

# pravahini

WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

**12 FEB – 18 FEB**



**MRP ₹ 50.00**

## NEWS HIGHLIGHTS:

1. ISRO's:- "Naughty Boy"
2. PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana
3. NOIDA is honored with the title of water warrior city
4. 'Indira' and 'Nargis' Dropped From National Film Awards
5. Japan's economy is now the world's fourth-largest
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## 1. Assam Cabinet Passes Assam Healing (Prevention of Evil) Practices Bill, 2024.

- ✚ The Assam Healing (Prevention of Evil) Practices Bill, 2024, has been passed by the Assam cabinet.
- ✚ It has banned magical healing practices in the name of treatment.

### Key Highlights:

#### ✚ Ban on Magical Healing Practices:

The bill prohibits the use of magical healing practices under the guise of medical treatment. This includes treatments for conditions such as deafness, dumbness, blindness, physical deformities, and autism.

- ✚ **Penalties for Illegal Practices:** Individuals found guilty of engaging in illegal magical healing practices can face imprisonment and fines as per the provisions of the bill.

- ✚ **Establishment of Wildlife Safari & Rescue Centre:** The Wildlife Safari & Rescue Centre is set to be established in the Namdang Reserved Forest in the Dibrugarh district.

- ✚ **Facilities:** The center aims to provide international-standard safaris for herbivores, carnivores, and bird aviaries, enhancing wildlife tourism in the region.

- ✚ **Sustainable Urban Development:** The cabinet has decided to introduce the Ten Cities Development Concept, named "Doh Shafer - Ek Rupayan", aimed at ensuring sustainable urban development in the state.



## 2. NASA Launches Extensive Air Pollution Monitoring Flights Across Asia Using DC-8 Flying Laboratory.

- ✚ In a bid to enhance the forecasting and management of air pollution, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has initiated an extensive series of flights across Asia using its DC-8 flying laboratory.

### Key Highlights:

- ✚ **Aircraft and Operations:** Flights are conducted using NASA's DC-8 flying laboratory, which can last up to 8 hours and sometimes occur at altitudes as low as 15 meters above the ground. A smaller NASA Gulfstream jet capable of creating 3D maps of pollutants is also utilized for the mission.
- ✚ **Mission Name and Partnership:** The mission, named ASIA-AQ, is a partnership between NASA and the governments of the regions experiencing some of the highest rates of air pollution-related fatalities globally.
- ✚ **Geographical Coverage:** Flights have already been conducted over densely populated areas in the Philippines as part of the initiative.
- ✚ **Data Collection and Analysis:** The data collected during these flights will contribute significantly to the global effort to tackle air pollution and its devastating impacts on human health and the environment.



### 3. NITI Aayog launches the GROW initiative to transform India's wastelands through agroforestry.

- ✚ Greening and Restoration of Wasteland with Agroforestry (GROW) report and portal was launched by Prof Ramesh Chand, Member, NITI Aayog at NITI Aayog.
- ✚ This multi-institutional effort led by NITI Aayog utilized remote sensing and GIS to assess agroforestry suitability across all districts in India.
- ✚ Using thematic datasets, an Agroforestry Suitability Index (ASI) was developed for national-level prioritization.





- ✚ The report provides state-wise and district-wise analysis, supporting government departments and industries for greening and restoration projects.
- ✚ The "Greening and Restoration of Wasteland with Agroforestry (GROW)-Suitability Mapping" portal Bhuvan [https://bhuvan-app1.nrsc.gov.in/asi\\_portal/](https://bhuvan-app1.nrsc.gov.in/asi_portal/) allows universal access to state and district-level data.
- ✚ Currently, agroforestry covers 8.65% of India's total geographical area, totalling about 28.42 million hectares.
- ✚ The GROW initiative aligns with national commitments, aiming to restore 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030 and create an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent.

#### 4. Names of 'Indira' and 'Nargis' Dropped From National Film Awards.

- ✚ The 'Indira Gandhi Award for Best Debut Film of a Director' and the 'Nargis Dutt Award for Best Feature Film on National Integration', which are part of the National Film Awards, have been renamed on the recommendation of the Committee for Rationalisation of Film Awards.



- ✚ The committee recommended that the 'Indira Gandhi Award for Best Debut Film of a Director' be renamed as 'Best Debut Film of a Director', and the award money be increased to Rs 3 lakh.
- ✚ It also recommended that the 'Nargis Dutt Award for Best Feature Film on National Integration' be renamed as 'Best Feature Film Promoting National, Social and Environmental Values'.
- ✚ This award carries a Rajat Kamal to the director and the producer with Rs 1.5 lakh each.
- ✚ The committee recommended that it be clubbed with 'Best Film on Social Issues and Best Film on Environment Conservation/Preservation'.

