

# 'Petroleum and Natural Gas Rules 2025 to bring paradigm shift in oil & gas sector'



NEW DELHI, Dec 21 (IANS)

UNION Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Sunday that the Petroleum and Natural Gas Rules 2025, which have been notified recently, will introduce a paradigm shift in India's quest to strengthen and boost domestic production of hydrocarbons, and provide momentum to efforts towards achieving India's energy security.

The Minister highlighted the case of the ONGC's commercial oil discovery at Ashok Nagar in West Bengal, which was made in 2018 but still has not been put into production because of the dispute between the state government and ONGC over the "value of the lease" on which stamp duty should be paid.

However, with the Oilfields (Regulation & Development) Amendment Act, 2025, which has now been passed into law, all ambiguity around what counts as the "value of the lease" has been clarified. The new rules also stipulate a time limit on approvals. Any application for a petroleum lease now has to be decided within 180 days. The new rules have now cleared the way for starting production from the ONGC's oilfield in Ashok Nagar, 50 km from Kolkata.

Instead of forcing companies to juggle multiple licences at different stages, a single petroleum lease now covers exploration, development, production, and even related activities like renewable energy projects, the Minister further said.

# 'INS Sindhughosh decommissioned after 40 years of service'



NEW DELHI, Dec 21 (PTI)

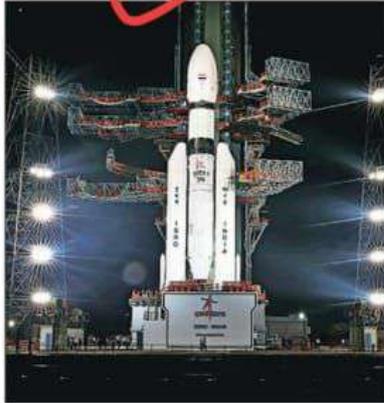
INDIAN Naval Ship (INS) Sindhughosh, the lead submarine of her class with the Indian Navy, has been decommissioned after 40 years of glorious service to the nation, the Western Naval Command said on Saturday.

The decommissioning ceremony was held at the Naval Dockyard, Mumbai, in the presence of WNC's Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief (FOCINC) Vice Admiral Krishna Swaminathan.

"INS Sindhughosh, the lead submarine of her class in service with the Indian Navy, was decommissioned at sunset on 19 Dec 25, after 40 years of glorious service to the nation, at Naval Dockyard, Mumbai, in the presence of VAdm Krishna Swaminathan, FOCINC WNC," WNC posted on X.

The submarine was paid off under the command of Lt Cdr Rajat Sharma. Capt KR Ajrekar (retd), the second Commanding Officer of the submarine, was the guest of honour, it said.

# ISRO to launch BlueBird Block-2 satellite on December 24



CHENNAI, Dec 21 (PTI)

ISRO's upcoming LVM3 M6 mission will carry the BlueBird Block-2 satellite into orbit on December 24, as part of a commercial deal with US-based AST SpaceMobile.

The historic mission will deploy the next-generation communication satellite designed to provide high-speed cellular broadband directly to smartphones worldwide.

AST SpaceMobile (AST & Science, LLC) is building the first and only space-based cellular broadband network, which is accessible directly by smartphones and designed for both commercial and Government applications.

"We are on a mission to eliminate the connectivity gaps faced by today's nearly six billion mobile subscribers and bring broadband to the billions who remain unconnected," the company said in its website.

AST SpaceMobile has launched five satellites -- BlueBird 1-5 in September 2024, which enable continuous internet coverage across the US and other select countries.

The US-based company has planned to launch similar satellites to augment its network support and has partnered with over 50 mobile operators across the globe.

For the upcoming mission, AST SpaceMobile has planned to launch its next-generation communication satellite, Bluebird Block-2, which has been designed to deliver 24/7 high-speed cellular broadband direct to smartphones worldwide.

# US seizes 2nd oil tanker off coast of Venezuela

WASHINGTON, Dec 21 (IANS)

US SECRETARY of Homeland Security Kristi Noem said on Saturday that the US forces seized another oil tanker off the coast of Venezuela earlier in the day.

“In a pre-dawn action early this morning on December 20, the US Coast Guard with the support of the Department of War apprehended an oil tanker that was last docked in Venezuela,” Noem said on X.

The US military seized an oil tanker off the coast of Venezuela on December 10, a move the Venezuelan Government condemned as “a blatant theft and an act of international piracy,” Xinhua news agency reported.

US President Donald Trump said on Tuesday that he has ordered a total blockade of all US-

sanctioned oil tankers travelling to and from Venezuela. He also said in a later interview that the United States will continue seizing additional oil tankers.

Venezuela is completely surrounded by the largest Armada ever assembled in the History of South America,” Trump wrote in a lengthy post on his social media platform. “It will only get bigger, and the shock to them will be like nothing they have ever seen before -- Until such time as they return to the United States of America all of the Oil, Land, and other Assets that they previously stole from us.” In the post, Trump announced “A TOTAL AND COMPLETE BLOCKADE OF ALL SANCTIONED OIL TANKERS going into, and out of, Venezuela” and demanded the return of oil and assets.

# India's Ditwah assistance extended to Sri Lanka's northern region

COLOMBO, Dec 21 (PTI)

INDIA has extended its humanitarian and infrastructure assistance from the island's north to the northern Jaffna peninsula following the devastation caused by Cyclone Ditwah.

Under Operation Sagar Bandhu, India has deployed engineering and medical teams to restore damaged connectivity and support affected communities. "As part of India's continued assistance to Sri Lanka under 'Operation Sagar Bandhu', the Indian High Commission in Colombo, Assistant High Commission in Kandy and Consulate General of India in Jaffna conducted humanitarian assistance distribution drives for families affected by Cyclone Ditwah in different parts of the Island."

"On December 18, High Commissioner of India Santosh Jha distributed relief kits among affected families in the Kolonnawa in coordination with 'All Ceylon Sufi Spiritual Association' and among children of Bhaktivedanta Children's Home 'Gokulam' at ISKCON Temple in Colombo."

"Earlier this month, the High Commissioner also distributed assistance among residents of Nayanalokagama, a village specially designated for the visually impaired, and among affected families in Negombo in Gampaha District," a release said.

# **G RAM G Bill** gets President's nod

NEW DELHI, Dec 21 (PTI)

**PRESIDENT** Droupadi Murmu on Sunday gave her assent to the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Bill, which replaces the MGNREGA and has a provision for 125 days of wage employment for rural workers.

With the presidential assent, it now becomes the VB-G RAM G Act, 2025, and a notification in this regard was published in the Gazette of India. The Rural Development Ministry, in a statement, called it a decisive reform in India's rural employment and development framework.

The VB-G RAM G scheme, which has replaced Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005, aims to establish a rural development framework aligned with the national vision of 'Viksit Bharat 2047'.