

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – MARCH 2, 2019

TAMIL NADU

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi – flagged off the Tejas Express through videoconferencing in Kanyakumari on March 1, 2019
- ✓ Tamil Nadu CM Edappadi K Palaniswami and Governor Banwarilal Purohit were present on the occasion

<p>HIGHWAYS PROJECTS Four-laning of Madurai to Paramakudi and two-laning of Paramakudi to Ramanathapuram section of NH87 Length 115 km Cost ₹1,134.35 crore</p> <p>➤ Four laning of Panagudi-Kanyakumari section of New NH44 and completion of balance work between Narikulam Tank portion in Kanyakumari district Length 550 metres Cost ₹27.24 crore</p> <p>➤ Steel flyover at Marthandam Junction on Nagercoil to Kanyakumari NH47 Length 2.808km Cost ₹209.48 crore</p> <p>➤ Steel flyover at Parvathipuram Junction on Nagercoil to Kanyakumari NH47 Length 1.534km Cost ₹104.54 crore</p>	<p>RAILWAY PROJECTS Superfast Tejas Express flagged off between Chennai Egmore and Madurai Distance covered 496km Time taken 6 1/2 hours</p> <p>FOUNDATION STONES LAID HIGHWAY PROJECTS Four-laning of Madurai-Chettikulam section of NH785 and to a flyover from Pandian Hotel Junction to Chettikulam in Madurai Length 7.3KM Cost ₹679.98Cr</p> <p>➤ Four-laning of Chettikulam-Natham Section of NH785 Length 29.39KM Cost ₹837.61 CRORE</p> <p>➤ Launching of road safety park and transport museum in Kanyakumari, statue of former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee, theatre and auditorium Total area 5 HECTARES Cost ₹75.32 Cr</p> <p>RAILWAY PROJECTS ➤ Restoration of rail connectivity between Rameswaram and Dhanushkodi Length 17.2km Cost ₹208 crore</p> <p>➤ New bridge at Pamban Viaduct Length 2.05km Cost ₹250 crore</p>
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- ✓ During the occasion, the Prime Minister unveiled several projects for the state worth more than Rs 2,000 crore

- **Chennai's 14-year old 'Mohamed Mikail' – to race for Honda in the upcoming Thai Talent Cup (NSF250R)**



- ✓ With the selection, he becomes the youngest Indian to compete in an international bike-racing event
- ✓ Japanese automobile giant Honda has a comprehensive programme for the junior riders and Mikail, who along with Kritik Habib, was selected during the talent hunt for the international events

NATIONAL

- **The Government – announces subsidy benefit details for electric vehicles under FAME II scheme**

POWER DRIVE

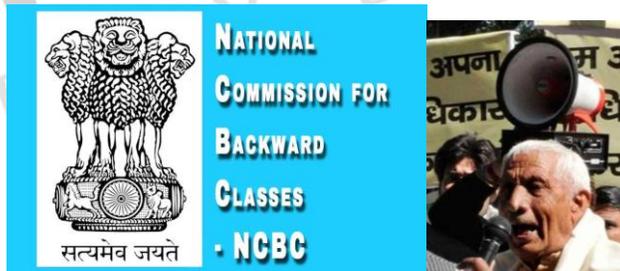
Type of vehicle	Number to get subsidy	Amount of subsidy (in ₹)	Max vehicle price (in ₹)
2-wheeler	10 lakh	20,000-40,000	1.5 lakh
3-wheeler	5 lakh	50,000-1 lakh	5 lakh
E-car cab	35,000	1.5-2.5 lakh	15 lakh
Hybrid car	20,000	5,000-20,000	15 lakh
E-bus	7,090	Rs 35-60 lakh	2 crore

“ This is a transformational scheme to push mobility for the masses. It draws from the PM's vision at the Mobility Summit where he laid down the principles through 7Cs – Common, Connected, Convenient, Congestion-free, Charged, Clean and Cutting-edge

