Shankar School of Banking | ASPIRANT'S CHOICE
Information is a Blessing
A Shankar IAS Academy Initiative

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 06-01-2026

NATIONAL NEWS

Surat Set to Become India's First Slum-Free City

Surat in Gujarat is close to becoming India's first slum-free city, due to large-scale redevelopment of slum clusters into permanent housing with basic civic amenities.

The initiative is being implemented by the Surat Municipal Corporation, using a mission-mode approach under central and state housing schemes.

Most slum areas are being redeveloped through in-situ slum redevelopment, where multi-storey apartment complexes are constructed at the same location.

Slum-dwelling families are provided permanent and legal housing, ensuring they are not displaced far from livelihoods, schools, or social networks.

The housing projects provide durable flats with essential civic amenities, including piped drinking water, proper drainage and sewage systems, street lighting, paved internal roads, sanitation, and waste management facilities.

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) provides central financial assistance, while Gujarat state housing policies complement funding and implementation.

Strong coordination between local, state, and central agencies has enabled Surat to achieve faster and more effective slum redevelopment compared to many other Indian cities.

Achieving slum-free status is expected to improve urban living standards and public health, reduce inequality and social exclusion, and enhance efficient land use and city aesthetics.

The initiative supports Sustainable Development Goal 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities and serves as a replicable model for urban housing and slum rehabilitation across India.

Gujarat Sets Up Cyber Security Panels to Protect Energy Infrastructure

The Gujarat government has constituted an 11-member Core Committee and a 19-member Task Force to protect the state's energy infrastructure from cyber-attacks.

The decision has been taken by the Energy and Petrochemicals Department (EPD), Gujarat, in view of rising cyber risks due to increased digitalisation in the power sector.

The move focuses on securing smart grids, SCADA systems, smart meters, and digital power supply

networks that support 24×7 electricity services.

The Core Committee will review the overall cyber security strategy in the energy sector and examine policies, preparedness, and system resilience.

It will also suggest long-term frameworks and improvements to strengthen cyber security of critical energy infrastructure.

The Task Force will focus on operational and technical implementation of cyber security measures across the power sector.

It will support training programmes, cyber drills, coordination activities, and on-ground execution of security protocols.

Both bodies will review existing IT and cyber security arrangements and assess the state's preparedness to handle cyber incidents.

They will recommend policy improvements and develop a clear roadmap for building a robust cyber security system in the energy sector.

The initiative includes capacity building measures, such as regular cyber drills, awareness programmes, and training for officials.

The state will promote coordination with academic institutions, cyber security experts, and state and national agencies.

E-Bill System for Fertiliser Subsidy Launched to Enhance Transparency

The E-Bill System for fertiliser subsidies has been inaugurated by Jagat Prakash Nadda, Union Minister for Chemicals and Fertilizers, in New Delhi.

The system will be used to process fertiliser subsidy payments of around ₹2 lakh crore, marking a major shift towards digital, transparent, and efficient financial governance.

The E-Bill System is an end-to-end online digital platform designed to process fertiliser subsidy claims electronically.

Earlier, fertiliser subsidy bills were processed through physical files, manual verification, and multiple approval layers, which often resulted in delays and inefficiencies.

Under the new system, subsidy claims will move digitally from fertiliser companies to the government through an integrated electronic workflow.

The system eliminates paperwork, speeds up approvals, and ensures that payments are released only after system-based verification.

Built-in checks and controls have been introduced to strengthen financial discipline and transparency.

Each bill is verified against predefined rules before payment approval.

All actions taken on a bill are digitally recorded, creating a complete audit trail.

The system reduces the risk of errors, duplication, and misuse of public funds.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Bulgaria Switches to Euro as Official Currency Effective January 1, 2026

Bulgaria adopted the Euro (EUR) as its official currency from January 1, 2026, replacing the Bulgarian lev (BGN) after approval by the Council of the European Union (EU) on July 8, 2025, confirming compliance with all Maastricht convergence criteria.

The irrevocable conversion rate was fixed at 1 EUR = 1.95583 BGN, ensuring a smooth and legally binding transition from the national currency to the euro.

With this move, Bulgaria became the 21st member of the Eurozone, marking a significant step toward deeper economic integration with the European Union.

During January 2026, both BGN and EUR will be accepted for payments across Bulgaria, but change will be given only in euros, facilitating a gradual transition for citizens and businesses.

From February 1, 2026, the euro becomes the sole legal tender, and the Bulgarian lev will be completely withdrawn from daily circulation, completing the currency changeover.

The Bulgarian National Bank (BNB) has joined the Eurosystem, integrating into the European Central Bank (ECB) framework, strengthening monetary coordination.

