

Daily Current Affairs

17 January 2025

Aaryan Varshney Becomes India's 92nd Chess Grandmaster

- Indian chess player Aaryan Varshney became India's 92nd Grandmaster after securing his final GM norm at the Andranik Margaryan Memorial Tournament in Armenia.
- Aaryan Varshney sealed his Grandmaster title by winning the Andranik Margaryan Memorial with a round to spare.
- The 21-year-old secured his third and final GM norm after holding a crucial draw against FM Tyhran Ambartsumian in the eighth round.
- Achieving the norm before the final round underlined his consistency and composure at the international level.
- The Grandmaster (GM) title is awarded by the International Chess Federation (FIDE).
- It requires players to achieve three GM norms and cross a minimum Elo rating benchmark, making it one of the toughest titles in competitive sports.



India and Germany Sign Joint Declaration

- India and Germany signed a Joint Declaration of Intent (JDI) on Telecommunications Cooperation during the official visit of German Federal Chancellor Friedrich Merz to India in January 2026.
- The Joint Declaration was signed by Amit Agrawal, Secretary (Telecom), on behalf of the Government of India, and Philipp Ackermann, on behalf of the Government of Germany.
- The agreement was concluded between India's Department of Telecommunications and Germany's Federal Ministry for Digital Transformation and Government Modernisation (BMDS).
- The Joint Declaration reflects the shared intent of both countries to deepen bilateral cooperation in telecommunications and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).
- It builds upon strong momentum in India–Germany relations and sustained high-level political engagements.
- The JDI aims to promote innovation-driven growth while supporting inclusive and sustainable digital transformation in both countries.



Praveen Vashista Appointed Vigilance Commissioner

- The President of India has appointed Shri Praveen Vashista as Vigilance Commissioner in the Central Vigilance Commission under the provisions of the Central Vigilance Commission Act, 2003.
- Shri Praveen Vashista was appointed through a Presidential warrant dated December 12, 2025, exercising powers under Section 4(1) of the CVC Act, 2003.
- He made and subscribed to his oath of office on January 16, 2026, before the Central Vigilance Commission.
- The oath was administered by the Central Vigilance Commissioner, who was authorised by the President under Section 5(3) of the Act.
- The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) is India's apex anti-corruption body, established in 1964 and given statutory status in 2003, to promote transparency and accountability in public administration and combat corruption in central government organizations, operating as an independent watchdog by monitoring vigilance activities and advising agencies, though it primarily has advisory powers and focuses on disciplinary matters rather than direct criminal prosecution.
- It's headed by a Central Vigilance Commissioner and two Vigilance Commissioners, appointed for a four-year term, and works to prevent corruption through its Secretariat, CTEO, and CDI wings.



Laura Wolvaardt Named ICC Women's Player

- South Africa captain Laura Wolvaardt has been named the International Cricket Council Women's Player of the Month for December 2025 for her record-breaking performances against Ireland.
- This is Wolvaardt's second ICC Player of the Month award in just three months, having previously won it in October 2025.
- The recognition reflects her remarkable consistency and leadership at the highest level of international cricket.
- By outperforming strong contenders such as Shafali Verma and teammate Sune Luus, Wolvaardt reinforced her place among the elite batters in women's cricket.



Mitchell Starc Wins ICC Men's Player of the Month

- Australian fast bowler Mitchell Starc has been awarded the ICC Men's Player of the Month for December 2025 following his exceptional all-round contributions in the Ashes series.
- Mitchell Starc was a dominant force throughout the Ashes, delivering match-winning spells with the ball.
- He began the series in emphatic fashion with a 10-wicket haul in the opening Test at Perth, immediately putting England under pressure.
- He followed this up with eight wickets in the second Test at Brisbane, underlining his consistency and ability to exploit home conditions.



GAIL's 694-km Expressway Gas Pipeline

- GAIL has completed the Mumbai-Nagpur Natural Gas Pipeline (MNPL), built largely within a 3-metre-wide corridor along the Samruddhi Mahamarg. The project is being seen as a major success of the PM GatiShakti integrated infrastructure framework.
- The Mumbai-Nagpur Natural Gas Pipeline stretches 694 km, of which about 675 km (96%) runs inside a utility strip just three metres wide along the Samruddhi Mahamarg expressway.
- Normally, gas pipelines require 20-30 metres of working space, but here GAIL installed a 24-inch high-capacity pipeline within the width of a footpath.
- This tight constraint fundamentally shaped engineering design, construction sequencing, and coordination with expressway works handled by MSRDC.
- The MNPL has a capacity of about 16.5 million standard cubic metres per day with bi-directional flow.
- It will enable city gas distribution in 16 districts, support piped natural gas for around 95 lakh households, and supply fuel to over 1,700 CNG stations.
- The pipeline will boost sectors such as power, fertilisers, chemicals, and manufacturing, while promoting cleaner fuel use and encouraging small and medium industries along the Samruddhi Mahamarg corridor.



REVIEW QUESTIONS

Q1. Aaryan Varshney became India's 92nd Chess Grandmaster after securing his final GM norm at which tournament?

- A. Tata Steel Chess Tournament
- B. Reykjavik Open
- C. Andranik Margaryan Memorial Tournament
- D. Abu Dhabi Masters

Answer: C

Q2. The Grandmaster (GM) title in chess is awarded by which organization?

- A. Asian Chess Federation
- B. International Olympic Committee
- C. World Chess Council
- D. International Chess Federation (FIDE)

Answer: D

Q3. India and Germany signed a Joint Declaration of Intent on cooperation in which sector?

- A. Renewable Energy
- B. Telecommunications and ICT
- C. Defence Manufacturing
- D. Space Technology

Answer: B

Q4. The Joint Declaration of Intent on Telecommunications Cooperation was signed during the visit of which German leader to India?

- A. Angela Merkel
- B. Olaf Scholz
- C. Frank-Walter Steinmeier
- D. Friedrich Merz

Answer: D

Q5. Shri Praveen Vashista was appointed as Vigilance Commissioner under which Act?

- A. Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988
- B. Right to Information Act, 2005
- C. Central Vigilance Commission Act, 2003
- D. Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013

Answer: C



SSBCrack
EXAMS

Q6. The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) primarily functions as:

- A. A criminal investigation agency
- B. A judicial body for corruption cases
- C. An advisory and supervisory vigilance body
- D. A prosecution authority

Answer: C

Q7. Who was named ICC Women's Player of the Month for December 2025?

- A. Shafali Verma
- B. Smriti Mandhana
- C. Sune Luus
- D. Laura Wolvaardt

Answer: D

Q8. Mitchell Starc received the ICC Men's Player of the Month award for his performance in which series?

- A. Border-Gavaskar Trophy
- B. Ashes Series
- C. ICC World Cup
- D. T20 World Cup

Answer: B

Q9. The Mumbai–Nagpur Natural Gas Pipeline project was executed under which government framework?

- A. National Infrastructure Pipeline
- B. Make in India
- C. PM GatiShakti
- D. Sagarmala Programme

Answer: C

Q10. The capacity of GAIL's Mumbai–Nagpur Natural Gas Pipeline is approximately:

- A. 5 million standard cubic metres per day
- B. 10 million standard cubic metres per day
- C. 12.5 million standard cubic metres per day
- D. 16.5 million standard cubic metres per day

Answer: D