

## EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – FEB 26, 2020

### TAMIL NADU

- **KV Jeyasri - has won the Sahitya Akademi Prize 2019 for her Tamil translation work 'Nilam Poothu Malarantha Naal', a novel based on the Sangam era**
  - ✓ The original novel was written in Malayalam by Manoj Kuroor with the title 'Nilam Poothu Malarantha Naal'.
  - ✓ The prize carries a cash amount of ₹ 50,000 and a copper plaque.
  - ✓ The Tamil teacher, who works at a school in Tiruvannamalai, has translated more than 13 books from Malayalam, her mother tongue, to Tamil.
  - ✓ Nilam Poothu Malarantha Naal traces the history of Paari, one of the seven philanthropist Tamil chieftains
  - ✓ The novel also explores the socio-cultural history of the ancient Tamil kingdom, the wars among kings and the lives of singers, poets and those practising various other professions in the Sangam period.
  - ✓ Jeyasri is currently translating IAS officer K.V. Mohankumar's novel Ushnarasi, which deals with the communist movement in Kerala and culminates in its capture of power in 1957.
  - ✓ The Akademi's executive board has selected 23 books from various languages for its translation prize 2019
  
- **The Tamil Nadu government - has invited suggestions from the public and others about its recently released draft 'TN State Action Plan on Climate Change 2.0'.**

**FOR A BETTER TOMORROW**

<p><b>KEY SECTORS COVERED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Sustainable agriculture, water resources, forest and biodiversity, coastal area management, strategic knowledge for climate change, disaster management and mitigation and health and sanitation</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; The environment dept held day-long workshop across the state before formulating the policy</li> <li>&gt; A state level</li> </ul>	<p>steering committee meeting will be held in March</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; The draft will be sent to the Union ministry of environment, forests and climate change for approval</li> <li>&gt; Members of public can send suggestions till end of February</li> </ul>
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- ✓ The draft plan primarily aims at –
    - ✓ increasing the forest cover inside and outside notified areas through proper afforestation,
    - ✓ restoring degraded forests,
    - ✓ enhancing biodiversity conservation,
    - ✓ managing forest fires and invasive alien species and
    - ✓ conducting research in the forestry sector among other plans.
  - ✓ Other topics such as Sustainable agriculture, water resources, forest and biodiversity, coastal area management, strategic knowledge for climate change, disaster management and mitigation and health and sanitation have been identified for special attention in the draft plan.
  - ✓ Out of the 37 activities proposed for long term implementation from 2021 to 2030, seven had been proposed in the previous action plan and would be continued further.
  - ✓ The government has proposed ₹2,834.44 crore for the forest sector alone to avoid large-scale degradation of forests and reduce the number of incidents of man-animal conflict.
  - ✓ Besides, over-grazing in core forest areas, forest fires, invasion of exotic species, blatant encroachments, quarrying and mining, destruction of coral reefs and estuarine environments and over exploitation and unscientific harvesting of minor forest produce have all contributed to the forest degradation.
  - ✓ Under Coastal Area Management, the Government has already deployed and achieved success in the deployment of artificial reefs, strengthening of rainwater harvesting structures and enhancement of livelihood opportunities of the fishing community livelihood.
  - ✓ Now, the new activities proposed in the draft plan include steps to protect the ecologically sensitive Gulf of Mannar region, conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem, eco-restoration, solid waste management in coastal areas, training and capacity building for fishermen, disaster management and eco-tourism
  - ✓ Also, by the year 2030, the government proposes to increase the mangrove forest cover to 5,600 hectares, the live coral cover to 42% and the extent of protected areas to 11,218 sq km among others.
  - ✓ The mangrove forest cover is vital in protecting the coast from damaging storms, tidal waves and floods
  - ✓ The draft policy also proposes measures to determine the state's overall progress towards climate resilience and help to assess its action plan continuation for achieving the country's sustainable development goals (SDGs).
- **The Election Commission of India - has announced elections to fill six Rajya Sabha Vacancies in Tamil Nadu on March 26.**
- ✓ As per the EC, nominations will begin on March 6 and end on March 13.

- ✓ The terms of S Muthu kuruppan (AIADMK), Sasikala Pushpa (AIADMK – joined BJP recently), Vijila Satyanath (AIADMK), A K Selvaraj (AIADMK), T K Rangarajan (CPM) and Trichy Siva (DMK) will end on April 2.
- ✓ As per the strength of the parties in the state assembly, DMK and AIADMK can nominate three MPs each.
- ✓ Currently, the AIADMK has 11 members, including one from Puducherry, in the Rajya Sabha, while the DMK has 5 and the CPI (M), the MDMK and the PMK one each.

