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Current Affairs - 16 December 2025

VB-G RAM G BILL SET TO REPLACE MGNREGA

- The Viksit Bharat–Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Bill, 2025 proposes a fundamental restructuring of India’s rural employment guarantee by replacing the MGNREGA, 2005.
- The government argues that an overhaul was necessary as MGNREGA, enacted in 2005, no longer reflects current rural realities.
- With **declining poverty levels** and **expanded digital access**, the scheme has continued to face structural issues such as misuse of funds, weak monitoring, and creation of low-quality assets.

Expansion of Guaranteed Employment Days - [Section 3(1), VB–G RAM G Bill | Section 3(1), MGNREG Act]

- The Bill guarantees **125 days** of wage employment per rural household per financial year, up from “not less than 100 days” under MGNREGA.
- **Change in Centre–State Funding Pattern - [Section 22(2), VB–G RAM G Bill]**
 - A major departure from MGNREGA, where the Centre paid 100% of unskilled wage costs.
 - Proposed cost-sharing under VB–G RAM G:
 - 90:10 (Centre: State) for Northeastern States, Himalayan States, and UTs with legislature (Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, J&K).
 - 60:40 for all other States and UTs with legislature.
 - 100% Central funding for UTs without legislature.
 - **Statutory Pause During Peak Agricultural Seasons - Section 6(1) & Section 6(2), VB–G RAM G Bill**
 - **Section 6(1):** No work shall be commenced or executed during notified peak agricultural seasons.
 - **Section 6(2):** States must notify, in advance, a period aggregating to 60 days per financial year covering sowing and harvesting.



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Expected Impact of VB-G RAM G on the Rural Economy

- The government argues that the new law will strengthen rural employment, incomes, and infrastructure.
- By prioritising water-related works, rural roads, markets, and climate-resilient assets, the scheme aims to raise agricultural productivity and reduce distress migration.
- Digitised planning, payments, and monitoring are expected to improve efficiency, transparency, and delivery.
- **What It Means for Farmers?**
 - Improved labour availability during peak sowing and harvesting, as States can pause public works for up to 60 days.
 - Lower wage inflation during critical agricultural seasons.
 - Better water and irrigation infrastructure, enhancing farm resilience.
 - Improved rural connectivity and storage facilities, reducing post-harvest losses.
- **Gains for Rural Workers**
 - 25% increase in guaranteed employment days (125 days instead of 100).
 - Digital wage payments and Aadhaar-based verification, reducing delays and wage theft.
 - Mandatory unemployment allowance if work is not provided.
 - Creation of durable community assets such as roads and water systems.
 - Predictable job availability through panchayat-led planning.

Stronger Accountability and Monitoring

- AI-based fraud detection systems
 - GPS and mobile-based monitoring of works
 - Weekly public disclosures of scheme data
 - Twice-yearly social audits at the gram panchayat level
 - Central and State-level steering committees for oversight
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CENTRALISED PUBLIC GRIEVANCE REDRESS AND MONITORING SYSTEM (CPGRAMS)



- CPGRAMS is an online platform available to the citizens 24×7 to lodge their grievances to the public authorities on any subject related to service delivery.
- It was developed and monitored by the **Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG)**, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances, and Pensions.
- It is a single portal **connected to all the ministries/departments of the Government of India and States.**
- CPGRAMS is also **accessible** to the citizens **through a standalone mobile application** downloadable through the Google Play store, and **mobile application integrated with UMANG.**
- The **status of the grievance** filed in CPGRAMS can be **tracked with the unique registration ID** provided at the time of registration of the complainant.
- The **grievances** received on the CPGRAMS shall be **resolved** promptly as soon as they are received but **within a maximum period of 21 days.**
- CPGRAMS also provides an **appeal facility** to the citizens if they are not satisfied with the resolution by the Grievance Officer.
 - **After closure of grievance**, if the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution, he/she can **provide feedback.**
- **Issues which are not taken up for redressal:**
 - **Sub-judice cases** or any matter concerning judgment given by any court.
 - **Personal and family disputes.** RTI matters.
 - **Religious matters.**
 - **Anything that impacts upon the territorial integrity of the country or friendly relations with other countries.**



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CAPACITY BUILDING FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS (CBSP) SCHEME



- It is a Central Government Scheme designed to develop the tourism potential of India.
- It was launched by the **Ministry of Tourism (MoT)**.
- It operates as a comprehensive **skill development and certification framework** targeting both the **unorganised and organised sectors of India's tourism and hospitality sector**.
- Under the Scheme, the Ministry of Tourism conducts **training programmes** for the **tourism stakeholders across the country**, including **urban, rural, and tribal areas**.
- The **outcome** of these training includes **placements by institutes, self-employment, and trainees opting for higher studies** such as diploma and degree courses in the tourism and hospitality sector.
- Under the scheme, **MoT provides financial assistance to participating institutes**.

