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National and International News

<p>Pravasi Bharatiya Divas</p>	<p>Why in news?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) will take place from January 8 to 10, 2025, in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. <p>Key Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is the flagship event of the Ministry of External Affairs. It is held in different cities, to showcase the diversity and progress of different regions of India. The theme for this year is the “Diaspora's contribution to a Viksit Bharat” (Developed India). Since 2015, it has evolved into a biennale event, with theme-based conferences held in the intervening years. History: This bi-annual celebration, held on January 9th, commemorates the day in 1915 when Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest Pravasi, returned to India from South Africa to lead the country's freedom struggle. The primary goals of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To commemorate the contributions of the Indian diaspora to India's development To create a better understanding of India abroad To support India's causes and work for the welfare of local Indian communities worldwide To provide a platform for overseas Indians to engage with the government and people of their ancestral land.
<p>Places in news: Z-Morh tunnel</p> 	<p>Why in news?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Prime Minister is set to inaugurate the Z-Morh tunnel, a crucial component of the year-round Kashmir-Ladakh corridor. <p>Key Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Z-Morh tunnel is a 6.4-kilometer tunnel connecting the Sonamarg health resort with Kangan town in central Kashmir's Ganderbal district. It is located near Gagangir village, just ahead of Sonamarg, and will ensure all-weather connectivity to the popular tourist destination on the Srinagar-Leh highway. The tunnel gets its name from the Z-shaped road stretch at the construction site. The stretch where the tunnel is under construction is situated at an altitude of over 8,500 feet, and is prone to snow avalanches in the winter. The road to Sonamarg as such remains closed for most



	<p>part of the winter.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic importance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Zojila tunnel, linking Sonamarg to Drass in Ladakh, is under construction and is expected to be completed by December 2026. ○ The Z-Morh tunnel will provide all-weather access to Sonamarg, a health resort, and is essential for ensuring rapid military access to Ladakh. ○ The Z-Morh tunnel will enable all-weather road connectivity between Srinagar, Drass, Kargil, and Leh, reducing reliance on air support for forward military positions. ○ This connectivity will enhance troop and supply transport, lower costs, and extend the operational life of aircraft used by the Indian Air Force. ○ The project is critical for the Indian defense forces stationed in Siachen and Eastern Ladakh, areas where tensions with Pakistan and China continue.
<p>Genome India Project</p> 	<p>Why in news?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India has completed and compiled a year-long study of 10,000 human genomes from 83 population groups, representing approximately 2% of the country's 4,600 population groups. • This exercise is being conducted to create a database under the Centre-backed Genome India Project. • This database will serve as a foundation for future research into diseases and drug therapies <p>Key Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About Genome India Project: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It is a Centre-backed, Department of Biotechnology's (DBT) initiative to sequence 10,000 Indian human genomes in three years and create a database. ○ The project has sequenced close to 7,000 genomes and 3,000 of these are already available for public access by researchers. ○ For conducting the project, investigators in hospitals will lead the data collection through a simple blood test from participants and the information will be added to biobanks. ○ Some of the priority areas are Precision health, Rare genetic disorders, Mutation spectrum of genetic and complex diseases in the Indian population, Genetic Epidemiology of Multifactorial Lifestyle Diseases, and Translational Research. ○ Countries like the UK, China, and the US also have projects to sequence a significant number of



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	<p>genomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Significance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To gain deeper insight into India's population diversity. ○ Improve diagnostic methods and medical counselling. ○ Find genetic predispositions to disease. ○ Develop personalised and customisable drugs. ○ Improve gene therapy. ○ Throw more light on individual susceptibility to infectious disease. ● What is the Human genome? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The human genome is the entire set of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA)residing in the nucleus of every cell of each human body. ○ The DNA consists of a double-stranded molecule built up by four bases – adenine (A), cytosine (C), guanine (G) and thymine (T). ○ Every base on one strand pairs with a complementary base on the other strand (A with T and C with G). ○ In all, the genome is made up of approximately 3.05 billion such base pairs. ● What is Genome sequencing? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ While the sequence or order of base pairs is identical in all humans, there are differences in the genome of every human being that makes them unique. ○ The process of deciphering the order of base pairs, to decode the genetic fingerprint of a human is called genome sequencing. ○ There are several methods of genome sequencing, but the most common is called next-generation sequencing (NGS).
<p>India-US Relations</p>	<p>Why in news?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● India and the US stand united in the fight against terrorism, with their relationship extending beyond this to prevent threats at an early stage through the 'de-radicalization' of vulnerable communities. <p>Key Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The relationship between India and the United States has evolved into one of the most significant partnerships in the 21st century. ● It spans economic, strategic, and cultural dimensions, reflecting the shared values and mutual interests of the world's largest democracies ● The two nations are motivated by common interests: India aims to become the world's third-largest economy,



