

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS—OCTOBER 31, 2020

TAMIL NADU

- **On October 30, Tamil Nadu governor Banwarilal Purohit- gave his assent to a bill on Tamil Nadu's 7.5% horizontal quota in medical seats for government school students**
 - ✓ The bill was approved by the governor following a favourable legal opinion for it was obtained from solicitor-general Tushar Mehta, after nearly 45 days of delay
 - ✓ The assent came a day after the state government issued a GO under Article 162 of the Constitution to implement the quota in the current academic itself.
 - ✓ The Bill, titled Tamil Nadu Admission to Undergraduate Courses in Medicine, Dentistry, Indian Medicine and Homeopathy on Preferential Basis to the Students of Government Schools Bill, 2020, was passed in the Assembly on September 15.
 - ✓ The solicitor-general, however, said the approval was subject to judicial review and other constitutional principles as well as the principles laid down by the Supreme Court.
 - ✓ The governor had sought solicitor-general's opinion through a September 26 letter to ascertain whether the Bill was in accordance with the Constitution or whether it would violate Article 14 and 15.

- **Scientists at Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research (IGCAR) in Kalpakkam- have developed a low-cost non-invasive thermal imaging device for early detection of breast cancer using artificial intelligence and deep learning software.**
 - ✓ On October 30, IGCAR signed an MoU with Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education and Research to use the new technology, which is non-invasive and portable, to continue the study.
 - ✓ The MoU was signed during the inauguration of a technology incubation centre of IGCAR on the occasion of the 111th birth anniversary of Dr. Homi Jehangir Bhabha

- ✓ It was one of the four MoUs signed with industry and other research centres for technology transfer and joint research studies.

HOW IT WORKS		Thermal imaging technology for early detection of breast cancer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The device developed by IGCAR, Kalpakkam uses breast thermography technique where a thermal imaging camera with infrared sensors captures an image using non-ionized radiation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The sensors will be able to detect the temperature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> variation between cancer cells and normal cells ➤ Captured image is then used for interpretation through an AI-deep learning-based software for diagnosis ➤ The device, which has shown a sensitivity of 90%, is low-cost, non-invasive and portable

- ✓ Another MoU was signed with Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) – Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Perambalur for joint research and development in irradiation related studies on seeds, crops and other allied areas.
 - ✓ The incubation centre was inaugurated by K N Vyas, secretary, department of atomic energy through video conference
 - ✓ The device uses breast thermography where infrared cameras can detect small temperature variation between cancer cells and normal cells through non-ionized radiation.
 - ✓ The images captured are then interpreted using AI-deep learning software for diagnosis.
 - ✓ At SRMC Hospital, the device was used for testing 125 patients and its sensitivity was found to be at 90%
 - ✓ While mammography is normally taken for women aged above 40, the new technology can help detect cancer much earlier.
 - ✓ A solar-powered radiation monitor and a low cost light weight air volume sampler for monitoring environmental pollution were other technologies developed by IGCAR and transferred to industry.
- **The Chennai airport – received 105 bulls by cargo from Germany on October 30**
- ✓ The bulls were brought to Chennai by the National Dairy Development Board for breeding purposes.
 - ✓ The animals will stay in Chennai at the animal quarantine for the mandated period.

NATIONAL

- **On October 30, the 15th Finance Commission - finalised its recommendations, which will be submitted to President Ram Nath Kovind on November 9.**

