

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – FEB 21, 2020

TAMIL NADU

- **The Tamil Nadu assembly - passed the Tamil Nadu Protected Agricultural Zone Development Bill, 2020 on February 20**
- ✓ The bill proposes the ban of eight categories of hazardous industries in Thanjavur, Tiruvarur, Nagapattinam districts and in five blocks each of Cuddalore and Pudukottai districts.
- ✓ The new bill calls for a complete ban on exploration, drilling and extraction of oil and natural gas, coal-bed methane, shale gas and other hydrocarbons.
- ✓ However, it exempts the ongoing exploratory projects in the region.
- ✓ The draft bill was approved by the State Governor Banwarilal Purohit, after the approval of state Cabinet on February 19.
- ✓ As per the Chief Minister, hydrocarbon projects would adversely affect subsurface water as they were detrimental to the fragile sensitive wetland, mangrove vegetation apart from causing risk of sea water intrusion.

AWAITS GUV NOD

Bill covers the whole of Thanjavur, Tiruvarur, and Nagapattinam districts and several blocks in Cuddalore and Pudukottai

PROJECTS BANNED

- Zinc smelter
- Iron ore process plant, integrated steel plant and sponge iron plant
- Copper and aluminium smelter
- Bone meal, processing of animal horn, hoofs and other body parts
- Tannery
- Exploration, drilling and extraction of oil and natural gas including coal-bed methane, shale gas and other similar hydrocarbons
- Ship breaking industry



Bill proposes a 30-member Tamil Nadu Protected Agricultural Zone Authority with chief minister as chairperson. Deputy CM, ministers for finance, law, agriculture, environment, rural development and local administration, industries, rural industries, animal husbandry, fisheries are members.

Chief secretary and secretaries of the departments, VC of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University are ex-officio members.

A district-level panel led by collector will assist the authority

- ✓ The bill intends to set up a 30-member high-powered authority, led by the Chief Minister, to discuss and provide the suggestions on various steps to protect and improve farm production.
 - ✓ To assist the authority, the Government will also constitute a district-level committee, led by collector.
 - ✓ In the 'Statement of objects and reasons' of the bill, the government mentioned about the carrying out of certain non-farming activities, which were adversely affecting agriculture in the region and threatening the state food security.
 - ✓ The bill prohibits the setting up of industries like zinc smelter, iron ore process plant, integrated steel plant and sponge iron plant, copper and aluminium smelter, units dealing in exploration, drilling and extraction of oil and natural gas, coal-bed methane, shale gas and other hydrocarbons, tannery and ship breaking industry in the region.
 - ✓ It proposes to punish violators with imprisonment for a period ranging from six months to five years, apart from levying a fine ranging between Rs 10 lakh to Rs 50 lakh.
 - ✓ Also, basic infrastructural developments in the zone such as harbours, pipelines, roads, telecommunications, power, water supply and other utilities would not be affected
 - ✓ The Cauvery delta is considered to be the rice bowl of Tamil Nadu and produces a large part of the foodgrain and other agricultural produce of the State
 - ✓ The Government is planning to develop the zone through integrated farming and promote technologies to increase production of crops and optimum use of water.
 - ✓ Agro-based and allied industries, research and development, including skill-building in the field of agriculture and allied sectors, would be promoted.
- **State health minister C Vijaya Baskar – announced in the assembly that callers to 108 will soon be able to track the movement of ambulances on their phones, similar to cab and food delivery services.**
- ✓ However, the callers will have to call from the Avasaram 108 app to make use of this facility
 - ✓ While this app is likely to reassure the callers about the tracking of the ambulance, it will also prevent or reduce the amount of prank calls the service has been receiving
 - ✓ According to the performance data of the emergency service, only two of every five calls the call centre in Teynampet receives are for medical emergency.
 - ✓ Of these calls, nearly one in five is a repeat call to check about the status of the ambulance help, like whether it is on the way or how long it will take to arrive the destination.
 - ✓ Until now, Avasaram 108 app was useful only to detect the location of the caller.
 - ✓ The app was launched in 2017
 - ✓ However, the call centre receives less than 5% of the total calls from the app.

