- **Impact on Russia and Gazprom**
    - **Economic Losses:** Ukraine faces a loss of \$800 million annually in transit fees, while Gazprom loses nearly \$5 billion in gas sales.
    - **Decline in Gas Exports:** Russian gas transit through Ukraine fell from 65 bcm in 2020 to about 15 bcm in 2023.
    - **Collapse of European Market Share:** At its peak, Russia controlled 35% of Europe's gas market, but the war has significantly eroded this dominance.
  - **Impact on EU**
    - **Countries affected**
      - The Ukraine route serves Austria and Slovakia. Austria received most of its gas via Ukraine, while Slovakia takes around 3 bcm from Gazprom per year, about two-thirds of its needs.
      - Slovakia has said the loss of Russian supply would not hit its consumption and that it has diversified supply contracts.
      - Ukraine's gas supply remains unaffected as it no longer relies on Russian transit gas.
    - **Market Impact**
      - EU gas prices reached record highs in 2022 but are unlikely to repeat due to the small remaining volumes of Russian gas and reduced dependency.
      - The European Union has offset the loss of Russian gas with liquefied natural gas (LNG) and non-Russian pipeline imports.
      - Competitors like Norway, the United States, and Qatar have gained market share at Russia's expense.
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### INS SURAT, INS NILGIRI, AND INS VAGSHEER



#### INS Surat:

- It is a **stealth destroyer**, the **fourth and last** of the **Project-15B** or **Vishakhapatnam Class**.
- It is designed in-house by the Indian Navy's Warship Design Bureau and is being constructed by **Mazagaon Dock Limited (MDL)**.
- It has an indigenous content of 72%.

#### Features:

- It is the Indian Navy's **first AI-enabled warship** to enhance its operational efficiency manifold times. It will have a displacement of 7,400 tons and a length of 163 meters and can rip through at a top speed of nearly 60 km/h.
- The ship has a maximum **range of 15,000 km**.
- It is armed with supersonic surface-to-surface **BrahMos missiles** and **'Barak-8 medium-range surface-to-air missiles**.
- The destroyer is fitted with **indigenously developed anti-submarine weapons** and sensors, prominently the hull-mounted Sonar Humsa NG, heavy-weight torpedo tube launchers, and ASW rocket launchers.

#### About INS Nilgiri:

- It is the **first of the seven multi-role frigates** being constructed **under the Project-17A**, four at the MDL and three at GRSE in Kolkata, at an overall cost of around Rs 45,000 crore.
- These ships have been designed indigenously by the Indian Navy's Directorate of Naval Design, New Delhi.
- Constructed at MDL, this 6,670-tonne vessel is equipped with cutting-edge weapons and sensors to address threats from enemy submarines, ships, and aircraft.



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- The ship has state-of-the-art **stealth features**, achieved through the shaping of the hull and radar-transparent deck fittings, which make ships difficult to detect.
- It is **mounted with guns** for **close-in defence capability** and effective naval gunfire.
- Nilgiri is **enabled to operate independently without supporting vessels** and to function as the flagship of the Naval task force.

### About INS Vagsheer:

- INS Vagsheer (S26) is the **sixth and final submarine** of the first **batch of six Kalvari-class submarines built for the Indian Navy**.
  - It is named after the sand fish, a deadly deep-sea predator of the Indian Ocean.
  - It is **designed by French naval defence and energy group Naval Group** and **manufactured by MDL**.
  - It is designed to operate in all theatres of operation, showcasing interoperability with other components of a Naval Task Force.
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### TACKLING DELIMITATION BY REVERSING POPULATION CONTROL

- In recent years, **the Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu have voiced concerns over the implications of the proposed delimitation exercise** and the potential loss of parliamentary seats for southern states.
- **This development, driven by the south's advanced fertility transition, highlights a complex intersection of demography, politics, and regional equity.**

### Potential Solutions for Equity

- **Weighted Representation**
  - **One potential solution is to introduce weighted representation**, where factors such as literacy rates, healthcare outcomes, and economic contributions are considered alongside population size.
  - **This would ensure that states are rewarded for their developmental achievements** rather than penalised for lower population growth.



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- **Revisiting Delimitation Criteria**
  - The delimitation exercise could be restructured to include demographic and socio-economic indicators as additional criteria for seat allocation.
  - For instance, states that have achieved population stabilization could receive a baseline level of representation, preventing significant reductions in their parliamentary seats.
- **Inter-Regional Redistribution**
  - To address the immediate demographic divide, policies could promote greater inter-regional migration.
  - Encouraging labour mobility between northern and southern states could help balance population densities and foster economic integration, thereby reducing the regional divide over time.
- **Fiscal Incentives for Development**
  - Beyond representation, fiscal policies could incentivize lagging states to invest in family planning, education, and healthcare.
  - By addressing the root causes of high population growth, these policies would help reduce the demographic divide in the long term.

### Conclusion

- The debate over fertility and representation reflects broader challenges in managing India's demographic transition.
  - Balancing political representation with demographic realities requires innovative solutions that prioritise equity, sustainability, and gender justice.
  - Ultimately, the focus must shift from reversing fertility trends to creating a fair and inclusive framework for governance that respects the diversity and achievements of India's states.
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