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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 22-01-2026

NATIONAL NEWS

Maharashtra Cabinet Approves Bembla River Irrigation Project and MAHIMA Agency

The Maharashtra Cabinet approved the ₹4,775 crore Bembla River Irrigation Project in Yavatmal district and cleared the establishment of a new overseas employment facilitation agency named MAHIMA.

The Bembla River Irrigation Project will be implemented in Yavatmal district, Maharashtra, to strengthen agricultural infrastructure.

The project will bring 52,423 hectares of land under assured irrigation across five talukas, reducing dependence on monsoon rainfall.

With a total cost of ₹4,775 crore, the project aims to improve crop productivity, enhance farmer incomes, and reduce agrarian distress, particularly in drought-prone Vidarbha region.

Improved irrigation is expected to support crop diversification, enable a shift from low-value rain-fed crops to higher-value crops, and ensure long-term water security.

The project will also generate employment opportunities during construction and allied activities and strengthen regional food security.

Alongside irrigation reforms, the Cabinet approved the creation of the Maharashtra Agency for Holistic International Mobility and Advancements (MAHIMA).

MAHIMA will focus on providing overseas employment opportunities for trained and skilled youth from Maharashtra.

The agency will work on coordination, skill mapping, and implementation mechanisms to connect the state's workforce with global labour markets.

The initiative aims to reduce unemployment, increase remittance inflows, and provide international exposure to Maharashtra's youth.

India Launches First Open-Sea Marine Fish Farming Project

India has launched its first-ever open-sea marine fish farming pilot project in the Andaman Sea, marking a shift from coastal aquaculture to open-ocean farming.

The initiative supports sustainable fisheries, livelihood generation, and India's expanding focus on

the Blue Economy.

The project was launched by Jitendra Singh, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology, during a field visit to North Bay, Andaman Sea.

It is described as a landmark effort to unlock the economic potential of India's oceans, which remained underutilised for decades.

The project reflects increased policy attention on maritime resources since 2014.

The pilot focuses on marine finfish and seaweed cultivation in open-sea conditions, away from the coastline.

Special open-sea cages, developed by the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), are used to withstand strong currents and waves.

Deep-water seaweed farming techniques are being promoted to ensure sustainability and higher productivity.

The project is implemented through collaboration between the Ministry of Earth Sciences, NIOT, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands administration.

During the launch, seaweed seeds were distributed to local fishing communities, and finfish seeds were provided for cage-based farming.

The initiative aims to diversify income sources for fishing communities while ensuring ecologically responsible marine use.

The government-led pilot may later be expanded through public–private partnerships, depending on outcomes, to accelerate growth in the Blue Economy sector.

Blue Economy refers to the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, livelihoods, and job creation while preserving marine ecosystems.

It aims to balance economic development with environmental sustainability, supporting fisheries, food security, renewable energy, tourism, and climate resilience.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

IGGEFIL Approves First Overseas Green Energy Loan for Solar Power Project in Zambia

IREDA Global Green Energy Finance IFSC Limited (IGGEFIL), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Limited (IREDA), has sanctioned its first international green energy loan.

The loan amount sanctioned is USD 22.5 million to Swarna Solar Limited (SSL).

The loan is for the development of a 100 Megawatt (MW) Photovoltaic (PV) Solar Power Project.

The solar project will be set up in Serenje District, Central Province of Zambia.

This sanction marks IGGEFIL's first overseas loan since its incorporation at Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City), Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

Operating from GIFT City enables access to foreign-currency loans, which helps in reducing hedging costs and improving global competitiveness.

The loan approval aims to leverage competitive international capital for global renewable energy development.

The initiative positions IREDA as a global catalyst for clean energy financing.

The move is aligned with the Government of India's (GoI) vision of promoting cross-border investments in renewable energy.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited Partners with Viasat

BSNL (Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited) has partnered with Viasat, Inc. (USA) to support the next phase of the Indian Navy's Satellite Communications (SATCOM) upgrade programme.

The partnership focuses on integrating Viasat's Ka-band satellite systems with BSNL's L-band network, enabling multi-band SATCOM connectivity for the Indian Navy (IN).

The collaboration aims to enhance coverage, reliability, and secure communication for critical naval operations.

Viasat will manage the programme through its International Government team under the Communication Services

BSNL will provide gateway infrastructure, system integration, and strategic support for the naval SATCOM network.

Viasat's satellite communication equipment has already reached India, with installation scheduled to begin in late January 2026.

The initiative strengthens India's maritime communication capabilities and supports the modernisation of naval communication infrastructure.

BANKING

World Bank Approves USD 286 Million for West Bengal

The World Bank (WB) approved USD 286 million financing for the West Bengal Health System Reform Program (WBHSRP) to improve quality of life and life expectancy for over 90 million people through equitable access to quality healthcare services.

