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Current Affairs - 18 December 2025

WHAT IS THE ANIMAL HUSBANDRY INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT FUND



(AHIDF)?

- It is a central sector scheme under the Prime Minister's "Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan" stimulus package.
- It is aimed at **boosting investments in animal husbandry infrastructure.**
- **Implementing Agency:** Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, and Dairying.
- **Objectives:**
 - To **expand milk and meat processing capacity** and help small rural producers connect with organised markets.
 - To ensure that livestock farmers get **better prices** for their milk, meat, and other animal products.
 - To make **good-quality milk and meat products** that can be easily available for people across the country.
 - To **meet the growing demand for protein-rich food** and help **reduce malnutrition**, especially among children.
 - To **encourage entrepreneurship** and create more job opportunities in the livestock sector.
 - To **promote exports** and increase the export contribution in the milk and meat sector.
 - To make available **quality concentrated animals feed.**
- The scheme will **incentivize investments for**
 - **Dairy processing and value addition infrastructure.**
 - **Meat processing and value addition infrastructure.**
 - **Animal Feed Plant.**
 - **Breed multiplication farm.**



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Current Affairs - 18 December 2025

- Animal Waste to Wealth Management (Agri-waste management).
 - Veterinary vaccine and drug production
 - The eligible beneficiaries under the Scheme would be:
 - Farmer Producer Organization (FPO)
 - Private companies
 - Individual entrepreneurs
 - Section 8 companies
 - Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)
 - Benefits
 - The beneficiaries are to contribute a minimum of 10% margin money as investment. The balance 90% would be the loan component to be made available by scheduled banks.
 - The Government of India will provide 3% interest subvention to eligible beneficiaries.
 - From the Credit Guarantee Fund, Credit guarantee would be provided to those sanctioned projects which are covered under MSME-defined ceilings.
 - Credit Guarantee Fund: Set up and managed by NABARD.
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WHAT IS BHARATNET PROJECT?



- It is an ambitious project of the Government of India aimed at providing broadband connectivity to all Gram Panchayats (GPs) in the country.
- It is one of the biggest rural telecom projects in the world.
- The primary objective is to provide unrestricted access to broadband connectivity to all the telecom service providers.
 - This enables access providers like mobile operators, Internet Service Providers (ISPs), Cable TV operators, and content providers to launch various services such as e-health, e-education, and e-governance in rural and remote India.



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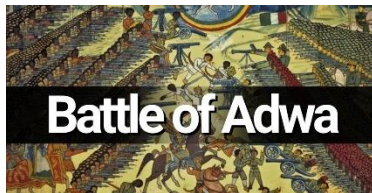
Current Affairs - 18 December 2025

- The project is being executed by a **Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV)**, namely **Bharat Broadband Network Limited (BBNL)**, which was incorporated in 2012 under Indian Companies Act 1956.
- The Telecom Commission approved implementation of the project in **three phases**. While the Phase I was completed in 2017, Phase II and Phase III are ongoing.

What is the Amended BharatNet Program (ABP)?

- The ABP is a design improvement **aiming for**:
 - **Optical Fibre (OF) connectivity** to 2.64 lakh GPs in ring topology (a network design where connected devices form a circular data channel)
 - **OF connectivity to the remaining non-GP villages on demand.**
 - It includes **features like IP-MPLS (Internet Protocol Multi-Protocol Label Switching) network with routers at Blocks and GPs**, operation and maintenance for **10 years**, power backup, and **Remote Fibre Monitoring System (RFMS)**.
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BATTLE OF ADWA



- It was fought by the Ethiopian Empire, which was then known as Abyssinia, and Italy in 1896, near Adwa, Ethiopia, as the **concluding battle** of the **First Italo-Ethiopian War (1895–1896)**.
 - The conflict **stemmed from Italy's ambitions to establish an empire in Africa**, which was part of the broader "scramble for Africa" among European powers.
 - This battle saw the **Ethiopian Empire, led by Emperor Menelik II, successfully defeat an invading Italian force.**
 - It led to the **decisive victory for the Ethiopians and securing their sovereignty.**
 - The victory had further significance for being the **first crushing defeat of a European power by African forces during the colonial era.**
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PROTECTING THE ARAVALLI RANGE

- The Aravalli Mountain Range is one of the oldest mountain systems in the world, estimated to be nearly two billion years old.
- Stretching over **650 km from Delhi to Gujarat**, the range passes through Haryana, Rajasthan, and Gujarat, forming a critical ecological spine in north-western India.
- Ecologically, the Aravalli's act as a **natural barrier against desertification**, preventing the eastward expansion of the Thar Desert into the fertile Indo-Gangetic plains.
- They play a vital role in climate regulation, groundwater recharge, and biodiversity conservation.
- Several important rivers, such as the **Chambal, Sabarmati, and Luni**, originate from or are supported by the Aravalli system.
- The region is rich in minerals like **limestone, marble, sandstone, copper, zinc, and tungsten**, which have historically made it a mining hub.
- However, excessive quarrying over recent decades has severely degraded forests, reduced groundwater levels, and worsened air quality, especially in the National Capital Region.