- ✓ Chairman N.K. Singh and members Ajay Narayan Jha, Anoop Singh, Ashok Lahiri and Ramesh Chand signed the report
 - ✓ The Commission is unlikely to opt for a significant reduction in the share of central taxes that is transferred to states, which is currently pegged at 41%.
 - ✓ Its award period will extend from April 2021 to March 2026.
 - ✓ A copy of the report will be presented to Prime Minister Narendra Modi later next month.
 - ✓ The contents will, however, be known at the time of Budget presentation in February when the government will table the report along with an Action Taken Report in Parliament.
 - ✓ The commission has finalised their report after consultations with the Union and state governments, local governments at different tiers, chairmen and members of previous finance commissions
 - ✓ The Fifteenth Finance Commission was constituted on November 27, 2017
 - ✓ It was set up against the backdrop of the abolition of the Planning Commission and the distinction between Plan and non-Plan expenditure, and introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST).
- **On October 30, the defence ministry - announced that 27% reservation for Other Backward Classes will be introduced in the 31 Sainik Schools in the country with effect from the 2021-2022 academic session.**
- ✓ The announcement was made by defence secretary Ajay Kumar through Twitter.
 - ✓ The move is in accordance with national norms as well as the formulations of the HRD ministry on admissions in educational institutions.
 - ✓ The 27% reservation for OBCs will be in addition to the existing 15% for SCs, 7.5% for STs and 25% for children of serving and retired military personnel under the 'defence category' in Sainik Schools.
 - ✓ In each Sainik School, 67% of seats are reserved for children of that state or UT, with the remaining 33% for candidates from other places.
 - ✓ If any of the reserved categories of SC, ST or OBC are not available within the home state/ UT, the seats shall be distributed among the defence and general categories to ensure the 67% criteria is met, as per the MoD order.
 - ✓ Admissions to the residential Sainik Schools, which begin from Class VI and come under the defence ministry, are through a competitive exam and a medical fitness test.
 - ✓ As per one estimate, the schools eventually contribute around 25% of the cadets selected for the tri-Service National Defence Academy (NDA) at Khadakwasla.
 - ✓ Sainik Schools made a modest beginning in 1961, with the primary aim being to prepare boys academically, physically and mentally for entry into NDA
- **Two dogs from Ghaziabad, Tiger and Blaze - could create history by becoming the first Indian breed dogs to be inducted into the elite sniffing forces of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF).**



- ✓ The two energetic Indian pariah pups, both over a year old now, are undergoing training in tough rescue missions with trainers at NDRF
 - ✓ Tiger and Blaze compete with German Shepherds and Labradors to gain a degree and secure a spot in rescue and search operations of the NDRF.
 - ✓ Picked up when they were around two months old, the two have completed training for 41 weeks at the NDRF's 8th Battalion headquarters in Ghaziabad.
- **A Seattle-based US court - has asked Isro's commercial arm Antrix Corporation to pay \$1.2 billion (approximately Rs.9,000crore) compensation to Bengaluru-based start-up Devas Multimedia for cancelling a satellite deal in 2005.**
- ✓ The district Judge ruled that Antrix should pay \$562.5 million to Devas and related interest, amounting to a total of \$1.2 billion compensation.
 - ✓ The nine-year-old Antrix-Devas legal battle has already witnessed the Permanent Court of Arbitration tribunal ruling in favour of Devas and CBI chargesheeting senior Antrix and Isro officials, including the then Isro chairman G Madhavan Nair.
 - ✓ Antrix, which had sought dismissal of the lawsuit in the US court citing jurisdictional issues, may challenge the ruling.

ANTRIX MAY CHALLENGE ORDER	
<p>January 2005 Antrix and Devas sign deal over use of 70MHz of S-band spectrum. Devas to pay Antrix around \$300million for 12 years</p>	<p>June 2011 Devas takes Antrix to int'l arbitration court</p>
<p>2010-2011 Allegations of irregularities surface</p>	<p>2013 SC lifts stay on arbitration proceedings</p>
<p>Feb 2011 Manmohan-led CCS annuls Antrix-Devas deal</p>	<p>Oct 27 District court of Washington, Seattle, rules in favour of Devas, asks Antrix to pay \$1.2bn</p>

- ✓ But Devas argued that the Seattle court has a jurisdiction over the case as Antrix engages in business in this district and across the US.
- ✓ With the formation of a new public sector entity, NewSpace India Limited (NSIL) in 2019, all commercial satellite dealings and technology transfer work have been

assigned to this commercial arm of the department of space, relegating Antrix to the background.

