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Current Affairs - 25 December 2025

PRADHAN MANTRI RASHTRIYA BAL PURASKAR



Pradhan Mantri
Rashtriya Bal Puraskar
(PMRBP) 2025

"Recognizing young champions of bravery/
exceptional talent/ outstanding
achievements, the Award honours children
who have demonstrated selfless courage,
remarkable skills, & made significant
contributions to society, inspiring others &
leaving a lasting impact."

- It is a prestigious **national honour** conferred **annually** by the Government of India.

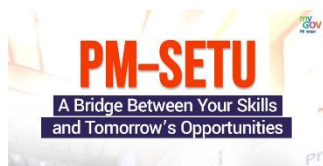
- It is **awarded to children** for exceptional excellence in Bravery, Art & Culture, Environment, Social Service, Science & Technology, and Sports.

- The Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar organized by the **Ministry of Women and Child Development** Government of India.

- **Eligibility for Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar**

- A child should be an **Indian Citizen**.
- **Age:** A child above the age of **5 years** and **not exceeding 18 years** (as of 31st July of respective year).
- The act/incident/achievement should have been **within 2 years of the last date** of receipt of application/nomination for the year of consideration.
- **The number of awards will be 25**, however, any relaxation to this maximum number may be permitted at the discretion of the National Selection Committee.
- Each awardee will receive a **medal, certificate** and citation booklet.

PM-SETU SCHEME



- **Pradhan Mantri Skilling and Employability**

Transformation through Upgraded ITIs (PM-SETU) is a Centrally

Sponsored Scheme launched to strengthen India's vocational training ecosystem.

- It aims to **modernise the ITI ecosystem by upgrading 1000 government ITIs** across India into modern, industry-aligned training institutions
- **Implementation:** It is implemented as a **hub-and-spoke model**.



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- Each hub will be equipped with **advanced infrastructure, innovation and incubation centres**, production units, training of trainer facilities, and placement services, while the spokes will extend access and outreach.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship
- **Components of PM-SETU Scheme:**
 - Introduce new, demand-driven courses and revamp existing ones in collaboration with industry;
 - **Special Purpose Vehicles:** Set up Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) with credible Anchor Industry Partners to manage clusters and ensure outcome-based training;
 - Create pathways for long-term diplomas, short-term courses, and executive programs;
 - **Strengthen 5 National Skill Training Institutes** in – Bhubaneswar (Odisha), Chennai (Tamil Nadu), Hyderabad (Telangana), Kanpur (Uttar Pradesh), Ludhiana (Punjab), as Centres of Excellence with global partnerships.
 - The initiative is backed by global **co-financing** from the **World Bank and Asian Development Bank**.

SAMUDRA PRATAP



- It is the first **indigenously designed** and built **Pollution Control Vessel** of the Indian Coast Guard.
- It is the largest ship in the ICG fleet, significantly enhancing the Coast Guard's operational reach and capability.
- **Features of Samudra Pratap:**
 - **Armament:** The vessel is equipped with state-of-the-art technology, including stabilised remote-controlled guns with integrated fire control systems.



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- **Advanced Systems:** It consists of Integrated Bridge System, Integrated Platform Management System, Automated Power Management System, and a high-capacity external firefighting system.
- It is the first Indian Coast Guard ship to be equipped with **Dynamic Positioning capability (DP-1)**, with **FiFi-2 / FFV-2 notation certificate**.
- It is equipped with **advanced systems to detect oil spills**.
- It is capable of **high precision operations**, recover pollutants from **viscous oil**, analyse contaminants, and separate oil from contaminated water.

THANJAVUR PAINTING



It is a classical **South Indian art form** originating in the town of Thanjavur (Tanjore), **Tamil Nadu, around 1600 AD.**

- Tanjore or Thanjavur paintings are **created on wooden panels**, commonly known as **palagai padam**.
- It was flourished under the **Nayakas of Thanjavur**.
- **Features of Thanjavur Painting**
 - Tanjore paintings are traditionally created on canvas affixed to wooden planks, typically made from **jackfruit or teak, and bound with Arabic gum**.
 - **Rich Colors:** These paintings are known for their vibrant colors. They often use bright shades of red, blue, green, and gold leafwork to create an opulent effect.
 - **Gesso Work:** It is one of the unique features of Tanjore paintings is the use of gesso work. Gesso is a mixture of **chalk, gypsum, and glue** applied to the surface to create embossed patterns and motifs.
 - **Theme:** Tanjore paintings typically depict **Hindu gods and goddesses**, especially figures like Lord Krishna, Lord Ganesha, and Goddess Lakshmi.
 - **Gold Leaf:** Gold foil or leaf is extensively used in Tanjore paintings to embellish the artwork.
- It has received the **Geographical Indication tag**.