## 5. Gupteswar Forest in Odisha declared Biodiversity-Heritage Site.

- ✚ The pristine Gupteswar Forest, adjacent to Gupteswar Shiva temple in Odisha's Koraput district has been declared as the fourth Biodiversity-Heritage Site (BHS) of the state as per a recent government notification.
- ✚ The site is spread over 350 hectares of demarcated area.

### Biodiversity of Gupteswar Forest

- ✚ The biodiversity inventory and survey conducted by the Odisha Biodiversity Board shows the presence of rich flora and fauna in the area.
- ✚ This includes at least 608 faunal species such as 28 mammal species, 188 bird species, 18 amphibian species, 48 reptile species, 45 fish species, and 141 butterfly species.
- ✚ The site has abundant floral diversity as well with 182 tree species, 76 shrub species, 177 herb species, 69 climber species, 14 orchid species and threatened medicinal plants.
- ✚ Many agriculturally and industrially important microorganisms also exist in this ecosystem.



## 6. India Leads the Charge at the 62nd Session of the Commission for Social Development.

- ✚ India, represented by Ruchira Kamboj, chaired the 62nd Session of the Commission for Social Development at the United Nations, emphasizing global collaboration to address social challenges aligning with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

- ✚ The session focused on the theme "Fostering Social Development and Social Justice through Social Policies," aiming to accelerate progress on the 2030 Agenda, particularly in poverty eradication.
- ✚ Ruchira Kamboj's leadership played a pivotal role in adopting four significant resolutions, addressing care and support systems, the social dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, and setting priority themes for future sessions.
- ✚ The session concluded with Kamboj welcoming Poland as the incoming Chair for the 63rd session in 2025, highlighting collaborative continuity.
- ✚ India's effective leadership and contributions were acknowledged by member states, marking a milestone as the country chaired the Commission for Social Development for the first time since 1975.



## 7. **Trinidad and Tobago Declares National Emergency After Offshore Oil Spill**

- ✚ Trinidad and Tobago declares a state of "national emergency" after a significant offshore oil spill in the eastern Caribbean.
- ✚ The spill, originating from an overturned vessel near Tobago, raises concerns about environmental damage and its impact on the nation's economy, especially tourism.
- ✚ Prime Minister Rowley highlights the gravity of the situation, stressing the need for extraordinary funding to address the uncertain extent and magnitude of the spill.
- ✚ The cause of the oil spill is under investigation, with suspicions of potential illicit activities due to the vessel's lack of distress calls and missing crew.





- ✚ Challenges in identifying the vessel persist, attributed to its submerged state and the absence of visible identifying features.
- ✚ Prime Minister Rowley suggests the possibility of the vessel being involved in illicit activities, citing the discovery of a towing cable as a potential indication.

## 8. Greece Becomes First Orthodox-Majority Nation to Allow Same-Sex Marriage

- ✚ The Hellenic Parliament of Greece passed a historic legislation, legalizing same-sex civil marriages in the country.
- ✚ It makes Greece the first constitutionally Christian Orthodox-majority nation to grant equal marital rights to LGBTQ couples.



- ✚ The bill was approved by 176 lawmakers in the 300-seat parliament and will become law when it's published in the official government gazette.
- ✚ Key Provisions
- ✚ The new law allows same-sex couples to marry with equal rights as heterosexual couples under Greek family law.
- ✚ Additionally, it permits LGBTQ couples to legally adopt children – another remarkable first for a predominantly Orthodox country.

### Recent Developments in Greece

- ✚ In 2015, Greece allowed civil partnership among same-sex couples, and in 2017 it gave legal recognition to gender identity.
- ✚ Two years ago it banned conversion therapy for minors aimed at suppressing a person's sexual orientation



## 9. PM Modi Inaugurates Abu Dhabi's First Traditional Hindu Stone Temple

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the country's first traditional Hindu stone temple located in Abu Dhabi.

### Name and Location

- The temple is formally called the 'BAPS Hindu Mandir Abu Dhabi' named after the organization, Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan (BAPS), that constructed it for worshippers.
- The complex is located at Abu Mureikha, just off the Dubai-Abu Dhabi highway.
- Built entirely using hand-carved beige sandstone and white marble hauled from Rajasthan and Gujarat in India, the temple architecture represents ancient Hindu haveli styles displaying intricate decorative sculptures depicting deities, columns, arches and scenes from Hindu scriptures.



## 10. CIAL to establish world's first green hydrogen plant in airport

- Cochin International Airport Limited (CIAL), Kerala has signed an agreement with Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) for establishing a green hydrogen production facility within CIAL's premises.
- The green hydrogen plant on the airport premises will make Cochin International Airport Limited (CIAL), the first airport operator in the world to have a hydrogen power generation facility on its premises.