- ✓ Most people did not download the app as they had very little information through it.
- ✓ As per the health minister, the average response time for an ambulance is 8.2 minutes within Chennai and around 10 minutes in other urban areas.
- **P Maruthamuthu, former vice-chancellor of Madurai Kamaraj University - was elected senate nominee to the Madras University's vice-chancellor search panel.**
 - ✓ With his nomination, now the search panel has two former VCs.
 - ✓ The governor-chancellor has to appoint his nominee to complete the search panel for selecting the new vice-chancellor.
 - ✓ Last week, the Madras University syndicate had nominated P Ramasamy, former vice chancellor of Alagappa University, to the search panel.
 - ✓ A special senate meeting was convened to elect a nominee to the search panel on February 20
 - ✓ During the meeting, the two associations in Madras University — professors forum of Madras University and Madras University teachers association (MUTA) — nominated Maruthamuthu and M Anandakrishnan, former vice-chancellor of Anna University, to the search panel.
 - ✓ Following the two proposals, the senate conducted voting to choose its nominee.
 - ✓ Out of the 87 votes polled, Maruthamuthu got 65 votes and Anandakrishnan got 21, with one vote considered not valid.
 - ✓ The three-year tenure of vice-chancellor P Duraisamy is coming to an end in May.
- **The preliminary work on development of the Chennai Metropolitan Area Intelligent Transport System - commenced on February 20**
 - ✓ The ₹660-crore project has received loan assistance from Japan International Cooperation Agency

A smoother drive

The city is set to get an intelligent traffic management system soon. Its key features:

- The estimated cost of the system is ₹660 crore
- The project has received loan assistance from Japan International Cooperation Agency
- The project is meant to streamline the traffic system to meet increasing demands in the Chennai Metropolitan Area
- The major components proposed include the Chennai Traffic Information System, Traffic Management System and City Bus System
- The Traffic Management System includes Area Traffic Signal Control System (ATCS) and junction improvement for 159 Junctions in the first phase of the project
- Variable Message Sign (VMS) System includes CCTV-based traffic monitoring at 17 junctions to provide information on traffic congestion
- Chennai Traffic Information System includes setting up of the Chennai Traffic Information Centre, an internet system in buses and a flood measurement and warning system
- The City Bus System will develop an MTC Command and Control Centre, a depot management system, a bus tracking system and a passenger information system

Envisaged benefits

- Better coordination between traffic control and the Command and Control Centre will enable swift response for movement of emergency services such as ambulances and fire engines
- Will facilitate decongestion of key junctions based on sensory monitoring of traffic volume
- Policing of traffic junctions with evidence
- Improved safety for non-motorised traffic such as pedestrians and cyclists
- Better ontime performance of public transport
- Cutting down inefficiencies from overcrowding
- Facilitating digital payment modes
- Greater accountability of drivers
- Road safety standards can be monitored

- ✓ The Area Traffic Signal Control System (ATCS) and junction improvement will be implemented at 159 crossings in the first phase of the project
- ✓ As per the system, all signals along a particular corridor will be operated from the control centre.
- ✓ Currently, the signals are manually operated, causing traffic congestion.
- ✓ In addition to the 159 road junctions, 192 more junctions will be covered in the second phase
- ✓ The major components proposed in the Intelligent Transport System include Chennai Traffic Information System, Traffic Management System and City Bus System.
- ✓ Another aspect of the project is the Variable Message Sign (VMS) system
- ✓ The city will also get a CCTV-based traffic monitoring system for instantaneous update of the traffic to assist the motorists.