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	<p>while the US seeks reliable allies to counterbalance China's growing influence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Defense Ties: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In 2018, India was elevated to Strategic Trade Authorization tier 1 status, which allowed India to receive license-free access to a wide range of military and dual-use technologies regulated by the US's department of commerce. ○ The signing of foundational agreements like LEMOA (2016), COMCASA (2018), and BECA (2020) has enabled deeper military cooperation. ○ Joint exercises like Malabar and the establishment of the 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue in 2018 have further strengthened strategic ties. ● Recent initiatives like the US-India Artificial Intelligence Initiative and the Critical and Emerging Technology Initiative (iCET) launched in 2022 underscore the strategic importance of tech cooperation in bilateral ties.
<p>Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN)</p>	<p>Why in news?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Centre has made it mandatory for new applicants to acquire a farmer ID in order to enroll in the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-Kisan) and receive benefits under the scheme. <p>Key Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-Kisan) Yojana came into effect from December 1, 2018. ● Under the scheme, income support of Rs 6000 per annum is provided to all eligible farmer families across the country in three equal installments of Rs 2,000 each every four months. ● The fund of Rs 2,000 is directly transferred to the bank accounts of the eligible farmers/farmer's family under the Direct Benefit Transfer Mode. ● Nodal Ministry - Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare ● Objective: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To supplement the financial needs of all landholding farmers' families in procuring various inputs to ensure proper crop health and appropriate yields, commensurate with the anticipated farm income as well as for domestic needs. ● Eligibility: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Landholding farmers' families with cultivable land holding in their names, ○ Farmers from both the urban and rural areas, ○ Small and Marginal farmers families. ● It is a Central Sector Scheme with 100% funding from



India - Mongolia relations



the Central Government.

Why in news?

- India is set to sign a mining agreement with Mongolia soon, according to government sources.

Key Points:

- India and Mongolia have interacted through Buddhism throughout history. Some Indian & Mongolian historians have conjectured the migration of some tribes from the Kangra kingdom to Mongolian territory 10000 years ago.
- India established diplomatic relations with Mongolia in 1955. The Indian Resident Mission in Ulaanbaatar was opened in 1971.
- **Cultural Cooperation:**
 - Mongolia voted in favour of India's proposal to put Yoga's inscription into the list of UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage.
 - The India-Mongolian Agreement on Cultural Cooperation, signed in 1961, has governed the Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) between the two countries.
 - India also voted for registering Mongolian legacy on "Mongolian Traditional Custom to Worship Mountain and Ovoo" in the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage.
- **Defence Cooperation:**
 - The Joint India-Mongolia exercise '**Nomadic Elephant**' is held annually.
 - Indian Armed Forces Observers regularly participate in the Annual multilateral peacekeeping exercise '**Khan Quest**' in Mongolia.
- **Commercial and Economic Relations:**
 - In 1996, an Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation between India and Mongolia was signed.
 - The Agreement provides for Most-Favored-Nation (MFN) status to each other in respect of customs, duties and all other taxes on imports and exports.
 - In 2022, an India-built oil refinery at the cost of more than USD 1 billion and with a capacity of 1.5 million metric tonnes was opened near Sainshand in the southern Dornogovi province of Mongolia.
- **Key Facts Related to Mongolia:**
 - Mongolia is a landlocked country located in East and Central Asia.
 - **It is bordered by Russia to the north and China to the south, east and west.**
 - It is the **world's second-largest landlocked**



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- country and the most sparsely populated country in the world.
- **Capital:** Ulaanbaatar



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