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Current Affairs - 11 January 2025

NATIONAL YOUTH FESTIVAL (NYF)



This year, the annual National Youth Festival (NYF) on January 10-12 at Bharat Mandapam, will undergo a transformative reimagining as the Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue.

- Under the component 'Promotion of National Integration' of the National Programme for Youth and Adolescent Development (NPYAD), the NYF is organised from **12th to 16th January** to commemorate the **birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda (12 January)**, which is celebrated as **National Youth Day**.
 - Every year since 1985, the Government of India observes January 12 as National Youth Day and the week commencing from that day, as National Youth Week.

It is organised by the **Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports** in partnership with one of the **States/UTs** which hosts the NYF.

- The **expenditure is shared between the Centre and the host State**.

During the festival, various **cultural programmes** (both competitive and non-competitive), Youth convention, Suvichar, Exhibition, Adventure programmes, etc., are organized, and about 7500 youth delegates from different states/UTs take part in the festival.

- Thematic displays are also organized.

NYF 2025:

- The **Theme** of NYF 2025 is **Innovation in Science and Technology**.
 - NYF 2025 main event will be held at **Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi**.
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UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE AND INFLUENCE OF THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL OF INDIA

Powers and Responsibilities of the CAG:

- The CAG, as outlined in **Articles 148-151 of the Constitution** and the **CAG (Duties, Powers and Conditions of Service) Act, 1971**, is the supreme audit institution of India.
- Appointed by the President, the CAG's primary duties include:
 - Auditing the accounts of the Union and State governments, including public sector undertakings (PSUs).
 - Reviewing compliance with applicable laws, rules, and regulations through **compliance audits**.
 - Assessing the implementation and effectiveness of government schemes and projects via **performance audits**.
 - Certifying the financial accounts of governments and PSUs through **financial audits**.
- Additionally, the **Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, 2003**, mandates the CAG to review government compliance with fiscal targets.

Selection and Execution of Audits:

- The CAG follows a meticulous process to select audit subjects:
 - **Risk Assessment:** Factors like project size, media coverage, and inspection reports influence the selection.
 - **International Guidelines:** The CAG adheres to standards set by the **International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI)**.
 - **Audit Plan Approval:** The CAG's office drafts an annual plan, with input from an **Audit Advisory Board**, which meets biannually.

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- **Government or Judicial Recommendations:** Specific audits may be requested by courts or governments, such as the Supreme Court's directive for auditing the Delhi-Noida Direct (DND) Flyover project.
- The audit process begins with an **entry conference** with the concerned department to outline the scope and methodology. After the audit, an **exit conference** is held to share preliminary findings.
- Departments are given six weeks to respond to the draft report before it is finalized and submitted to the President or Governor.

Challenges in Tabling Reports:

- While **Article 151 of the Constitution** mandates that **CAG reports be laid before Parliament or state legislatures**, it does not specify a time limit.
- This loophole has led to delays, as seen in Delhi, where over a dozen CAG reports—including on issues like air pollution mitigation and liquor supply—remain untabled. Similar delays have been observed in states like West Bengal.
- A CAG report becomes public only when presented in the legislature. Following this, the **Public Accounts Committee (PAC)** examines the report, seeks government responses, and recommends corrective actions.
- Between 2019 and 2023, the PAC submitted 152 reports to the Lok Sabha, scrutinizing audit findings and government compliance.

Impact of CAG Audits:

- CAG reports play a pivotal role in highlighting financial losses and procedural inefficiencies, often prompting significant policy changes. For instance:
 - The **2010 audit on 2G spectrum allocation** exposed massive irregularities, leading to widespread political ramifications and regulatory reforms.
 - A CAG review led to changes in Telangana's **Engineering Procurement Contract (EPC)**
- In 2022-23, the CAG approved **172 audit reports**, a significant increase from **73 reports in 2018-19**, reflecting its growing scrutiny of governance and fiscal accountability.

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SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES 2025

Wildfires in Los Angeles, California, have killed 10 people, forced over 130,000 evacuations, and destroyed homes, including those of celebrities like Paris Hilton and Billy Crystal.

Major fires, such as the Palisades, Eaton, Sunset, Hurst, and Lidia fires, continue to burn, affecting areas like Hollywood Hills.