NATIONAL

- **Proposing a major change, the government - may rule that 'salary' be considered a part of 'gross income' to decide the category of 'creamy layer' for OBCs**
- ✓ Currently, a backward class person is eligible to avail Mandal reservations in public employment and education, in case they fall out of the purview of 'creamy layer'.
- ✓ As per the ministry of social justice and empowerment, inclusion of 'salary' in calculating the creamy layer for OBCs was decided as per the recommendations of an expert committee
- ✓ A proposal to this effect is likely to be moved soon for the consideration of the government.
- ✓ If approved by the Government, the move will significantly reduce the number of individuals qualifying for the 27% quota benefits, as more are likely to be excluded from 'creamy layer' — the cut-off that defines an OBC individual as 'self-sufficient' and 'rich'
- ✓ As per the guiding 1993 Office Memorandum on creamy layer, 'salary' and 'agricultural income' are not included in 'gross income' which only comprises 'income from other sources'.
- ✓ Later, confusion started after the Centre, over the last six years, began including salary in case of OBCs from PSU backgrounds while excluding it for those working in state and Union governments
- ✓ The Madras and Delhi high courts called the practice "discriminatory" and asked the Centre to reverse the situation in favour of OBCs from PSU backgrounds.
- ✓ Then, an expert committee was created in March 2019 to resolve the situation
- ✓ As per the suggestions of the panel, the Income Tax Act will be made the benchmark to calculate the creamy layer cut-off for all OBCs across the board.
- ✓ The I-T Act includes 'salary' and 'other sources' but leaves out 'agri income'.

- ✓ The income ceiling could be increased from the present Rs 8 lakh per annum to above Rs 11 lakh.
- **LNG logistics company Atlantic Gulf & Pacific (AG&P) - to hire a floating LNG terminal from Abu Dhabi's ADNOC Logistics and Services for setting up India's first floating LNG import facility at Karaikal Port in Puducherry.**
 - ✓ The two firms signed an agreement for the conversion, supply, operations, and maintenance of a floating storage unit (FSU) at AG&P's new LNG import facility located within Karaikal Port
 - ✓ The construction on the terminal will begin in first quarter of 2020 and the commercial operations are expected to commence before the end of 2021
 - ✓ The Karaikal FSU will be only the 4th FSU-based LNG import terminal in the world, after those in Malta, Malaysia, and Bahrain
 - ✓ ADNOC L&S will provide a Japan-built Moss-type containment vessel as FSU for the project from its fleet of 8 LNG ships
 - ✓ The facility will be owned and operated by AG&P
 - ✓ It will have an initial capacity of 1 million tonnes per annum (MTPA), which will be expanded to 3 MTPA later based on the demand.
 - ✓ The terminal will serve domestic, industrial and commercial customers within a radius of 500 km
 - ✓ It will cater to the heavily industrialized region of central Tamil Nadu, which has major manufacturing clusters for the fertilizer, cement, steel, textile, leather, sugar and garment industries.
- **India - has issued about 70 licences to import about 5 lakh tonnes of refined palm oil from three countries — Nepal, Indonesia and Bangladesh.**
 - ✓ The licences will be valid for a period of 18 months only.
 - ✓ India imported about 23 lakh tonnes of refined palm oil or about 2.5 lakh tonnes every month, during the period between April to December in the current fiscal.
 - ✓ India is the world's largest importer of vegetable oils and imports nearly 15 million tonnes annually.
 - ✓ Out of this total imports, palm oil comprises 9 million tonnes, while the remaining 6 million tonnes comprises of soybean and sunflower oil.
 - ✓ Indonesia and Malaysia are the two countries which supply palm oil to India.
 - ✓ Malaysia produces 19 million tonnes of palm oil in a year, while Indonesia produces 43 million tonnes per year.
 - ✓ On January 8, the government had imposed restrictions on imports of refined palm oil.
 - ✓ The restrictions were announced on the backdrop of remarks by Malaysian Premier on the new citizenship law, CAA and Kashmir issue