## STATES

- **Bihar - became the first state with an NDA government announcing not to implement the National Register of Citizens on February 25.**
- ✓ The Bihar assembly unanimously adopted a resolution to follow the old National Population Register (NPR) format of 2010
- ✓ However, it had decided to adopt the transgender column from the new format, as recommended by the home ministry.
- ✓ The resolution is virtually a copy of CM Nitish Kumar's response to the Centre's letter seeking feedback on NPR
- ✓ Earlier, the Centre had sought feedback from all states on NPR and the Bihar government had taken the opportunity to also communicate its stand on the NRC.

## NATIONAL

- **On the second day of President Donald Trump's first visit to India, India and US - signed two bilateral pacts for strengthening cooperation in the mental and emotional wellbeing and generic medicine regimes.**



- ✓ The first agreement enables India learn from the US's research and experience in treating mental health issues.
- ✓ According to a Lancet report, the incidences of mental health disorders have been increasing rapidly in India from 3% in 1990 to 6% in 2013.
- ✓ Most cases are not reported as 80% of people with any form of mental disorder do not seek treatment
- ✓ The memorandum of understanding (MoU) between both the countries recommends the use of Indian traditional therapies and medicines to address

mental health issues and facilitate greater access to such drugs and therapies to the larger US market.

- ✓ The second agreement is to help increased access to generic drugs in the US
- ✓ This MoU will allow India to strengthen its food and drug protocols and benefit Indian consumers by ensuring higher standards of generic drug standard compliance.
- ✓ The US has been among the largest markets in the world for generic drugs while India is a large producer of such medicines.

➤ **The elections to 55 Rajya Sabha seats falling vacant in April - will be held on March 26**

- ✓ This was announced by the Election Commission on February 25.
- ✓ Of the total 55 seats, 51 seats from 17 states are falling vacant on different dates in April due to retirement of sitting members, while the remaining 4 other seats are vacant due to resignation of members.
- ✓ Maharashtra will have the maximum number of vacant seats, followed by Tamil Nadu.
- ✓ Prominent among those retiring are Rajya Sabha deputy chairman Harivansh (JD-U), NCP Chief Sharad Pawar, Union minister Ramdas Athawale (RPI), Congress veteran Motilal Vora, former union ministers Vijay Goel (BJP) and Kumari Selja (Cong), and former Madhya Pradesh CM Digvijaya Singh.
- ✓ The Rajya Sabha seats that have fallen vacant include those of home minister Amit Shah, who resigned after his election to the Lok Sabha from Gandhinagar, and Arun Jaitley who passed away.
- ✓ While notification for the elections will be issued on March 6, the last date of filing nominations will be March 13.
- ✓ The counting will be held on the evening of March 26, an hour after conclusion of polls.
- ✓ The Rajya Sabha also known as 'Council of States' comprises not more than 250 members
- ✓ Among the 250 members, 238 members are elected indirectly by MLAs from different States and Union Territories and 12 are nominated by the President from different fields such as sports, literature, art, science and social service.
- ✓ The elections to the house are held after every two years when one-third of the house members retire and the same number of members are elected.
- ✓ The elections to the Rajya Sabha are indirect, as the members are elected by the elected members of the legislative assemblies of states through a process called Proportional Representation and Single Transferable Vote
- ✓ Currently, Rajya Sabha has strength of 245 members, among which 233 members represent different states and union territories and 12 members have been nominated by the President.

- **The Government - officially announced the constitution of the 22nd Law Commission for a period of three years on February 25, 2020**
- ✓ The term of the 21st Law Commission ended on August 31, 2018.
- ✓ The Union Cabinet had approved the proposal to reconstitute the panel last week.
- ✓ The Law Commission is a non-statutory body, which advises the government on all legal issues.
- ✓ The Government will now appoint the commission's Chairperson and other members.
- ✓ The Chairperson of the commission is generally a retired Supreme Court or High Court judge
- ✓ The 22<sup>nd</sup> Law Commission will examine the existing laws and identify the laws that are no longer needed or are irrelevant and can be repealed immediately.
- ✓ It will also suggest the necessary laws to implement the Directive Principles mentioned in the Preamble of the Constitution.
- ✓ The Law commission was originally formed in 1955
- ✓ 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 Food Safety and Standard Authority of India (FSSAI) - has made it mandatory for sweet shops to display the details of the 'date of manufacturing' and 'best before' date of the products even on nonpackaged or loose sweet items from June 1.**
- ✓ At present, it is mandatory to mention these details on labels of packaged sweets only.
- ✓ The latest regulatory move comes following the receipt of complaints by FSSAI about sale of stale or expired nonpackaged sweets causing potential health hazards to consumers.
- ✓ As per FSSAI, food business operators (FBOs) should decide and display the 'best before' date for nonpackaged sweets depending upon the nature of the product and local conditions.
- ✓ FSSAI has also issued an indicative list mentioning shelf life of various types of traditional sweets which can be referred to by FBOs for compliance.
- ✓ The list recommends consumption of some items like rasgullas, badam milk, rasmalai and rajbhog within two days of manufacturing.