Mining and Environmental Degradation

- Since the early 1990s, the Environment Ministry has issued regulations restricting mining to sanctioned projects.
- Despite this, widespread illegal and unregulated mining continued, particularly in parts of Haryana and Rajasthan.
- In 2009, the Supreme Court imposed a blanket ban on mining in Faridabad, Gurugram, and Mewat districts of Haryana. However, enforcement challenges persisted.

Supreme Court Intervention and Uniform Definition

- A major issue in protecting the Aravalli's was the absence of a uniform definition.
- Different States and agencies used inconsistent criteria to identify Aravalli formations, leading to regulatory loopholes.



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Current Affairs - 18 December 2025

- To address this, the **Supreme Court constituted a committee** comprising representatives from the Environment Ministry, Forest Survey of India (FSI), Geological Survey of India, State Forest Departments, and the Central Empowered Committee (CEC).
- In 2025, the **Court accepted the committee's recommendation that hills above 100 metres in height would be considered part of the Aravalli range.**

Central Empowered Committee Recommendations

- The Central Empowered Committee proposed a science-based, multi-layered strategy for protecting the Aravalli's. Key recommendations included:
 - Comprehensive scientific mapping of the Aravalli range across all States
 - Macro-level environmental impact assessment of mining activities
 - Strict prohibition of mining in ecologically sensitive zones such as wildlife corridors, aquifer recharge areas, water bodies, and protected habitats
 - No new mining leases or renewals until proper mapping and assessments are completed
 - Tight regulation of stone-crushing units contributing to air pollution
- These recommendations were accepted by Supreme Court in its November 2025 order.

Sustainable Mining and the Green Wall Initiative

- Instead of imposing a complete ban, the Supreme Court adopted a calibrated approach.
- It allowed existing legal mining to continue under strict regulation while pausing fresh approvals. The Court noted that total bans often fuel illegal mining mafias and unregulated extraction.
- Complementing judicial action, the Centre launched the **Aravalli Green Wall Project** in June 2025.
- The initiative aims to increase green cover in a five-kilometre buffer zone across 29 districts in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Delhi. The project targets the restoration of 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030, strengthening India's land degradation neutrality goals



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Current Affairs - 18 December 2025

WHAT IS THE KAVACH SYSTEM?



Recently, the Union Railway Minister, in a written reply during the Winter Session of Parliament (December 2025), informed the Lok Sabha that the indigenously developed Kavach system has been fully commissioned on over 2,000 km of the Indian Rail network, with the rollout progressing at a very fast pace.

- Kavach is an **indigenously developed Automatic Train Protection (ATP)** system designed to enhance **railway operational safety**.
- It has been developed by the **Research Design and Standards Organisation (RDSO)** under **Indian Railways (IR)** in collaboration with Medha Servo Drives Pvt Ltd, HBL Power Systems Ltd, and Kernex Microsystems.
- Kavach is a **highly complex digital safety ecosystem** consisting of **five major integrated components**, including **continuous Optical Fibre Cable (OFC)** laid along **tracks** and **telecom towers** for uninterrupted communication.
- The system uses a **combination of electronic devices and Radio Frequency Identification (RFID)** installed in locomotives, signalling systems, and railway tracks, which communicate using ultra-high radio frequencies.
- Based on **pre-programmed safety logic**, Kavach can **alert loco pilots, automatically apply brakes, and prevent unsafe train movements**.

WHAT IS EXERCISE “DESERT CYCLONE II”?



The 2nd edition of the Joint Military Exercise Desert Cyclone II, scheduled to be conducted at Abu Dhabi from 18–30 Dec. 2025.