➤ **The world's second-biggest 'Operation Control Centre' for goods trains - is likely to be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the end of this month**

- ✓ The centre will be coming up at Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh
- ✓ It will act as the 'nerve-centre' of the over 1,800 km-long eastern dedicated freight corridor
- ✓ It is built by the Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India (DFCCIL) and is ready to begin operations
- ✓ The control centre has a centralized 'theater' which measures 1560 sq m with a video wall of more than 90 m
- ✓ The theater will be used as a one-stop Centre for controlling and monitoring rail systems, including train operations and the power supply system.
- ✓ The Dedicated Freight Corridor, considered as one of the biggest infrastructure projects in the country, is a 3,360 km stretch consisting of the Eastern and Western corridors.
- ✓ The Eastern corridor will run from Ludhiana in Punjab to Dankuni near Kolkata, spanning across Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand.
- ✓ For the Eastern corridor, the World Bank has provided a loan of about \$1.86 billion.
- ✓ It is targeted to be completed by December 2021
- ✓ The Western corridor will have a similar operation control system at Ahmedabad.
- ✓ Once operational, the freight corridor will help decongest the existing Indian Railway network
- ✓ It will also help in increasing the average speed of goods trains to 70 kmph, from the existing 25 kmph.

➤ **The Union Cabinet - gave its approval to set up the 22nd Law Commission on February 19.**

- ✓ The Law Commission advises the government on complex legal issues.
- ✓ The term of the 21st law Commission ended on August 31, 2018.
- ✓ The Law Ministry will now notify the new panel
- ✓ The Commission will have a three-year term
- ✓ Apart from a full-time chairperson, the commission will have four full-time members, including a member-secretary.
- ✓ The Law and Legislative Secretaries in the Law Ministry will be ex-officio members of the commission.
- ✓ It will also have part-time members, with not more than five members at any time.
- ✓ A retired Supreme Court judge or Chief Justice of a High Court will head the commission.
- ✓ The Law Commission is a non-statutory body.
- ✓ Originally formed in 1955, it has submitted 277 reports to the government till now.

- ✓ The previous Law Commission has functioned under retired Justice B.S. Chauhan
 - ✓ It had submitted reports and working papers on key issues such as simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and the Assemblies and a uniform civil code.
 - ✓ In 2015, a proposal was mooted to make the law panel into a permanent body either through an Act of Parliament or an executive order (resolution of the Union Cabinet), but it was abandoned later
 - ✓ In 2010, the then UPA government had prepared a draft Cabinet note to give statutory status to the commission, but the idea did not take off.
 - ✓ The Law Commission will undertake a review of the existing laws of India.
 - ✓ It will provide its recommendations to formulate new laws to make reforms.
 - ✓ The law commission will also submit its recommendations for reforms in the justice delivery system in India, speedy disposal of cases and reduction in the cost of litigations among others.
- **The Railways - will begin the commercial run of its Ramayana-themed special tourist train, Shri Ramayana Express, from March 28.**
 - ✓ It will be run by Indian Railways Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC)
 - ✓ This train will cover all pilgrimage sites associated with Lord Rama
 - ✓ The passengers of Ramayana Express will visit places associated with Lord Rama and Ramayana and hence it is also known as the 'Ramayana Circuit of India.'
 - ✓ The train will commence its journey from Delhi on March 28 and tourists may board it from Delhi's Safdarjung Railway station, Ghaziabad, Moradabad, Bareilly and Lucknow.
 - ✓ It will take 16 nights and 17 days to complete its journey of Ramayana Circuit.
 - **Serum Institute of India, Pune - may begin the human trials for a vaccine for COVID-19 within the next six months**
 - ✓ Presently in the pre-clinical tests phase, SII's vaccine candidate has been developed using a laboratory-made synthetic virus.
 - ✓ As per the CEO of the Institute, the vaccine is likely to be ready by early 2022.
 - **The Delhi International Airport - has become the first single-use plastic-free airport in India.**
 - ✓ The airport started its initiatives to become single-use plastic-free after the observance of Environment Day in 2018.
 - ✓ Delhi International Airport uses eco-friendly products instead of plastic.
 - ✓ It is India's biggest airport.
 - ✓ Every year about 68.5 million passengers travel through this airport.
 - ✓ India has targeted to end the use of single-use plastic by 2022.