- ✓ As per the 2005 agreement, Antrix had agreed to build, launch and operate two satellites — Gsat-6 and Gsat-6A — and lease out 90% of the satellite transponder capacity to Devas
- ✓ Devas had planned to use it to offer hybrid satellite and terrestrial communication services throughout India.
- ✓ Unfortunately, Isro lost Gsat-6A in space soon after its launch on March 29, 2018 during orbit-raising manoeuvres due to a power failure.
- ✓ However, the deal was cancelled following the comptroller and auditor general (CAG) report, which pointed out irregularities and non-compliance with standard operating procedures.
- ✓ It said that though Devas was planning to use the two satellites for telecommunication and broadcasting services, permission was not sought from the department of telecommunication.
- ✓ According to estimates, the deal, if continued, may have resulted in a notional loss of Rs.2 lakh crore to the exchequer.

INTERNATIONAL

- **New Zealanders - voted to legalise euthanasia for people with a terminal illness**
- ✓ However, the country had voted not to legalise recreational marijuana use, as per the preliminary results of a referendum released on October 30
- ✓ The referendum to legalize the euthanasia and cannabis took place on October 17, 2020
- ✓ With about 83% of votes counted, New Zealanders emphatically endorsed the euthanasia measure with 65% voting in favour and 34% voting against.
- ✓ With respect to marijuana, 53% voted against legalising the drug for recreational use and 46% voted in favour, as per the results declared till now.
- ✓ Euthanasia is the practice of ending a person's life to relieve pain and suffering intentionally
- ✓ It is categorized into voluntary, non-voluntary and involuntary
- ✓ The supreme court of India legalized the passive euthanasia on 9 March 2018 as a part of the verdict in light of Aruna Shanbaug who had been in a Persistent Vegetative State (PVS) until her death in 2015.
- ✓ The judgement was passed on the plea filed by Pinki Virani in the Supreme Court in December 2009.
- ✓ Passive euthanasia means withholding treatments which are necessary for the continuance of life
- ✓ Active euthanasia includes the use of lethal substances or a lethal injection for terminating the life

INDIA AND NEIGHBOURS

- **India - is looking to import potatoes from Bhutan to address the shortage issues.**
- ✓ On October 30, the Directorate general of foreign trade (DGFT) issued an order allowing the import of potatoes from the tiny Himalayan nation without any licence till January 31, 2021.
- ✓ Import duty on potato has also been reduced by the centre to 10% from 30%.
- ✓ Potato prices have been hovering between Rs.40 and Rs.45 per kg across cities.
- ✓ Union food and consumer affairs minister Piyush Goyal told reporters 30,000 tonnes of potatoes will arrive from Bhutan in the next few days.
- ✓ A total of 10 lakh tonnes is allowed for import.
- ✓ The Minister also indicated that the government will continue import of onion and pulses (urad and arhar) as well to tide over the current problem of high prices.
- ✓ Private players have imported 7,000 tonnes of onion and another 27,000 tonnes will reach by mid November, the Minister said.
- ✓ The government is also likely to extend the memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Mozambique to import 2 lakh tonnes of toor dal per annum for the next five years.
- ✓ Another fresh MoU is likely to be signed with Myanmar to import 2 lakh tonnes of urad dal per year for the next five years

DEFENCE

- **The Indian Navy - is all set to launch the first phase of the 24th edition of Malabar exercise in the Bay of Bengal off the Visakhapatnam coast from November 3 to 6.**
- ✓ The top-notch exercise will mark the first time the 'Quad' countries – India, US, Japan and Australia - will come together for combat manoeuvres on the high seas after a gap of 13 years
- ✓ This is the first time Australia will be joining the exercise after 2007
- ✓ More than three years after Australia's request to join the exercise, last week India announced that the Australian Navy would participate in Malabar 2020.
- ✓ India will deploy destroyer INS Ranvijay, stealth frigate INS Shivalik, offshore patrol vessel INS Sukanya, fleet support ship INS Shakti and submarine INS Sindhuraj for the first phase of Malabar.
- ✓ The US, Australia and Japan will be fielding guided-missile destroyer USS John S McCain, long-range frigate HMAS Ballarat and destroyer JS Onami, respectively.
- ✓ Long range maritime patrol aircraft and helicopters will also take part in the exercise.
- ✓ The Indian side for Phase-I will be led by Rear Admiral Sanjay Vatsayan, Flag Officer Commanding Eastern Fleet

- ✓ The second phase of Malabar, with a different set of warships and submarines, will take place in the Arabian Sea from November 17 to 20.
- ✓ Malabar-2020 will witness complex and advanced naval exercises including surface, anti-submarine and anti-air warfare operations, cross-deck flying, seamanship evolutions and weapon firing exercises
- ✓ Malabar began as a bilateral exercise between India and the U.S. in 1992 and became trilateral in 2015 with the addition of Japan.