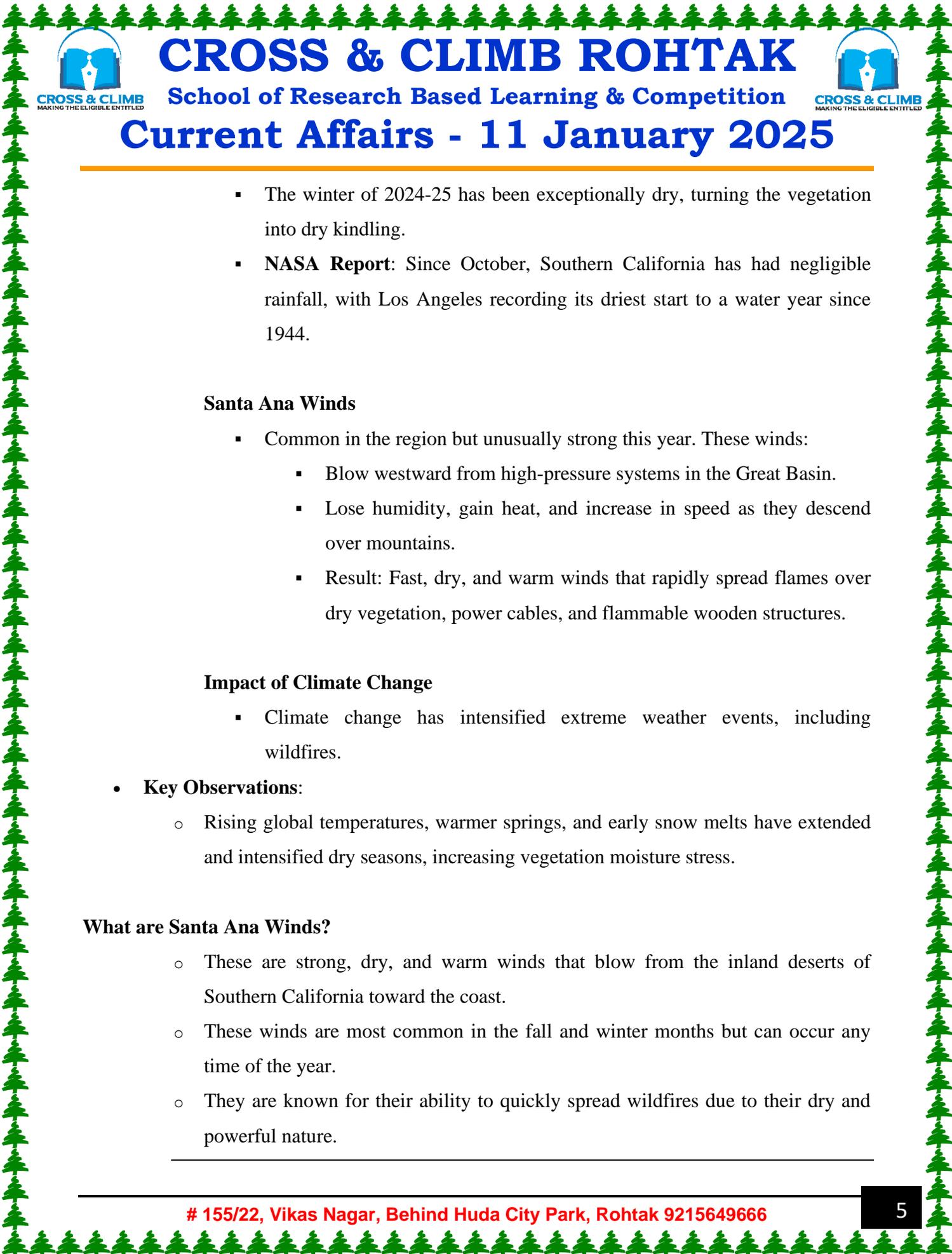
The Oscars nominations announcement has been delayed due to the fires. Although wildfires are common in California, the intensity and speed of these winter wildfires are unusual.

California Wildfires 2025

- **Origin and Timeline**
 - The first fire started on January 7 in the Pacific Palisades neighbourhood of Los Angeles.
 - It is the worst firestorm in recent memory, occurring unusually in January, traditionally the coldest winter month.
- **Unusual Timing and Drought Conditions**
 - Wildfires typically occur between June and October, but the current blaze defies this pattern.
 - Southern California has been facing drought conditions, with only 40.9% of the state drought-free as of December 31, 2024, compared to 96.65% the previous year.

Possible Cause of California Wildfires

- The exact trigger remains unknown, but power cables blowing in the wind are a likely cause.
- **Three Key Factors Behind the Conflagration**
 - **Wet Weather Followed by Extreme Dryness**
 - Unusually wet winters in 2022 and 2023 led to dense vegetation growth in the Los Angeles region.



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- The winter of 2024-25 has been exceptionally dry, turning the vegetation into dry kindling.
- **NASA Report:** Since October, Southern California has had negligible rainfall, with Los Angeles recording its driest start to a water year since 1944.

Santa Ana Winds

- Common in the region but unusually strong this year. These winds:
 - Blow westward from high-pressure systems in the Great Basin.
 - Lose humidity, gain heat, and increase in speed as they descend over mountains.
 - Result: Fast, dry, and warm winds that rapidly spread flames over dry vegetation, power cables, and flammable wooden structures.

Impact of Climate Change

- Climate change has intensified extreme weather events, including wildfires.
- **Key Observations:**
 - Rising global temperatures, warmer springs, and early snow melts have extended and intensified dry seasons, increasing vegetation moisture stress.

What are Santa Ana Winds?