—AMITABH KANT | CED NITI AAYOG



- ✓ It had allocated a total of Rs 10,000 crore for subsidies with around Rs 8.596 crore (roughly 80%) to be used exclusively as subsidy to push electric vehicles and the balance amount of Rs 1,300 crore set aside for the charging stations
- ✓ Subsidy details for Electric vehicles
- ✓ The biggest chunk of subsidy of Rs 3,545 crore has been earmarked for running of 7,090 electric buses by government transport understandings
- ✓ Shared transport including three-wheelers are allocated Rs 2,500 crore subsidy
- ✓ For 10 lakh two-wheelers, the total subsidy has been fixed at Rs 2,000 crore.
- ✓ Another Rs 525 crore has been kept for four-wheelers “mainly” for cabs, excluding Private electric four-wheelers
- ✓ Rs 26 crore subsidy has been allocated for hybrid cars to pacify the Japanese automobile manufacturers, who have been opposing sops for electric vehicles
- ✓ Charging station details
- ✓ Around nine cities with more than four million population each will get 1,000 charging stations.
- ✓ Another 44 million-plus cities will get 1,000 and the smart and hilly cities would get another 500 charging stations
- ✓ Another 200 charging stations would be set up along the major roads connecting two cities such as Delhi-Gurgaon, Hyderabad-Secunderabad and Mumbai-Navi Mumbai
- **The Government - has inaugurated the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC)**



- ✓ Bihar BJP leader Bhagwan Lal Sahni has been named the chairman of the NCBC
- ✓ Kaushalendra Singh Patel (UP), Sudha Yadav (MP) and Achary Talloju (Telangana), all linked to the BJP, would be the members of the commission
- ✓ The Constitution (123rd Amendment) Bill to grant the commission ‘constitutional status’ was introduced in Parliament in April 2017 and approved in August 2018 – after repealing the National Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993
- ✓ The new commission is enshrined in the Constitution at par with the panels for SCs and STs, with power to hear grievances
- ✓ The earlier commission had a limited mandate of inclusion and exclusion of castes in the national list of OBCs
- ✓ The term of the last NCBC chairperson, Justice V Eswaraiah (retd) got over in September 2016, while that of its last member expired by February 2017

- **The central government's Ayushman Bharat scheme - has tied up with app-based cab aggregator Uber - to facilitate free healthcare for its driver and delivery partners**



- ✓ This is the first ever partnership of Ayushman Bharat – Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) with a private firm
 - ✓ As per the MoU, Common Service Centres (CSCs) will be set up at Partners Seva Kendras across India to facilitate free healthcare for tens of thousands of driver and delivery partners of Uber
 - ✓ CSC's Village Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs) at these centres will help verify eligibility and issue e-cards to driver and delivery partners for the Ayushman Bharat Scheme
 - ✓ Eligible driver and delivery partners will pay only Rs 30 to obtain an Ayushman Bharat card to provide access to the services under the scheme
 - ✓ The scheme provides Rs 500,000 of healthcare benefits for free secondary and tertiary treatment to each eligible family per year in government and empanelled private hospitals.
- **The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi - approved the 'Pradhan Mantri Jai Indhan- Vatavaran Anukool fasal awashesh Nivaran (JI-VAN) Yojana' for providing financial support to the Integrated Bioethanol Projects**
 - ✓ The scheme aims to incentivise 2G Ethanol sector for setting up commercial projects and increasing Research & Development in this area
 - ✓ The Pradhan Mantri JI-VAN Yojana was allocated a financial outlay of Rs 1969.50 crore for the period 2018-19 to 2023-24

Pradhan Mantri JI-VAN Yojana

PM JI-VAN yojana under process for creating infrastructure of 2G Ethanol Bio-refineries in the Country.



Focus:

Providing viability gap funding for setting up Commercial Projects and promoting R&D in this field by providing grant on setting up demonstration projects.

Budget
₹5,000 crore

Benefits of the scheme:

- Doubling farmer income by providing remuneration on agriculture residues.
- Address environmental concerns caused due to burning of biomass & improve health of citizens.
- Create rural & urban employment opportunities.
- Crude import substitution by enhancing ethanol blending percentage progressively.
- Forex savings
- Contribute to Swacch Bharat Mission by supporting the aggregation of non-food biofuel feedstocks such as waste biomass and urban waste.
- A tool to meet the targets envisaged in Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) programme for achieving 10% blending of Ethanol in Petrol on Pan India basis