Key Training Programmes under CBSP:

- **Hunar Se Rozgar Tak (HSRT):** A programme focused on **skill-based employment**
- **Entrepreneurship Programme (EP):** Designed to equip individuals with the skills required to establish their own ventures in the tourism sector.
- **Skill Testing & Certification (ST&C):** A **re-skilling initiative** that assesses and certifies existing tourism service providers.
- **Tourism Awareness Programme (TAP):** Aimed at creating awareness and encouraging community participation in the tourism industry.
- The **beneficiaries** range from **organised sector workers**, such as hotel and restaurant workers, to **unorganised sector workers**, such as dhaba staff, taxi/coach drivers, tourist police, monument staff, etc.



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WHAT IS PROJECT MAUSAM?



Culture.

- It is an **Indian government-led cultural-diplomacy and maritime heritage initiative** launched in 2014 by the **Ministry of Culture**.
- It aims to **explore the multi-faceted Indian Ocean 'world'** - collating **archaeological and historical research** in order to **document the diversity** of cultural, commercial, and religious interactions **in the Indian Ocean**.
- A total of **39 Indian Ocean countries** have been **identified** under Project Mausam.
- The **main objective** of the project is to **inscribe places and sites identified** under Project Mausam as **trans-national nominations for inscription on UNESCO's World Heritage List**.
- It also aims to **promote research** on themes related to the **study of maritime routes** through international **scientific seminars** and meetings and by adopting a multidisciplinary approach.
- The project is **implemented by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** as the nodal agency with **research support of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) and National Museum** as associate bodies.

What is Mission Mausam?

- It was launched by the **Ministry of Earth Sciences** in 2024.
- It is **implemented by the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the National Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasting (NCMRWF), and the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM)**.
- It aims to **improve weather and climate services**, ensuring **timely and precise observation, modeling, and forecasting** information for multiple sectors, including agriculture, disaster management, and rural development.



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GOOGLE'S PROJECT SUNCATCHER: TAKING DATA CENTRES BEYOND EARTH

- Project Suncatcher aims to deploy **solar-powered satellite** constellations equipped with **Tensor Processing Units (TPUs)** to perform large-scale machine learning computations in space.
- The system will use laser-based optical links to connect satellites, enabling data centre-level computational coordination.

Need for Data Centres in Space

- The AI boom has led to a rapid expansion of terrestrial data centres, bringing significant environmental costs.
- These include **heavy water** consumption, rising dependence on fossil-fuel electricity, and a sharp increase in power demand—projected by Goldman Sachs to grow by up to 165% by 2030—intensifying climate concerns.
- **Energy, Stability, and Reliability Advantages**
 - Space, particularly the lunar surface, offers **predictable conditions** and continuous solar radiation, reducing dependence on fragile terrestrial energy grids.
 - Space-based systems are also **insulated from risks** like natural disasters and undersea cable disruptions that frequently affect Earth-based infrastructure.
- **Data Sovereignty and Legal Flexibility**
 - Data localisation laws limit where companies can process and store data.
 - Hosting data centres in outer space could bypass such constraints, as the **1967 Outer Space Treaty** prohibits national sovereignty claims over space, potentially allowing multi-country data hosting from a single extraterrestrial facility.
 - Advances in rocket technology have significantly lowered the cost of space missions, making it increasingly viable to launch **experimental payloads** and test space-based data infrastructure.



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Key Challenges and Limitations

- Despite its promise, space-based data centres face major hurdles:
 - high construction and maintenance costs,
 - difficulty of repairs,
 - potential need for on-site specialists,
 - latency in data transmission due to distance from Earth, and
 - unresolved cybersecurity risks.