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STRUCTURAL AND POLICY CONSTRAINTS TO MANUFACTURING IN INDIA

- Manufacturing has historically played a central role in economic development by absorbing surplus labour, driving productivity growth, and enabling exports.
- Countries such as China and South Korea used manufacturing-led growth to transition from low-income to middle- and high-income economies.
- In contrast, India's structural transformation has followed an atypical path, with services expanding rapidly while manufacturing's share in GDP has remained broadly stagnant.
- Despite beginning the 20th century at levels comparable to several East Asian economies, India did not experience a sustained manufacturing boom.
- Instead, growth increasingly shifted toward services such as software, finance, and business process outsourcing.
- This divergence raises important questions about the structural weaknesses of India's industrialisation strategy.

India's Manufacturing Performance

- Manufacturing's share in India's GDP has remained roughly constant over decades and has recently ceded further ground to services.
- While India has witnessed pockets of industrial success, these have not translated into large-scale employment generation or broad-based technological upgrading.
- This underperformance becomes more apparent when compared with **China** and **South Korea**, where manufacturing expanded both in scale and sophistication.
- The limited growth of manufacturing has also constrained India's ability to absorb low-skilled labour exiting agriculture, contributing to informal employment and underemployment.
- As a result, India faces the challenge of high economic growth without commensurate job creation in productive sectors.



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Technology and Productivity Constraints

- A key question emerging from this analysis is why Indian manufacturing failed to respond through technological upgrading.
- Economic theory suggests that high wages can induce innovation, pushing firms to adopt labour-saving technologies and improve productivity.
- This process played a crucial role in historical industrialisation in countries like Britain, Germany, and Japan.
- In India, however, manufacturing firms did not sufficiently invest in technology or capital-intensive production.
- Instead, many industries continued to rely on abundant cheap labour, limiting productivity growth.
- This failure to move up the value chain meant that manufacturing could neither sustain higher wages nor compete effectively in global markets.

Uneven Growth and Rising Inequality

- India's growth story has been marked by strong performance in services alongside weak wage growth for a large segment of workers.
 - Even in fast-growing sectors such as software and platform-based services, entry-level wages have stagnated over long periods.
 - Many modern Indian "unicorns" depend more on labour reserves than on genuine technological innovation.
 - This pattern has contributed to rising income inequality. While the private sector has generated wealth and entrepreneurship, its growth has been uneven and insufficiently linked to mass employment creation.
 - Manufacturing's stagnation thus reflects deeper issues in India's development trajectory, including inadequate diffusion of technology and skills.
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BUREAU OF PORT SECURITY - STRENGTHENING INDIA'S COASTAL SECURITY

- India has a long coastline of over 7,500 km and a rapidly expanding maritime economy.
- As of 2025, the country has **12 major ports and 217 non-major ports**, of which **66 are cargo-handling ports**, while the rest largely serve fishing and coastal activities.
- Major ports, administered by the Union government, handle more than half of India's maritime cargo traffic.
- In recent years, India has witnessed a sharp rise in port capacity, coastal shipping, and inland waterway cargo movement.
- This growth has significantly enhanced India's trade connectivity and logistics efficiency, but it has also increased exposure to security threats such as smuggling, terrorism, cyber intrusions, and illegal migration through maritime routes.
- Ensuring secure ports and vessels has therefore emerged as a key national security priority.

Need for a Dedicated Port Security Authority

- Until recently, India's coastal and port security responsibilities were distributed across multiple agencies, including the Indian Navy, Coast Guard, CISF, State maritime police, and port authorities.
- While operational agencies remain crucial, the absence of a single statutory body for regulatory oversight and coordination often leads to gaps in communication, duplication of efforts, and uneven implementation of security standards.
- Recognising these challenges, the government decided to establish a specialised institution that could function as the nodal regulator for port and ship security, similar to how aviation security is governed in India.

Bureau of Port Security: Mandate and Structure

- The Bureau of Port Security (BoPS) has been constituted under Section 13 of the Merchant Shipping Act, 2025, as a statutory body.