As a result, Bulgarian banks will come under the Single Supervisory Mechanism (SSM), enhancing banking supervision, financial stability, and regulatory oversight.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

ISRO Successfully Tests Enhanced SSLV Third Stage (SS3) at Sriharikota

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully conducted a static ground test of the enhanced 3rd stage (SS3) of the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) at the Solid Motor Static Test Facility, Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC), Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh.

SSLV is a three-stage, all-solid launch vehicle designed for quick, on-demand missions and to support industrial-scale production of launch services.

During the test, the enhanced SS3 motor was fired for 108 seconds, with all performance parameters closely matching pre-test predictions.

The motor was equipped with around 233 sensors to monitor pressure, thrust, temperature, vibration, and the performance of control electronics.

Following the successful test, the enhanced SS3 stage has qualified for induction into flight missions.

The performance upgrades, including a new carbon-epoxy motor case, have increased SSLV payload capacity by about 90 kg.

Additional improvements such as an upgraded igniter and nozzle system have further enhanced the efficiency, reliability, and overall performance of the SSLV.

BANKING

Ministry of Finance Maintains Small Savings Scheme Interest Rates for Q4 FY26

The Department of Economic Affairs (DEA–Budget Division) under the Ministry of Finance (MoF) kept interest rates unchanged across all Small Savings Schemes (SSS) for Q4 FY26 (1 Jan–31 Mar 2026).

This is the 8th consecutive quarter with no change in SSS interest rates; rates were last revised in Q4 FY24.

The decision covers key schemes including Public Provident Fund (PPF) and Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana (SSY).

Interest Rates on Small Savings Schemes – Q4 FY26

Post Office Savings Deposit (POSD): 4.0%

1-Year Post Office Time Deposit (POTD): 6.9%

2-Year POTD: 7.0%

3-Year POTD: 7.1%

5-Year POTD: 7.5%

5-Year Post Office Recurring Deposit (PORD): 6.7%

Kisan Vikas Patra (KVP): 7.5% (Maturity: 115 months)

Public Provident Fund (PPF): 7.1%

Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana (SSY): 8.2%

National Savings Certificate (NSC): 7.7%

Senior Citizen Savings Scheme (SCSS): 8.2%

Post Office Monthly Income Scheme (PO-MIS): 7.4%

Mahila Samman Savings Certificate (MSSC): 7.5%

SSS are Government of India (GoI)-backed instruments, aimed at promoting household savings with risk-free returns.

RIIT Sponsored by NHAI Gets AAA (Stable) Rating from CARE Ratings

Raajmarg Infra Investment Trust (RIIT), sponsored by National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), has received a AAA (Stable) rating for its long-term bank facilities from CARE Ratings Limited.

The AAA (Stable) rating is the highest credit rating, indicating very strong financial health and extremely low risk of default on debt.

The Stable outlook suggests that RIIT's credit profile is expected to remain unchanged in the near to medium term.

The rating reflects the experience, credibility, and track record of NHAI in the roads and highways sector, along with the strategic importance of NHAI's asset monetization programme, which has monetized assets worth around ₹1.43 lakh crore to date.

RIIT has received SEBI approval (on December 24, 2025) to operate as a Public Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT), enabling the monetization of National Highway assets.

The Public InvIT provides a safe, long-term investment option, primarily targeting retail and domestic investors, while supporting India's infrastructure growth and sustainable capital formation.

The InvIT initiative broadens public participation in the National Highway infrastructure development story, strengthening NHAI's asset monetization programme.

Sagarmala Finance Corporation Limited Begins Maritime Lending

Sagarmala Finance Corporation Limited (SMFCL), India's first NBFC dedicated to maritime financing, commenced lending operations and sanctioned loans worth around ₹4,300 crore during its 51st Board Meeting held on December 30, 2025.

With this step, SMFCL formally entered the maritime lending space, in line with the strategy approved by its Board, strengthening India's port and maritime financing ecosystem.

A major portion of funding includes ₹4,000 crore allocated for a Greenfield Port Project, reaffirming the Government of India's (GoI) commitment to port-led development under the Sagarmala vision.

Under the same loan tranche, Dredging Corporation of India (DCI) received ₹150 crore, while Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL) secured ₹110 crore, aimed at enhancing dredging capacity and indigenous shipbuilding capabilities.

The SMFCL Board approved a ₹25,000 crore borrowing limit and a ₹8,000 crore lending target for

FY 2025-26, outlining its strategic roadmap for maritime sector financing.

SMFCL, launched in June 2025 (formerly known as Sagarmala Development Company Limited), has been appointed as the nodal agency for the ₹25,000 crore Maritime Development Fund (MDF), positioning it as a key financial pillar for India's maritime infrastructure development.

Asian Development Bank Sanctions ₹4,100 Crore Loan to Telangana

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has granted in-principle approval for a ₹4,100 crore ($500 million) loan to the Telangana Government for Phase-I of the Musi River Development Project.

The Telangana Government submitted a Preliminary Project Report (PPR) to the Ministry of Jal Shakti (MoJS) seeking ₹3,188 crore under the National River Conservation Plan (NRCP).