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Current Affairs - 18 December 2025

- **Desert Cyclone II** is the **second edition** of the **India–U.A.E. Joint Military Exercise**, following the inaugural edition held in 2024.
- The **Indian contingent** comprises personnel primarily drawn from a **Mechanised Infantry Regiment** battalion of the **Indian Army**.
- The **A.E. Land Forces** are represented by a **contingent of similar strength** from the **Mechanised Infantry Battalion**.
- The core objective of the exercise is to **enhance interoperability** and **strengthen defence cooperation** between the **Indian Army** and the **U.A.E. Land Forces**.
- The exercise focuses on **sub-conventional operations** in **urban environments** under a **United Nations mandate**, preparing forces for **peacekeeping, counter-terrorism, and stability operations**.
- Joint training includes **fighting in built-up areas, heliborne operations, and detailed joint mission planning**.
- A key feature is the **integration of Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS)** and **counter-UAS techniques** for conducting **urban military operations**.
- The conduct of Desert Cyclone II reflects **deepening military diplomacy, shared strategic interests, and growing operational synergy** between India and the U.A.E.

Key Facts about India–U.A.E. Defence Relations

- **India and the U.A.E. established diplomatic relations in 1972.**
- The **A.E. opened its Embassy in New Delhi in 1972, while India opened its Embassy in Abu Dhabi in 1973.**
- The **first-ever India–U.A.E. Joint Air Forces exercise** was conducted in 2008 at the **Al-Dhafra Air Base, Abu Dhabi.**
- India has been a **regular participant** in the **biennial International Defence Exhibition (IDEX)** held in Abu Dhabi.
- In 2025, Indian Navy ships **INS Visakhapatnam** and **INS Trikand** participated in the **bilateral naval exercise “Zayed Talwar”**, aimed at enhancing **naval interoperability and synergy**.



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INDIA COAST GUARD SHIP (ICGS) SARTHAK



India Coast Guard Ship
'Sarthak'

- It is the fourth in the series of five **Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs)** being built by Goa Shipyard for the Indian Coast Guard (ICG).
 - These OPVs are **multi-mission platforms** capable of undertaking **concurrent operations**.
 - The ship is propelled by **diesel engines** designed to attain a high speed.
 - The ship is fitted with state-of-the-art equipment machinery, **sensors, and weapons** and has an **Integrated Bridge System, and Integrated Machinery Control System**.
 - That enables it to function as a command platform and undertake mandated Coast Guard charter of duties, including **search and rescue, combating maritime crimes, and preserving and protecting the marine environment**.
 - It will be **based at Porbandar, Gujrat**, and operate on India's western seaboard under the operational and administrative control of the commander, Coast Guard Region.
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CHINA TESTS WIRELESS LINKING OF SEVEN FREIGHT TRAINS

- China's seven-train freight operation was enabled by a wireless control system deployed on the Baoshen Railway in Inner Mongolia.
 - Instead of using traditional mechanical couplings, the trains were synchronised through a wireless network that coordinated their movement as a single unit.
 - The system was developed by China Shenhua Energy, a subsidiary of the state-owned CHN Energy group, overcoming the key challenge of linking multiple heavy freight trains without physically joining them.
 - The system combines relative speed control with absolute distance monitoring, using continuous communication between trains and ground systems.
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Current Affairs - 18 December 2025

- This virtual coupling allows trains to adjust dynamically to speed changes, shorten braking distances, and safely operate at closer intervals without physical connections.

Safe Spacing Through Wireless Synchronisation

- Despite operating closely on the same track, the seven freight trains maintained safe distances during the trial.
- CHN Energy said each train ran about 1,091 metres apart at a speed of 60 kmph.
- Using wireless communication and precise control, the system synchronised acceleration and braking across all trains without mechanical couplers.
- According to China Central Television (CCTV) report, the operation was completed without any collision or separation, demonstrating that wireless coordination can ensure both safety and efficiency in multi-train freight movement.

Implications for China's Rail Freight Capacity

- The successful wireless multi-train operation could significantly **boost China's freight capacity—by up to 50%**—without requiring new rail infrastructure.
- The breakthrough aligns with China's strategy of using advanced technology to increase loading efficiency.
- CHN Energy noted that since 2022, the project has been tested across multiple heavy-haul scenarios, offering a scalable model for rail systems worldwide.

Why Wireless Multi-Train Control Matters for China?

- China's rail freight volumes continue to surge, with over 3 billion tonnes moved in the first nine months of the year.
 - Expanding capacity by building new lines is expensive, making efficiency-enhancing technologies more attractive. Wireless group train control allows longer trains, shorter intervals, and denser convoys without new infrastructure.
 - As China expands international services like China Railway Express across Europe and Asia, mastering such technology strengthens its freight competitiveness and positions it as a global leader in heavy-haul rail operations.
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