INTERNATIONAL

- **Japanese firm, Taisei Corporation - was chosen by Sri Lanka to build a new \$570 million terminal for Sri Lanka's main airport in Colombo**
- ✓ The new terminal is expected to double the capacity at the Bandaranaike International Airport to around 20 million passengers a year.
- ✓ With the move, Japan re-emerges as a key infrastructure backer in the midst of several ongoing Chinese projects in the country

APPOINTMENTS

- **The Banks Board Bureau (BBB) - has recommended G.R. Chinatala as the next chairman of National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD).**



Shri G.R.Chinatala
Managing Director

- ✓ The current chairman, Harsh Kumar Bhanwala, is about to retire in June.
- ✓ Bhanwala took charge of Nabard in December 2013.
- ✓ In December last year, the government extended his term by six months.
- ✓ Chinatala is currently MD of Nabfins, a subsidiary of Nabard, which is a non-deposit taking NBFC.

SPORTS

- **The Indian women's cricket team – launches its search for an elusive ICC trophy with the start of T20 World Cup opener against defending champions Australia at Sydney on February 21.**

CHAMPIONS SO FAR

2009: Eng
2010: Aus
2012: Aus
2014: Aus
2016: WI
2018: Aus

INDIA'S SCHEDULE

Feb. 21	vs Aus	Sydney	1.30 p.m.
Feb. 24	vs Ban	Perth	4.30 p.m.
Feb. 27	vs NZ	Melbourne	9.30 a.m.
Feb. 29	vs SL	Melbourne	9.30 a.m.

ALL TIMES IST

India reached the semifinals in the 2009, 2010 and 2018 editions



- ✓ Australia has won the T20 World Cup a record four times out of the six editions held so far.
 - ✓ The only other teams to lift the trophy are England on home soil in 2009 and the West Indies in 2016.
 - ✓ India has failed to reach the final in any of the six previous editions.
 - ✓ The country made the semifinals two years ago and it was only the third time the country reached the knockout stage.
- **Divya Kakran (68kg), Sarita Mor (59kg) and Pinki (55kg) - won their first-ever gold each in the women's freestyle at the Asian Wrestling championships in New Delhi's Indira Gandhi indoor stadium on February 20.**



- ✓ However, India's Nirmala Devi lost her 50kg title clash against Japan's Igarashi Miho to settle with the Silver medal.
- ✓ Delhi-girl Divya won all four of her bouts by fall, including the final against reigning world junior champion, Japan's Matsuyuki Naruha
- ✓ In the other match, Rohtak's Pinki overcame an elbow injury to win a hard fought contest against Mongolia's Bolormaa Dulguun
- ✓ In the women's 59kg, Sarita prevailed over Mongolian Battsetseg Altantsetseg to clinch gold
- ✓ Indian women freestyle wrestlers largely benefitted in the absence of teams from wrestling powerhouses, China and North Korea.