- ✓ The Centre for High Technology (CHT), a technical body under the aegis of the Union Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, will be the implementation Agency for the scheme.
- ✓ The Union Government launched the Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) programme in 2003 for blending of 10% ethanol in Petrol to address environmental concerns due to fossil fuel burning
- ✓ The present policy allows procurement of ethanol produced from molasses and non-food feed stock like celluloses
- ✓ At present, the EBP is being implemented in 21 States and 4 UTs of the country
- **The Union Government – signs \$926 million loan agreement with Asian Development Bank (ADB) - to operationalise two lines (of about 58 km) of the Mumbai Metro Rail System**
- ✓ The approved loan is the single largest infrastructure loan in ADB history approved by its Board



- ✓ The project will be implemented by the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) and expected to be completed by the end of 2022

✓ **The Union Cabinet approves 2 new policies -- National Policy on Software Products 2019 and National Mineral Policy 2019 – on February 28, 2019**

✓ National Policy on Software Products 2019



- ✓ The National Policy on Software Products 2019 aims to develop India as the global software product hub through innovation, improved commercialisation, sustainable Intellectual Property (IP), promoting technology startups and specialised skill sets
- ✓ It intends to create Indian software products Industry of \$70-80 billion with direct and indirect employment of 3.5 million by 2025.
- ✓ Initially, an outlay of Rs 1500 crore is allocated as Software Product Development Fund (SPDF) and Research & Innovation fund, for a period of 7 years
- ✓ National Mineral Policy 2019

<p>Cabinet Decision February 28, 2019</p> <p>National Mineral Policy, 2019(1/2)</p> <p>The Union Cabinet approved National Mineral Policy 2019.</p> <p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The New National Mineral Policy will ensure more effective regulation. It will lead to sustainable mining sector development in future while addressing the issues of project affected persons especially those residing in tribal areas <p>Objective:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The aim of National Mineral Policy 2019 is to have a more effective, meaningful and implementable policy that brings in further transparency, better regulation and enforcement, balanced social and economic growth as well as sustainable mining practices. <p>Details:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Mineral Policy 2019 includes provisions which will give boost to mining sector such as • introduction of Right of First Refusal for RP/PL holders, • encouraging the private sector to take up exploration, 	<p>Cabinet Decision February 28, 2019</p> <p>National Mineral Policy, 2019(2/2)</p> <p>Details(contd)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • auctioning in virgin areas for composite RP cum PL cum ML on revenue share basis, • encouragement of merger and acquisition of mining entities and • transfer of mining leases and creation of dedicated mineral corridors to boost private sector mining areas. • The 2019 Policy proposes to grant status of industry to mining activity to boost financing of mining for private sector and for acquisitions of mineral assets in other countries by private sector • It also mentions that Long term import export policy for mineral will help private sector in better planning and stability in business • The Policy also mentions rationalize reserved areas given to PSUs which have not been used and to put these areas to auction, which will give more opportunity to private sector for participation • The Policy also mentions to make efforts to harmonize taxes, levies & royalty with world benchmarks to help private sector
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- ✓ The policy aims to regulate and ensure sustainable mining sector development and practices in the country
- ✓ It replaces the National Mineral Policy 2008
- ✓ It intends to attract private investment through incentives apart from making efforts to create and maintain a database of mineral resources in the country
- ✓ It proposes a long term export import policy for the mineral sector
- ✓ It also introduces the concept of Inter-Generational Equity to support the future generations
- ✓ It also intends to constitute an inter-ministerial body to institutionalise the mechanism for ensuring sustainable development in mining.

COMMITTEES

- **The Justice Ranjana Desai-led search committee - has finalized its recommendations for the chairperson and eight members of the anti-corruption ombudsman, Lokpal**



- ✓ The committee has sent a list comprising 5 names for Lokpal Head and 24 names for members of the anti-graft body — 3 each for 8 positions — to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who heads the Lokpal selection committee
- ✓ The eight-member search panel, formed in September 2018, held its first meeting in January 2019
- ✓ It was set a deadline of February 28 by the Supreme Court to hand over the recommended names to the Government
- ✓ The search committee has former SBI chief Arundhati Bhattacharya , Isro chief A S Kiran Kumar, Former Gujarat police chief Shabbirhusein S Khandwawala, former Allahabad high court justice Sakha Ram Singh Yadav and Prasar Bharati chairman A Surya Prakash as members
- ✓ The selection committee is headed by the PM and has Chief Justice of India Justice Ranjan Gogoi, Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan and former advocate general Mukul Rohatgi as members

CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

- Pakistan, one of the founding members of Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) – boycotts the meeting of the Islamic grouping which began in Abu Dhabi on March 1, 2019