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- It functions under the **Ministry of Ports**, Shipping and Waterways and is modelled on the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS).
- The BoPS is responsible for regulatory oversight relating to the security of ships, port facilities, and maritime infrastructure.
- Its role is not operational in nature but focuses on standard-setting, compliance, coordination, and supervision across both major and non-major ports.

Key Functions of the Bureau of Port Security

- The BoPS addresses a wide range of maritime security concerns.
- These include maritime terrorism, arms and drug trafficking, human trafficking, illegal migration, piracy, poaching, and other illicit activities carried out through sea routes.
- A notable feature of the BoPS is its emphasis on cybersecurity.
- With ports increasingly dependent on digital systems, the Bureau is expected to monitor and protect port IT infrastructure from cyber threats, in coordination with national cybersecurity agencies.
- The BoPS has the legal authority to ensure compliance with international obligations such as the **International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code**, which mandates minimum security standards for ports and vessels engaged in international trade.

Role of CISF and Security Implementation

- Under the BoPS framework, the **Central Industrial Security Force (CISF)** has been designated as a recognised security organisation.
 - The CISF will prepare standardised security plans, conduct security assessments, and train private security agencies deployed at ports.
 - Security measures are to be implemented in a graded and risk-based manner, taking into account factors such as vulnerability, trade volume, location, and threat perception. This approach aims to balance security needs with ease of doing business.
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TUNNEL SAFETY GUIDELINES - LESSONS FROM THE SILKYARA COLLAPSE

- On November 12, 2023, the Silkyara Bend–Barkot Tunnel on NH-134 (Char Dham Mahamarg Pariyojana) **collapsed**, trapping 41 workers for 17 days.
- Though all were rescued safely, the incident exposed **systemic weaknesses** in tunnel planning, geological assessment, and emergency preparedness, especially in fragile Himalayan terrain.
- In response, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (**MoRTH**) issued comprehensive guidelines to prevent and mitigate road tunnel collapses, particularly relevant for strategic and border area connectivity projects.

Why Tunnel Safety Matters?

- Tunnels enable **seamless connectivity** in mountainous, snow-bound, eco-sensitive, congested and border areas.
- India's expanding highway network under strategic and Char Dham projects has increased tunnelling activity, raising geological and safety risks.

Key Provisions of the New Guidelines:

- **Strengthening planning (DPR, GBR and risk register):**
 - **Issues identified:** Many Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) reduced to procedural formalities. Inadequate geological and geotechnical investigations.
 - **Guidelines:**
 - Project authority responsible for verifying correctness of geological investigations.
 - Mandatory preparation of Geotechnical Baseline Report (GBR), risk register (hazards, risks, mitigation measures).
 - **Principle of risk allocation:** “Risk shall be borne by the party best equipped to manage it.”
 - GBR and risk register to be shared with bidders to ensure transparency and realistic costing.



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- **Geological realities and design challenges:**
 - Tunnel design is critical as ground itself acts as a support system.
 - Predicting ground properties from limited tests is an oversimplification, especially in the Himalayas.
 - Poor investigations lead to time overruns, cost escalation, and safety failures.
 - **Special conditions to be assessed:** Squeezing and swelling ground, rock bursts, shallow cover zones, tunnels below perennial streams/nalas, hot water ingress, and toxic/flammable gases (long tunnels).
- **Tunnelling technologies (NATM vs TBM):**
 - **NATM** (New Austrian Tunnelling Method): “Design-as-you-go” approach, suitable for non-uniform rock conditions, controlled blasting, and mandatory excavation and support sheet for each round.
 - **TBM** (Tunnel Boring Machine): Used in uniform geological stretches, requires vigilance against roof collapse and water ingress.
- **Collapse risk zoning and safety infrastructure:** Tunnels to be classified into collapse-risk zones. High-risk zones must include Np-4 escape pipe (minimum 0.9 m diameter), mobile rescue containers, fixed rescue containers, minimum 24-hour survival capacity.
- **Emergency response and human capacity:**
 - **Emergency Response Plan (ERP):** Prepared in advance, updated weekly based on site conditions.

Conclusion:

- The Silkyara tunnel collapse was a **watershed moment** in India’s infrastructure journey.
 - MoRTH’s **new guidelines** mark a shift from procedural compliance to risk-based engineering, emphasising geological realism, accountability, and human safety.
 - **Effective implementation** will be crucial to ensuring that India’s push for strategic connectivity and infrastructure-led growth does not come at the cost of lives and sustainability.
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