APPOINTMENTS

- **The Centre – announced the appointment of Harpreet A De Singh as the CEO of Air India’s (AI) regional subsidiary ‘Alliance Air’ on October 30**



- ✓ This is the first instance a woman has become the CEO of an Indian carrier Singh is currently AI’s Executive Director (flight safety).
- ✓ Captain Nivedita Bhasin, one of AI’s most senior commanders currently flying Boeing 787 Dreamliner, will be the new ED (flight safety) in place of Singh.
- ✓ AI CMD Rajiv Bansal issued an order, saying Singh “will hold the charge of Alliance Air CEO post till further orders.”
- ✓ Captain Nivedita Bhasin has also been asked to head several other departments, given her experience.
- ✓ Alliance Air is not being sold off with the Air India-AI Express-AISATS combine and will remain a PSU for now.
- ✓ Harpreet Singh was the first woman pilot to be selected by Air India in 1988.
- ✓ However, she could not fly due to health reasons and has been very active in the area of flight safety.
- ✓ Singh has headed the Indian Women Pilot Association, where Bhasin and other senior women commanders like Captain Kshamta Bajpai are seen as role models by young pilots.
- ✓ Air India has the highest ratio of woman pilots among Indian carriers.
- ✓ Indian airlines saw more women applying for pilot jobs in mainly two phases - Mid-1980s and then from 2005 when private low cost airlines started taking wings.
- ✓ Erstwhile Indian Airlines was the first to hire women pilots in the early 1980s.
- ✓ Captain Saudamani Deshmukh was the first woman commander in India.
- ✓ While global average of woman pilots has been 2%-3%, India has been at over 10%.

RANKINGS

- **On October 30, the Bengaluru-based Public Affairs Centre – released the Public Affairs Index-2020 (PAI-2020)**
- ✓ Kerala emerged as the best governed state in the country while Uttar Pradesh ended at the bottom in the large states category
- ✓ Among the Union territories, Chandigarh emerged as the best with 1.05 PAI points, followed by Puducherry (0.52) and Lakshadweep (0.003)
- ✓ Dadar and Nagar Haveli (-0.69), Andaman, Jammu and Kashmir (-0.50) and Nicobar (-0.30) were the worst performers.
- ✓ The states were ranked based on a composite index in the context of sustainable development defined by three pillars of equity, growth and sustainability.
- ✓ The analysis used data from Central government sources.
- ✓ The not-for-profit organisation Public Affairs Centre is headed by former Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman K. Kasturirangan
- ✓ Four southern states - Kerala (1.388 PAI Index point), Tamil Nadu (0.912), Andhra Pradesh (0.531) and Karnataka (0.468) - topped the list of 18 large states with the population of more than two crore.
- ✓ Uttar Pradesh (-1.461), Odisha (-1.201) and Bihar (-1.158) were at the bottom of the ranking, scoring negative points in the category.
- ✓ In the small states category with less than two crore population, Goa ranked first with 1.745 points, followed by Meghalaya (0.797) and Himachal Pradesh (0.725).
- ✓ The worst performers in the index with negative points were Manipur (-0.363), Delhi (-0.289) and Uttarakhand (-0.277)
- ✓ A new aspect in PAI 2020 is the chapter on Delta Analysis – the results on state performance and ranking measured as the Delta value over the last five years from 2015- 16 when the first PAI was released, to 2019-20.
- ✓ In the large states' category, in terms of equity, Bihar followed by West Bengal and Odisha, who feature at the bottom of PAI-2020, are the top performers, while Kerala, Punjab and Maharashtra feature at the bottom.