How Other Tech Giants Are Exploring Space-Based Data Centres?

- Several technology leaders are exploring space as the future home for data centres.
- OpenAI CEO Sam Altman has envisioned **Dyson sphere**-like AI data centres harnessing solar energy, an idea aligned with his \$500-billion Stargate project involving Nvidia, SoftBank, and Oracle. Practical experiments are already underway.
- Recently, the Starcloud satellite carrying Nvidia's powerful H100 GPU was launched to test AI computation in space.
- Earlier, Lonestar Data Holdings sent a mini data centre with 8 TB storage to the Moon during an Intuitive Machines mission.
- Other industry leaders share this vision. Jeff Bezos, through Blue Origin, has proposed moving polluting industries like data centres off Earth, while former Google CEO Eric Schmidt has also signalled plans to place data centres in orbit.

EXERCISE EKATHA 2025



- Established in 2017, Exercise Ekatha is an **annual bilateral maritime exercise** between the **Indian Navy and the Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF)**.
- It aims to enhance bilateral maritime cooperation, and **2025** marks its **eighth edition**.
- The exercise involved a series of professional interactions designed to **boost interoperability and operational collaboration** between the two navies.



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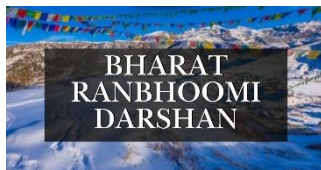
Current Affairs - 16 December 2025

- Activities included technical and combat diving, boarding operations, firing drills, demolition and explosive handling, asymmetric warfare tactics, and special heli-borne operation drills.

Key Facts about Maldives:

- It is an **independent island country** in the **north-central Indian Ocean**.
- It is **Asia's smallest country by area**.
- **Gan** is the country's **largest island**.
- **Formerly a British colony**, the Maldives became an **independent nation in 1965**.
- **Capital: Male**.
- **Official language: Dhivehi (an Indo-European language)**; Arabic, Hindi, and English are also spoken.

BHARAT RANBHOOMI DARSHAN



- It is a flagship initiative by the **Ministry of Defence & Ministry of Tourism**.
- **Aim:** The initiative aims to **promote border tourism** while simultaneously strengthening infrastructure and improving the livelihoods of people living in remote border villages. It helps in **promoting connectivity, tourism, and socio-economic** development in border
- **Features of Bharat Ranbhoomi Darshan Initiative:**
 - **Virtual Tour:** It features details on **various battlefields and border areas**, offering **virtual tours**, historical narratives, and interactive content.
 - **Historical Narratives:** The Indian Army, in conjunction with the Ministry of Tourism, has shortlisted **Galwan (the river valley in Ladakh) Doklam** which is a tri-junction between India, Bhutan and China.
 - It even **identified other forward sites** to **raise awareness** by opening historically significant locations linked to the valor and sacrifices of the **Indian Armed Forces to tourists**.



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- Most of these sites fall along India's **borders with China** (Line of Actual Control) and **Pakistan** (Line of Control) that have had a history of wars after independence and other clashes in recent times.
- The Army is **collaborating with local civil** authorities to facilitate these efforts while maintaining high operational preparedness.

UNITED NATIONS ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATION



- It was **established in 2005**, as the political initiative of **Mr. Kofi Annan**, former UN Secretary-General.
- It was co-sponsored by **the Governments of Spain and Turkey**.
- It was created to **serve as a soft-power political** tool of the United Nations Secretary-General for conflict **prevention and conflict resolution**.
- **Function:** It maintains a **global network of partners** including states, international and regional organizations, civil society groups, foundations, and the private sector to improve cross-cultural relations between diverse nations and communities.
- The **Global Forum** is the **highest-profile event** of the UNAOC which brings together prominent personalities, current and potential partners, and others from different sectors.
- **Funds:** The Secretary-General has established a **voluntary Trust Fund for UNAOC**.
 - This **fund supports the UNAOC projects**, activities and outreach, undertaken by the High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations in his official capacity, and core operational and human resources needs.

The Trust Fund for UNAOC is **administered by the United Nations Secretariat** in accordance with the United Nations Financial Regulations and Rules.

- UNAOC **receives voluntary contributions** from member states, international organizations, private sector and foundations.
- **Secretariat:** It is based in **New York, USA**.