The Musi River Development Project is divided into five zones, with Phase-I covering 21 km of Zone-I, from Osman Sagar (Gandipet) to Bapu Ghat and Himayatsagar to Bapu Ghat, out of a total project length of 55 km.

The Musi Riverfront Development Corporation Limited (MRDCL), a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) of the Telangana Government, is executing Phase-I.

Phase-I works are expected to begin after cost estimates finalization by 31 March 2026.

Key features include Bapu Ghat redevelopment, the Gandhi Sarovar, and the Mahatma Gandhi memorial, aiming to create a major riverfront landmark.

The project focuses on cultural restoration of temples, mosques, gurudwaras, churches, and the 800-year-old Lord Shiva temple at Manchirevula.

Infrastructure plans include the Gateway of Hyderabad, a 55-km elevated corridor from Gandipet to Gourella, and a greenfield road connecting the Outer Ring Road.

SEBI Grants In-Principle Approval to Ashika Group

Ashika Group received in-principle approval from Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to act as a Sponsor and establish Ashika Mutual Fund (MF), enabling the formation of an Asset Management Company (AMC), subject to final registration.

The approval allows Ashika Mutual Fund to begin preparations for scheme launches, once final SEBI registration is granted.

Ashika Group, established in 1994, operates as a diversified financial services platform offering Retail and Institutional Broking, Investment Banking and Advisory, Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs), Research & Advisory, Global Family Office Services, NBFC operations, and distribution services.

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

Chairman of ESAF Small Finance Bank

ESAF Small Finance Bank, headquartered in Thrissur, Kerala, appointed Karthikeyan Manickam as its Chairman, strengthening the bank's leadership.

Karthikeyan Manickam brings over 36 years of experience in public sector banking, having previously served as Executive Director of Bank of India (BoI).

During his banking career, he held several senior leadership positions at Indian Bank, gaining extensive operational and managerial expertise.

He has served as a Board Member of Tamil Nadu Grama Bank and BOI STAR Investment Managers Pvt. Ltd., contributing to governance and strategic oversight.

He also served as Chairman of Star Union Dai-ichi Life Insurance Company Limited (SUD Life), adding experience in the insurance and financial services sector.

SPORTS

Youngest Woman to Complete Seven Summits

Kaamya Karthikeyan, an 18-year-old from Mumbai, became the youngest female in the world to scale the Seven Summits (the highest peaks on all seven continents).

She is a Class 12 student of Navy Children School, Mumbai, and completed her final summit in Antarctica (Mount Vinson) followed by a trek to the South Pole on December 27, 2025.

Kaamya has successfully climbed: Mount Kilimanjaro (Africa), Mount Elbrus (Europe), Mount Kosciuszko (Australia), Mount Aconcagua (South America), Mount Denali (North America), Mount Everest (Asia) and Mount Vinson (Antarctica)

She is the second-youngest female in the world and the youngest Indian to climb Mount Everest from the Nepal side, which she scaled at the age of 16 in May 2024.

The Indian Navy congratulated her, noting that she is the daughter of a naval officer (Commander S. Karthikeyan) and praised her endurance, courage, and resilience.

Kaamya now aims to become the youngest person to complete the Explorers Grand Slam.

This ultimate adventure challenge includes climbing the Seven Summits and skiing to both the North and South Poles.

World Blitz Chess Championship 2025

The World Rapid and Blitz Chess Championship 2025 was held in Doha, Qatar, featuring elite

players from across the world and delivering high-intensity competition.

Magnus Carlsen won the World Blitz Chess Championship for a record ninth time, reaffirming his dominance in the fastest format of the game.

Despite struggling in the round-robin stage with blunders, time trouble, and forfeits, Carlsen showed exceptional experience and mental resilience in the knockout rounds.

In the final, Carlsen defeated Nodirbek Abdusattorov, later describing the victory as one of the hardest-earned world titles of his career.

Arjun Erigaisi delivered a strong performance, winning the bronze medal in the Blitz event and emerging as one of the standout players of the tournament.

Erigaisi topped the league stage among 252 players, losing only one out of 19 games, and registered victories against top players, including Magnus Carlsen.

A dip in form during the semi-finals denied Erigaisi a chance at the gold medal, resulting in a joint bronze finish.

Magnus Carlsen and Arjun Erigaisi were the only two players to win two medals each at the Doha championship.

India finished the tournament with three bronze medals, highlighting its growing strength in global chess.

Along with Arjun Erigaisi’s Rapid and Blitz bronze medals, Koneru Humpy won bronze in the Women’s Rapid Championship.

The performances underlined India’s rising stature in international chess and the depth of talent across formats and categories.

Blitz chess, recognised by the International Chess Federation (FIDE), is a fast-paced format where players get three to five minutes per game, testing speed, intuition, and composure under pressure.