## **INTERNATIONAL**

- **Qatar - invited Pakistan to attend the signing of the landmark peace deal between the US and the Afghan Taliban in Doha on February 29**
- ✓ The deal would end America's longest war in Afghanistan where the US has lost over 2,400 soldiers since late 2001

# SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **Isro – to launch GISAT-1, the country’s first earth imaging satellite in a geostationary orbit, on the evening of March 5 from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota.**
- ✓ The 2,275-kg GISAT-1 satellite will be launched aboard the medium lift launcher, GSLV- F10 from the second launch pad of Satish Dhawan Space Centre SHAR in Sriharikota.
- ✓ This is the fourteenth flight of the GSLV
- ✓ The satellite is capable of performing rapid surveillance and fast imaging.
- ✓ This is the first satellite to be launched by ISRO in 2020, following which 10 more satellites are to be launched this year.
- ✓ GISAT-1 will facilitate almost real time observation of the Indian subcontinent under cloud-free conditions and at frequent intervals

## DEFENCE

- **India and the US - signed helicopter deals worth \$3 billion on February 25**
- ✓ The two countries also agreed to work for early conclusion of the fourth and final bilateral foundational military pact called the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-Spatial Cooperation (BECA).

**DELHI'S SPENT \$21BN ON US DEF GEAR SINCE 2007**  
 A closer look at the choppers in the \$3 billion deal announced as part of Trump's visit

 <p><b>MH-60 'ROMEO'</b></p> <p>How many? 24</p>	 <p><b>AH-64E 'APACHE'</b></p> <p>How many? 6</p>
<p>Cost: ₹15,157cr (\$2.12 billion); Delivery: First six in a year. Remaining 18 over next four years</p>	<p>Cost: ₹5,691cr (\$796 million) Delivery: To begin in 2023</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Described as a frigate in the air, the MH-60R is a multi-role naval chopper that operates from warships to detect, destroy submarines</li> <li>➤ Has multi-mode radars/night-vision, Hellfire missiles, MK-54 torpedoes &amp; precision-kill rockets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to target submarines</li> <li>➤ Key for Indian Navy as 140-warship force is virtually bereft of such choppers at a time when Chinese subs are increasingly prowling about in Indian Ocean region</li> <li>➤ Over 300 MH-60Rs operational around the world</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Billed as tanks in the air, the Apache is a multi-role helicopter designed to detect, contain &amp; destroy enemy tank &amp; land forces</li> <li>➤ Armed with Stinger air-to-air missiles, Hellfire Longbow air-to-ground missiles and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a variety of guns/rockets</li> <li>➤ Combines lethality &amp; surveillance capabilities and also has capability to control drones</li> <li>➤ Over 2,400 Apaches operational worldwide</li> </ul>

**US Is Pushing F/A-18 Or F-21 For A 114-Jet Deal For \$20-bn And Also Has These Deals In The Pipeline...**

<p>6 more P-8I maritime patrol aircraft: <b>\$1.8 billion</b></p>	<p>National Advanced Surface to Air Missile System-II for the missile shield over Delhi: <b>\$1.8 billion</b></p>	<p>30 Sea Guardian armed drones: <b>\$2.5+ billion</b></p>	<p>13 big MK-45 naval gun systems for warships: <b>\$1.02 billion</b></p>
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- ✓ The BECA will enable the US to share advanced satellite and topographical data for long-range navigation and missile-targeting with India
  - ✓ Earlier, both the countries have signed the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) in 2002, the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) in 2016 and the Communications, Compatibility and Security Arrangement (COMCASA) in 2018
  - ✓ BECA is expected to be signed by next year between both the countries.
  - ✓ India and the US also signed deals for 24 MH-60 'Romeo' helicopters for Rs 15,157 crore (\$2.12 billion) and the six additional Apache attack choppers for Rs 5,691 crore (\$796 million) on February 25
  - ✓ It takes the total value of lucrative Indian defence deals bagged by Washington to over \$21 billion in the last 13 years
  - ✓ The first six MH-60 'Romeo' multi-mission helicopters will be delivered to India in a year, with the rest 18 thereafter coming over the next four years
  - ✓ These helicopters are expected to plug the Navy's critical operational gap in detecting, tracking and destroying enemy submarines.
  - ✓ The six AH-64E Apache attack choppers, in turn, will be delivered from 2023 onwards.
  - ✓ With the chopper deals done, the US will aim to seal the other proposed deals in the pipeline worth around \$7 billion over the next couple of years.
  - ✓ These include six more P-8I long-range maritime patrol aircraft (\$1.8 billion), the National Advanced Surface to Air Missile System-II for the missile shield over Delhi (\$1.8 billion), 30 Sea Guardian armed drones (over \$2.5 billion) and 13 big MK-45 naval gun systems for warships (\$1.02 billion).
- **The 5th edition of the Exercise Indra Dhanush - commenced on 24th February, 2020 at the Air Force Station Hindan, India.**