The program aims to support personalized healthcare services across West Bengal for people over 30 years.

WBHSRP provides digital tracking of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as hypertension and diabetes.

The International Bank of Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) approved a loan with a maturity of 16.5 years, including a grace period of 3 years.

Health indicators in West Bengal:

Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) declined from 32 deaths per 1000 births (2012–2018) to 19 deaths per 1000 births (2018–2020).

Total Fertility Rate (TFR) stood at 1.64 births per woman (2019), among the lowest in India.

Life expectancy in the state reached 72 years, above the national average.

Challenges: West Bengal has the second-highest rate of adolescent pregnancies in India (16%), contributing to a Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) of 103 deaths per 1,00,000 live births (2018).

WBHSRP will support strengthening gender-based violence (GBV) services, including targeted interventions for boys, married adolescents, and healthcare providers.

The program will focus on five districts: Purulia, Birbhum, Murshidabad, Maldah, and Uttar Dinajpur, aiming to enhance access to quality healthcare and reduce inequities in maternal and adolescent health.

State Bank of India Signs Memorandum of Understanding with Tamil Nadu

The State Bank of India (SBI) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of Tamil Nadu (TN) to provide enhanced benefits under the Corporate Salary Package (CSP) for State Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs)

The MoU was signed by R. Balaji, Additional Director and ex-officio Joint Secretary, Finance Department, TN, and Smitha S. Nair, Deputy General Manager, SBI.

The Corporate Salary Package (CSP) offers zero-balance salary accounts, concessional interest rates on home, car, and personal loans, and waiver of processing fees across select banking and loan services, ensuring cost savings for employees.

Employees under the CSP receive premium banking support, including dedicated relationship managers, wealth management solutions, and secure, customized digital banking platforms for seamless transactions.

SBI Life Introduces ‘Smart Platina Advantage’ Life Insurance Savings Plan

SBI Life Insurance launched ‘SBI Life – Smart Platina Advantage’, an individual, non-linked, non-participating life insurance savings plan offering long-term guaranteed benefits and life insurance protection to support financial goals across life stages, such as children’s education, retirement, and wealth creation.

The plan is savings-oriented, providing guaranteed benefits and financial protection throughout the policy term.

Life cover is provided to ensure family security in case of the life assured’s death.

The plan features limited premium payment terms, assured guaranteed additions every policy year, and flexible maturity payout options (lump sum or installments) for post-maturity liquidity.

Minimum annual premium starts from ₹50,000, with tax benefits under Income Tax Act provisions (typically Section 80C and 10(10D)).

Policy term options include limited premium payment of 7 or 10 years with coverage for 15, 20, or 30 years.

Guaranteed additions accrue annually to boost maturity value, with higher additions for larger premiums and longer terms.

Maturity proceeds can be received in installments up to 7 years for post-maturity liquidity.

The plan ensures predictable outcomes with guaranteed additions and protection irrespective of market fluctuations.

DEFENCE

Trilateral Coast Guard Exercise ‘DOSTI 17’

The 17th edition of the biennial trilateral Coast Guard exercise ‘DOSTI 17’ commenced in Male, Maldives, involving the Indian Coast Guard (ICG), Sri Lanka Coast Guard (SLCG), and Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF) Coast Guard from 17–19 January 2026.

India’s delegation is led by Director General Paramesh Sivamani, while Sri Lanka is represented by Admiral Rohan Joseph, DG of SLCG.

The harbour phase of the exercise was held from 17–19 January 2026, followed by an operational sea phase.

During the harbour phase, the exercise focused on MARPOL-based marine pollution response drills, promoting reciprocal learning and strengthening operational capabilities among participants.

The exercise conducted joint Visit, Board, Search, and Seizure (VBSS) drills and developed cross-

boarding Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to enhance coordination.

Activities included live demonstrations of pollution response equipment and tabletop exercises.

In the sea phase, ICG ships (including ICGS Vajra and ICGS Atulya) and aircraft (ICG Dornier) participated alongside the Sri Lankan ship SLNS Suranimila to test operational coordination in open-sea conditions.

The phase focused on search and rescue (SAR) missions and tactical maritime security drills to address non-traditional security challenges.

The exercise supports India's SAGAR (Security And Growth for All in the Region) vision and Neighbourhood First policy, fostering regional maritime cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region.

AWARDS & PRIZES

Indian Railways' Highest Award for Child Trafficking Prevention

Railway Protection Force (RPF) officer Chandana Sinha has been conferred Indian Railways' highest award for her exceptional contribution to preventing child trafficking and rescuing vulnerable children at railway stations and trains.

Chandana Sinha is a senior RPF officer known for her ground-level, child-centric approach to safety across railway premises.

She focused not only on enforcement but on identification, rescue, and rehabilitation of trafficked and runaway children.