- ✚ The agreement for the plant was exchanged in Thiruvananthapuram in the presence of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, who is also the ex-officio Chairman of CIAL.

### What is Green Hydrogen?

- ✚ Green hydrogen refers to hydrogen produced using renewable energy sources like solar or wind instead of fossil fuels, hence it has zero carbon emissions.
- ✚ It is produced through a process called electrolysis which separates hydrogen and oxygen from water. As a clean fuel, green hydrogen is important for a sustainable future across sectors including transportation.

## 11. ISRO's:- "Naughty Boy",

- ✚ ISRO's Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) was earlier known as "naughty boy", but now, after successfully placing INSAT-3DS into intended orbit, it has earned the sobriquet "smarty boy".



### Why GSLV was known as “naughty boy”

- ✚ The Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) has made 60 launches as of January 1, 2024, of which 57 have been successful and reached their planned orbits.
- ✚ This means that PSLV has a success rate of 95 per cent, and a failure rate of five per cent.
- ✚ Since GSLV did not have as good a track record as PSLV in terms of successful launches, a former ISRO chairman coined the sobriquet "naughty boy" to GSLV.
- ✚ Now that GSLV can boast of 10 successful flights, it has earned new monikers such as “mature boy”, “obedient boy”, “smarty boy”, and “natty boy”.
- ✚ ISRO Chairman S Somanath said that GSLV did not have a good nickname in the past, but recently, it has performed well, and placed satellites into intended orbits.

## 12. PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana

India's pursuit of sustainable development and energy independence has led to the inception of the PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana, a rooftop solar scheme aimed at lighting up one crore households across the nation.



- Launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, this initiative marks a significant step towards harnessing renewable energy sources and reducing the carbon footprint.
- PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana, formerly known as the rooftop solar scheme, represents a transformative effort to solarize one crore households in India.
- By installing solar panels on rooftops, the scheme aims to provide free electricity up to 300 units per month to eligible households, thereby reducing their reliance on conventional energy sources and cutting down electricity bills.
- This initiative not only promotes environmental sustainability but also empowers households economically by alleviating the burden of energy expenses.

## 13. Noida is honored with the title of water warrior city

Noida, a city in the National Capital Region, has garnered recognition for its efforts in water conservation and management.



- The Department of Water Resources, River Development, and Ganga Rejuvenation, under the Union Water Ministry, has honored Noida with the title of "Water Warrior" city.
- This recognition comes as a testament to the city's measures in waste water treatment and reuse for various purposes, particularly irrigation.



- In a ceremony held in Delhi, Noida was applauded for its achievements in two categories at the World Water Award 2023-24.
- The city clinched the title of the best sewage treatment plant (STP) and also received accolades for its water reuse project of the year.

## 14. The Kannada Language Comprehensive Development (Amendment) Bill, 2024

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- The Amendment Bill proposes to make Kannada a mandatory language for instruction as well as examination in both undergraduate and postgraduate education.
- In addition to jobs in the state government, the 2024 Bill also includes requirements to know Kannada in order to gain employment in state PSUs, banks, private companies and multinationals operating within Karnataka.



## 15. Ex Finnish Prime Minister Alexander Stubb Becomes Finland's 13th President

- Former Prime Minister of Finland Alexander Stubb became the 13th President of Finland.
- Stubb received 51.7% of the vote while his Green Party rival, former Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto, received 48.4%.

- ✚ On 1 March 2024 Mr Stubb will officially assume office, replacing Sauli Niinisto.
- ✚ On 11 February, after a seven-year hiatus, Former Prime Minister, triathlete, and Europhile Alexander Stubb made a triumphant return to politics, winning the Finnish presidency in the election.



- ✚ In the counting, 98% of the votes were counted.
- ✚ This is the first election after Finland joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) military alliance.
- ✚ In April 2023, Finland officially became the 31st member of the Washington-led alliance.

## 16. Japan's economy is now the world's fourth-largest

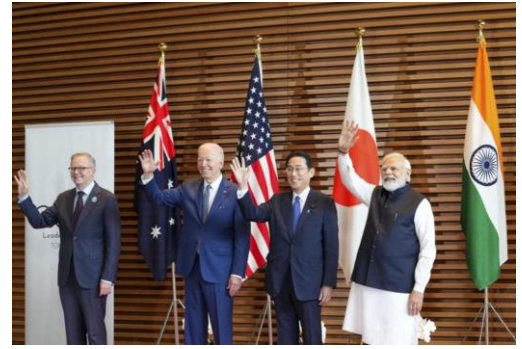
- ✚ Japan's economy is now the world's fourth-largest after it contracted in the last quarter of 2023 and fell behind Germany.