- ✓ It is a joint air force exercise between the Indian Air Force and the Royal Air Force of the United Kingdom
- ✓ The Exercise focuses on the theme of "Base Defence and Force Protection".
- ✓ From the Indian side, 42 combatants of Garud Commando Force participated in the exercise.
- ✓ The Hindon Air Force Station operates under Western Air Command.
- ✓ It is the eighth largest air base in the world and the largest air base in Asia
- ✓ It is located in Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh.

## SPORTS

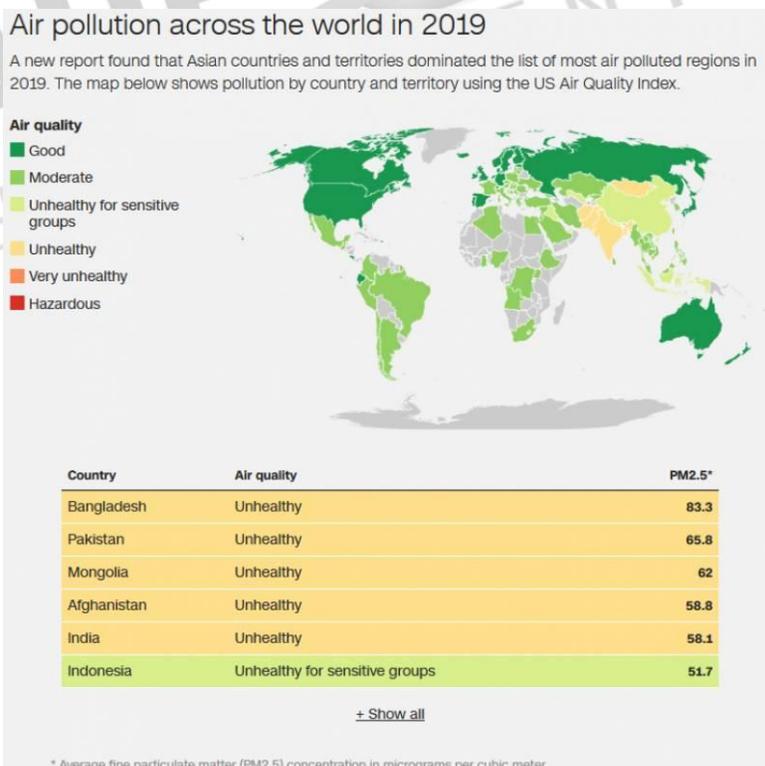
- **Saurav Ghosal (13-time National champion and World No. 13) and Joshna Chinappa (18-time National champion and World No. 12) - will lead the Indian men's and women's contingents at the 20th Asian team squash championship in Malaysia from March 25 to 29.**



- ✓ The other members of the squad are Abhishek Pradhan, Harinder Pal Sandhu and Abhay Singh in the men's section, and Tanvi Khanna, Sunayna Kuruvilla and Sanya Vats in the women's.
- ✓ The selection was based on the performance at the 77th National Championship.

## RANKINGS

- **New Delhi - topped the list of most polluted capital cities in the world in 2019, according to World Air Quality Report 2019, compiled by IQAir AirVisual**
- ✓ As per the report, 21 of the world's 30 most polluted cities were located in India.
- ✓ Ghaziabad had the dubious distinction of being the most polluted city in the world



- ✓ According to the report, Ghaziabad was followed by Hotan in China, and then Gujranwala and Faisalabad in Pakistan.

- ✓ Delhi took the fifth place.
- ✓ The 21 Indian cities named in the list in the order of their ranking were Ghaziabad, Delhi, Noida, Gurgaon, Greater Noida, Bandhwari, Lucknow, Bulandshahr, Muzaffarnagar, Baghpat, Jind, Faridabad, Coraut, Bhiwadi, Patna, Palwal, Muzaffarpur, Hisar, Kutail, Jodhpur and Moradabad
- ✓ As per the country-wise data, India was ranked fifth in the world's most polluted countries with Bangladesh taking the top spot, followed by Pakistan, Mongolia and Afghanistan.
- ✓ Whilst cities in India, on average, exceed the World Health Organisation target for annual PM2.5 exposure by 500%, national air pollution decreased by 20% from 2018 to 2019 with 98% of the cities experiencing improvement