Her work involved close coordination with Non-Governmental Organisations, Child Welfare Committees, and State authorities, strengthening institutional response to trafficking.

Railway stations and trains are frequently used by traffickers due to high passenger volume and anonymity, making the Railways a critical intervention point.

The Railway Protection Force plays a frontline role in detecting suspicious movement of minors, and officers like Chandana Sinha enhanced surveillance, staff training, and early intervention mechanisms.

She emphasized early identification of children travelling alone or under suspicious supervision, preventing exploitation before it occurred.

She helped institutionalise child-friendly protocols within the RPF, ensuring rescued children were treated as victims rather than offenders.

Her initiatives improved inter-agency coordination, enabling faster rescues and safe handover to welfare institutions, leading to a reduction in trafficking cases on high-risk routes.

The Indian Railways' highest award is given for exceptional service and outstanding contribution,

recognising both operational excellence and humanitarian impact.

By honouring an RPF officer for child protection work, Indian Railways highlighted social responsibility as a core institutional value alongside safety and efficiency.

Chandana Sinha's work has strengthened the role of Indian Railways as a key stakeholder in child protection and is expected to motivate wider adoption of similar practices.

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of ICICI Bank

ICICI Bank Limited has re-appointed Sandeep Bakshi as Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for a further two-year term.

The new tenure of Sandeep Bakshi will be from 04 October 2026 to 03 October 2028.

The re-appointment is subject to approvals from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), stakeholders, and other statutory authorities, as required.

Sandeep Bakshi was first appointed as MD and CEO in October 2018, and his previous term was extended till October 2026.

Before becoming MD & CEO, he served as Whole-Time Director (WTD) and Chief Operating Officer (COO) of ICICI Bank.

Sandeep Bakshi has been associated with the ICICI Group since 1986 (originally joined ICICI Limited), marking nearly four decades of leadership experience.

During his career, he has held senior positions across various ICICI Group entities, including ICICI Limited, ICICI Lombard General Insurance, ICICI Bank, and ICICI Prudential Life Insurance.

Along with Bakshi's re-appointment, the Board of Directors (BoDs) of ICICI Bank has also re-appointed Ajay Kumar Gupta as Executive Director (ED).

Ajay Kumar Gupta's tenure as Executive Director will be from 27 November 2026 to 26 November 2028, for a two-year period.

Prime Minister of Yemen

Yemen's Presidential Leadership Council (PLC) appointed Shaea Muhssin Mohammed Al-Zindani as the new Prime Minister of Yemen on 15 January 2026.

Shaea Muhssin Mohammed Al-Zindani was serving as Foreign Minister of Yemen (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates) before his elevation as Prime Minister.

He succeeded Salem bin Braik (Salem Saleh bin Braik), who formally submitted his resignation

during a meeting with PLC Chairman Rashad Al-Alimi in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Shaea Muhssin Mohammed Al-Zindani is a senior Yemeni diplomat and politician, known for his extensive diplomatic experience and role in representing Yemen during a critical political transition.

In his early career, he served as Deputy Foreign Minister of Yemen in the early 1990s (1990–1991).

He was appointed Yemen's Ambassador to the United Kingdom (UK) from 1991 to 1994.

He later served as Yemen's Ambassador to Italy from 2005 to 2010, with concurrent non-resident accreditation to Greece, Serbia, Albania, and San Marino.

From 2010 onwards, he served as Yemen's Ambassador to Jordan (until 2015) and later as Ambassador to Saudi Arabia (2017–2024).

He also represented Yemen as Ambassador to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (UN) from 2008 to 2010.

Prior to becoming Prime Minister, he served as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates from March 2024.

SPORTS

Vidarbha Wins Maiden Vijay Hazare Trophy

Vidarbha won their first-ever Vijay Hazare Trophy title, defeating Saurashtra by 38 runs in the final held at the BCCI Centre of Excellence, Bengaluru.

This victory marked a historic milestone for Vidarbha in India's premier domestic List A (50-over) tournament.

Vidarbha put up a strong batting performance, posting 317 runs, driven by a match-winning century by opener Atharva Taide, who scored 128 runs.

It was Taide's finest List A knock and provided a solid foundation in a high-pressure final.

In reply, Saurashtra were bowled out for 279 in 48.5 overs while chasing 318.

Prerak Mankad (88) and Chirag Jani (64) offered resistance with a key partnership, but the required run rate increased after their dismissals.

Vidarbha's disciplined bowling sealed the title, with Yash Thakur picking up four wickets, supported effectively by Nachiket Bhute and Darshan Nalkande.

The Vijay Hazare Trophy is named after Vijay Hazare and is India's premier domestic one-day competition.

While Vidarbha have earlier won the Ranji Trophy, this was their first Vijay Hazare Trophy title, highlighting their growing strength in limited-overs cricket.