INTERNATIONAL DAY

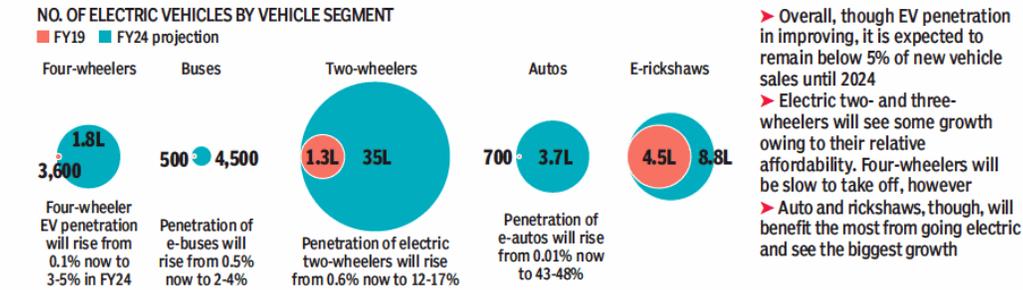
- **International Mother Language Day – February 21**
- ✓ The day is observed by UNESCO annually to celebrate the linguistic diversity that exists in the world.
 - ✓ UNESCO has identified over 7000 languages that are used (read, written and spoken) in different countries across the world
 - ✓ Theme 2020 - 'Languages without borders'
 - ✓ From 1999 onwards, UNESCO – the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, started observing International Mother Language Day on 21st February every year
 - ✓ The Ministry of HRD will also observe Matribhasha Diwas on 21st February across the entire country
 - ✓ The theme of the Matribhasha Diwas 2020 to be celebrated across India is 'Celebrating our Multilingual Heritage'
 - ✓ According to Census 2001, India has 22 officially recognised languages, 1635 rationalised mother tongues, 234 identifiable mother tongues.

PROGRESS OF EV'S IN INDIA – AN UPDATE

INDIA'S EV CHARGE WILL BE LED BY AUTOS & TWO-WHEELERS

As electric vehicles become increasingly viable and affordable, a look at India's progress on EVs so far and where the industry is headed in the next five years, according to **Crisil Research**

By 2024, about 5% of new sales will be electric vehicles

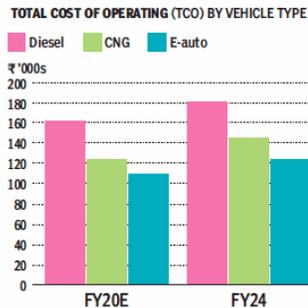


Passenger e-cars likely to stay expensive to own and operate

SEGMENT-WISE BREAKDOWN OF ELECTRIC VEHICLE COST PROJECTIONS

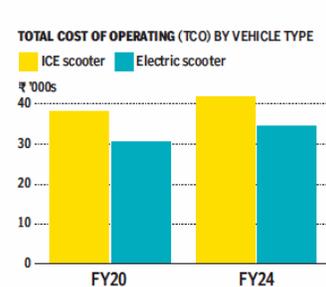
AUTOS

- E-autos are cheaper to buy and maintain than CNG autos
- Operating and acquisition costs are set to drop substantially by 2024
- By 2024, 43% to 48% of all new autos will be electric
- E-rickshaws are increasingly replacing cycle rickshaws and could become low-cost alternatives to e-autos, costing as much as 30% less



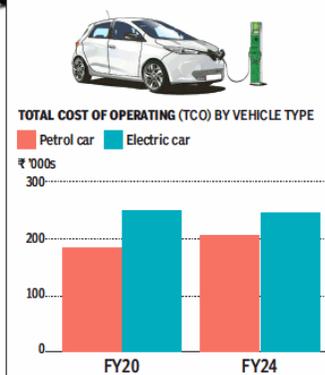
SCOOTERS

- By 2024, 12% to 17% of all new two-wheelers are projected to be electric
- The biggest five two-wheeler producers are also expected to raise electric capacity from 4 lakh units in 2020 to 30 lakh units in 2024
- Though internal combustion engine (ICE) motorbikes will be cheaper than e-scooters, ICE scooters will be costlier than both



FOUR-WHEELERS

- Private passenger vehicles aren't currently eligible for subsidies while commercial vehicles are
- An electric cab running 50,000km a year will save Rs 1.65 lakh compared with Rs 35,000 saved by personal e-cars, which run about 10,000km a year, according to Crisil's estimate. But weak charging infra will hurt adoption



How's India's EV scene compares with the rest of the world