- These are strong, dry, and warm winds that blow from the inland deserts of Southern California toward the coast.
 - These winds are most common in the fall and winter months but can occur any time of the year.
 - They are known for their ability to quickly spread wildfires due to their dry and powerful nature.
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WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION



WORLD
METEOROLOGICAL
ORGANIZATION

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has confirmed that **2024 is the warmest year on record, based on six international datasets.**

- It is a **specialized agency** of the **United Nations (UN)**, responsible for promoting international cooperation in the fields of **meteorology, hydrology, climatology and geophysics.**
- Established in 1950, it originated from the **International Meteorological Organization (IMO)**, which was founded in 1873.
- It is the UN system's authoritative voice on the state and behavior of the Earth's atmosphere, its interaction with the oceans, the climate it produces, and the resulting distribution of water resources.

Governance Structure:

- **World Meteorological Congress:** It is WMO's supreme body which consists of representatives of all members. It meets at **least every four years** to set general policy and adopt regulations.
- **Executive Council:** It consists of 36-members which meets annually and implements policy.
- **Secretariat:** It is headed by a **secretary-general** appointed by the congress for a four-year term, serves as the administrative centre of the organization.

Members: It has **193 Members**, including 187 Member States and 6 Territories, maintaining their own meteorological services.

- **Headquarter:** Geneva, Switzerland.



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PROJECT VEER GATHA



The fourth edition of Project 'Veer Gatha 4.0', as part of Republic Day celebrations has garnered an incredible nationwide response.

- It was **launched in 2021** as part of 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' to commemorate India's 75th year of Independence.
- The project **aims to raise awareness of Gallantry awardees' acts** of bravery and the life stories of these heroes.
- The initiative helps instill **patriotism and civic values in students**.
- The journey of Project Veer Gatha from Edition 1 to Edition 4 has been inspiring, expanding the reach of the competition across the length and breadth of the country.
- It is a joint initiative by the **Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Education**.

Project Veer Gatha 4.0:

- It presented a variety of thought-provoking topics for essay and paragraph writing.
- Students had the opportunity to write about their chosen role models, particularly focusing on Gallantry Award recipients.
- They were also encouraged to explore the inspiring lives of freedom fighters such as Rani Laxmibai, the 1857 First War of Independence, and the significant role of Tribal Uprisings in India's Freedom Struggle.

INDIAN CUSTOMS ELECTRONIC GATEWAY



The ministry of Commerce has said that the discrepancy in the gold counting error numbers was primarily due to migration of data transmission mechanism from SEZ to Indian Customs Electronic Gateway (ICEGATE).

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Indian Customs Electronic Gateway (ICEGATE) was established in 2007.

- It is the national portal of Indian Customs of Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) that provides e-filing services to the Trade, Cargo Carriers and other Trading Partners electronically.
 - It is the main infrastructure for connecting trade users with the Indian government's customs department, and acts as a hub for **exchanging information between external trading partners** involved in international trading.
 - It is internally linked with multiple partner agencies including RBI, Banks, DGFT, DGCIS, Ministry of Steel, Directorate of Valuation and other various Partner Government Agencies involved in EXIM.
 - It collectively **contributes to streamlining customs procedures**, enhancing trade facilitation, and promoting transparency and efficiency in cross - border trade activities in India by providing multiple features for its users.
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DESERT NATIONAL PARK (DNP)



At least 12 Great Indian Bustards (GIBs) were recently spotted in a group at Desert National Park (DNP) in Rajasthan, in a major boost to efforts to conserve one of India's most critically endangered species.

- It is located in the **Thar Desert** near the town of Jaisalmer in Rajasthan.
- It is **one of the largest national parks** in the country, covering an area of over 3160 sq. km.
- The area falls in the **extreme hot and arid region** of the very low rainfall zone (<100mm) of the country.

Topography:

- The Park forms a vast, **sandy, and undulating terrain**.



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- The **major landform** consists of **craggy rocks and compact Salt Lake bottoms**, inters medial areas, and **fixed dunes**.
- **Sand dunes** form around **20% of the park**.
- There are three main lakes in this sanctuary: **Rajbaugh Lake, Malik Talao Lake, and Padam Talao**.
- One of the most interesting features of the DNP is the **presence of fossils from the Jurassic Period**.

Vegetation:

- The vegetation of a major part of the arid region of the Thar falls under the **thorn forest type**.
- The vegetation is **quite sparse with open grassland, thorny bushes, plantations, and dunes** as the broad habitat types.
- It consists of **dhok, ronj, salai, and palm trees**.
- **Khejri** (*Prosopis cineraria*) is commonly found, which is revered and protected by the local communities, especially the '**Bishnois**'.

Fauna:

- The wildlife of the DNP includes **Chinkara, Desert fox, Bengal Fox, Indian Wolf, Desert Cat, Hare, etc.**
 - The **endangered Great Indian Bustard** is one magnificent bird found in relatively fair numbers.
 - **Reptiles** are also found in abundance, and they include the spiny –tailed lizard, **monitor lizard, saw scaled-viper, Russel viper, and Karit**.
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