- ✚ The government reported the economy shrank at an annual rate of 0.4% in October to December, according to Cabinet Office data on real GDP released Thursday, though it grew 1.9% for all of 2023. It contracted 2.9% in July-September. Two straight quarters of contraction are considered an indicator an economy is in a technical recession.
- ✚ Japan's economy was the second largest until 2010, when it was overtaken by China's. Japan's nominal GDP totaled \$4.2 trillion last year, while Germany's was \$4.4 trillion, or \$4.5 trillion, depending on the currency conversion.
- ✚ A weaker Japanese yen was a key factor in the drop to fourth place, since comparisons of nominal GDP are in dollar terms. But Japan's relative weakness also reflects a decline in its population and lagging productivity and competitiveness, economists say.

## 17. Quad bill: to create a Quad Intra-Parliamentary Working Group.

- ✚ The United States House of Representatives has indeed passed the Quad bill, directing the Biden administration to create a Quad Intra-Parliamentary Working Group. This group aims to strengthen cooperation among the US, Australia, India, and Japan<sup>123</sup>.
- ✚ The bill emphasizes the importance of joint cooperation between these four nations. Specifically, it instructs the State Department to:-
- ✚ Submit a strategy to Congress within 180 days of the bill's enactment, outlining ways to increase engagement and cooperation with the Quad.
- ✚ Enter into negotiations with Japan, Australia, and India to establish the Quad Intra-Parliamentary Working Group within 60 days of the bill's enactment.
- ✚ Establish a US group (comprising a maximum of 24 members of Congress) to represent the US in this working group.
- ✚ Define guidelines for annual meetings and group leadership.
- ✚ The Quad's focus areas include:- Preparing for the next pandemic; Co-developing new innovative technologies and Deepening economic engagement and integration.



## 18. SELF STUDY POINTERS

1. Haryana Govt. launched VAN MITRA scheme to encourage participation in tree plantation.
2. Virendra Bansal Assumes Role as Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer of SBI Capital Markets
3. SIDBI Introduces 'Prabhaav' - An Impact Study of the Fund of Funds for Startups.
4. Assam Designates 'Kaji Nemu' Lemon as Official 'State Fruit' to Promote Local Agriculture.
5. Malaysia's Shah Alam will host the Badminton Asia Team Championships in 2024.



6. The president of the International Chess Federation (FIDE) and the minister of sports passed the torch for the 45th Chess Olympiad.
7. Shri Pashupati Kumar Paras launches 'SUFALAM', a ground-breaking launch for food processing entrepreneurs.
8. RIL tops the list of most valuable Indian companies.

## 19. WEEK THROUGH MCQs

1. Which ministry initiated the "SUFALAM: Start-Up Forum for Aspiring Leaders and Mentors Startup Conclave 2024"?
  - a) Ministry of Home Affairs
  - b) Ministry of Finance
  - c) Ministry of MSME
  - d) Ministry of Food Processing
2. When is National Women's Day celebrated every year?
  - a) 11 February
  - b) 12 February
  - c) 13 February
  - d) 14 February
3. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman submitted a White Paper to Parliament. Which prime minister's tenure was mentioned in the paper?
  - a) Charan Singh
  - b) Manmohan Singh
  - c) Atal Bihari Vajpayee
  - d) Inder Kumar Gujral
4. Which edition of the Strandja Memorial Tournament in Bulgaria where boxers Amit Panghal and Sachin Siwach win gold medals?
  - a) 73
  - b) 75
  - c) 77
  - d) 78
5. Where was the statue of India's first Chief of Defense Staff, late General Bipin Rawat, unveiled?
  - a) New Delhi
  - b) Varanasi
  - c) Haridwar
  - d) Dehradun
6. Recently 'Kazi Nemu' has been recognized as the state fruit of which state?
  - a) Assam
  - b) Nagaland
  - c) Arunachal Pradesh
  - d) Meghalaya

7. With whom has the Uttar Pradesh government decided to enter into an agreement for better disaster management?  
a) IIT Roorkee      b) IIT Delhi      c) IIT Mumbai      d) IIT Varanasi
8. Archaeologists recently discovered an eighth-century 'Kotravai sculpture' in which state?  
a) Gujarat      b) Andhra Pradesh      c) Tamil Nadu      d) Kerala
9. 'Dakshin Bharat Sanskritik Kendra', recently seen in the news, was established in which city of India?  
a) Hyderabad      b) Chennai      c) Bengaluru      d) Kochi
10. Recently, the UPI payment system has been launched in two countries?  
a) Sri Lanka and Mauritius      b) Australia and Egypt  
c) Chile and Peru      d) Iran and Israel

### Answer Key

1. (d)	2. (c)	3. (b)	4. (b)	5. (d)	6. (a)	7. (a)	8. (c)	9. (a)	10. (a)
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