- ✓ This was the first time in OIC's 50-year history that the country's foreign minister has stayed away from the meeting, even though its delegation participated in it
- ✓ Incidentally, 50 years ago, the then Pakistan president Gen Yahya Khan had walked out of the 57-member country- OIC summit over the same issue — inclusion of India at the meet

AT 1ST MEET, YAHYA THREATENED PULLOUT

➤ India was offered membership status of OIC in 1969, when it was founded. **Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed**, then minister for indl development, led the Indian delegation to the Rabat conference

➤ There, a Moroccan minister asked him to either **withdraw "voluntarily" or "feign illness"** and not attend the meet

➤ Alternatively, it was suggested India attend as an "observer" — a **downgrade from the membership status**

➤ The reason: Pak president **Yahya Khan had locked**

himself up in his room and threatened to boycott the summit if the Indian delegation was present. Jordan, Turkey and Iran also supported Pakistan



Yahya Khan

➤ The reason for Khan's tantrum: **riots in Ahmedabad**

➤ The Indian delegation was not informed about any of the official meetings/sessions, which were **held in secret**

- ✓ Pakistan was protesting against the decision to invite Indian External Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj as guest of honour at the meeting

PERSONALITIES

- **IAF's Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman – crosses over via the Wagah-Attari border to India – 60 hours after taken captive in PoK after being shot down while chasing an intruding Pakistani F-16**



- ✓ He was accompanied to the border by Group Captain Joy Thomas Kurien, India's air attache in Islamabad, and by a director of the Pakistan Foreign Office
- ✓ After entering the country, he was immediately taken to the airport and flown in an IAF Embraer jet to New Delhi.
- ✓ As per protocol, he will first undergo a thorough medical examination to ascertain the extent of his injuries due to the ejection and subsequent beating by a mob, when he bailed out from his MiG-21 and landed in PoK

DEFENCE

- **Air Marshal Raghunath Nambiar - appointed as the new chief of the IAF's Western Air Command (WAC)**



- ✓ He replaces Air Marshal C Hari Kumar, who retired after over 39 years in service
- ✓ WAC is the most important command out of the five regional commands of IAF
- ✓ It is spread from Ladakh to Bikaner, at an area of around 400,000 sq km with its headquarters in New Delhi
- ✓ It controls 18 important airbases like Srinagar, Leh, Thoise, Awantipur, Ambala, Amritsar, Halwara, Bikaner, Nal and Udampur, among others
- ✓ Air Marshal Nambiar, an experimental test pilot who has flown 42 types of aircraft, has the distinction of having the most number of flying hours to his credit on Mirage-2000 fighters in the IAF
- ✓ Of his total 5,100 hours of flying experience, the senior officer has chalked over 2,300 hours on Mirage-2000s
- ✓ He was also the project test pilot for the indigenous Tejas Light Combat Aircraft.

SPACEX 1ST PRIVATE-MANNED MISSION – DEMO-1

Will Musk Help US Restart Its Manned Missions To Space?

The SpaceX launch — the mission's called demo-1 — will be the first time a privately built spacecraft designed to carry humans is headed to the ISS

No American astronaut has blasted off from US soil for a space mission since July 2011, when the Atlantis, the last mission of Nasa's Space Shuttle programme, returned to Earth

\$82M What Nasa's been paying Russia to buy seats per astronaut for a round trip to ISS on Soyuz spacecraft

But in 2014, Nasa awarded a combined \$6.8 billion in contracts to SpaceX and Boeing — the second US company in the race along with Elon Musk's SpaceX — for them to make spacecraft that could send astronauts to space

Dummy rider now, astronaut to follow in 6 months

➤ There will be no humans on board on Saturday. Instead of a crew, it will be carrying a heavily wired dummy christened 'Ripley' (in homage to Sigourney Weaver's character in the film, "Alien")

➤ If the demo-1 test is successful, then an uncrewed abort test — a test of a launch escape system to check whether the crew can be efficiently moved to safety in case of an emergency on the launch pad — will be held

➤ If it all goes to plan — there are heavy duty safety certifications to be obtained — then the first crewed SpaceX test flight to ISS could take off in July

SpaceX repurposed its cargo Dragon capsule

After making 16 deliveries to ISS using the cargo version of Dragon, it is overhauling it for carrying astronauts

