



EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – DECEMBER 16, 2020

NATIONAL

- **The Centre - has asked states and UTs to identify at least one 'adverse event management centre' in each block to monitor the safety and efficacy aspects of the vaccine shots.**
- ✓ The decision is aimed at tracking any adverse effect happening after vaccination
- ✓ Every vaccination session site will be linked to a designated 'Adverse Event Following Immunisation (AEFI) management centre' to ensure all such events are tackled and reported efficiently
- ✓ The health ministry has also issued guidelines for monitoring adverse events.
- ✓ Meanwhile, the ministry of health and family welfare released the latest short- and medium-term projections under the universal immunisation programme
- ✓ According to the projections, India will need to augment its cold chain equipment of different types by 5.2 million to 11 million in order to handle the Covid-19 vaccination drive.
- ✓ At present, the country has 85,634 cold chain equipment in 28,947 cold chain points
- ✓ India has six proposed Covid-19 vaccines undergoing clinical trials and three are seeking emergency use authorisation
- ✓ Accordingly, the Drugs Controller General of India is examining three applications from Pfizer, Serum Institute of India (SII) and Bharat Biotech for emergency use authorisation of their respective vaccines.
- ✓ Further, the government has supported one more candidate vaccine from India — the novel mRNA vaccine candidate, HGCO19, which has been developed by Genovva, Pune
- ✓ The government has also identified 23 ministries and departments at the Centre and state level for the coordination activities.
- ✓ These have been assigned roles for planning, implementation, social mobilisation and awareness generation for the vaccine rollout.

- **The government – is planning to have separate hostels for SC engineering students in college campuses, under a special financial assistance scheme ‘Babu Jagjiwan Ram Chhatrawas Yojna’**
- ✓ Under the scheme, the Union ministry of social justice and empowerment has proposed to carry out new construction and upkeep of hostels for Scheduled Caste students.
- ✓ As per the provisions of the scheme, central assistance would be provided to state and central institutes to construct/expand hostels for SC students.
- ✓ The ministry has directed all engineering colleges in India that figure in the NIRF (National Institutional Ranking Framework) rating, to carry out a “comprehensive” need assessment/demand survey, so as to calculate the number of hostels that would be required for SC candidates.
- ✓ The department has asked for the survey findings from all the IITs, NIT, as also universities like Anna University, Jadavpur University, Delhi Technological University, Institute of Chemical Technology, Veermata Jijabai Technological Institute
- ✓ Further, the details of survey are asked from private institutes like Thapar Institute of Technology, Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Thadomal Shahani Engineering College, KJ Somaiya Institute of Engineering and Information Technology and 250-odd engineering colleges across India.
- ✓ The survey would focus on the number of operational hostels for SC candidates, the count of such students on their college rolls, and the gap in availability of hostels for SC candidates, apart from land for constructing exclusive hostels for SC students.
- ✓ Institutes also need to indicate their willingness to manage day-to-day operations of such hostels.
- **The Centre is set to launch a pan-India toll-free helpline—Elder Line— from January 26, 2021**
- ✓ The helpline – 14567 – aims to reach out to the abandoned elderly or those reporting abuse besides providing emotional support and information on old age homes and schemes.
- ✓ The new helpline is set to be operationalised in various states and Union Territories by March.
- ✓ Older persons seeking legal advice related to the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act (MWPSC) will also be assisted.
- ✓ The call centres will be called “connect centres” and they will provide the assistance through field staff.
- ✓ There is also a proposal to link the helpline to tribunals handling maintenance-related cases and also provide updates on cases being handled by each tribunal.
- ✓ Currently, there is no consolidated database on maintenance-related cases and the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MSJ&E) hopes to bridge this gap.

- **The government - is set to launch a 'Brand India' mission, focused on the promotion of quality products that are manufactured in the country.**
 - ✓ The move is being spearheaded by Piyush Goyal-led commerce and industry ministry
 - ✓ It is based on similar policies in other countries, including the US, Switzerland, Germany and France, which regulate claims made to goods produced in their jurisdiction.
 - ✓ In case of food products, the requirement is 80% local production.
 - ✓ The manufactured goods should carry minimum of 20% local content and the companies should have their headquarters in the country.
 - ✓ The mission is to initially focus on tyre and Rubber Industry ecosystem
 - ✓ Goyal's plan was discussed with the Quality Council of India and other agencies last week
 - ✓ It is looking at country of origin certificates, which will be voluntary with self-certification to be vetted by certain entities.
 - ✓ It will be applicable to natural as well as manufactured goods.
 - ✓ To be eligible for the tag, manufactured goods producers need to be registered in India and should comply with the prescribed health and safety standards.
 - ✓ The entire certification process is proposed to be completed within six to 10 days of an application being filed, with monitoring expected to start after six months.
 - ✓ Once a decision is taken, the mission can be launched in around a year with the initial plan to be tested through a few pilot runs.
 - ✓ Those who opt for the scheme may be given recognition by the government e-marketplace and other platforms, preference in public purchase and other benefits, including those under trade agreements.
 - ✓ A range of products, from electronics to automobiles and defence equipment have been identified as potential focus areas.
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- **The Union Ministry of Culture – is planning a museum in Kolkata, as part of the commemoration of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's 125th birth anniversary in 2022**



- ✓ Further, the ministry will hold an exhibition at the Victoria Memorial and cultural performances in West Bengal on the eve of occasion

- ✓ In this regard, Culture Minister Prahlad Singh Patel held a meeting on December 15, which was attended by family members of the freedom fighter to discuss the preparations.
 - ✓ The programme would start from January 23, 2021, a year ahead of the 125th birth anniversary.
 - ✓ Historical documents, photos and other materials would be brought together at one place for display.
 - ✓ Further, an “eminent personality” will be invited to deliver the Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Memorial lecture
 - ✓ The celebrations would also include cultural programmes in West Bengal under the ‘Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat programme’
 - ✓ These programmes will be organised in partnership with paired State of West Bengal – Rajasthan – emphasizing more interaction between States
- **On December 15, the Department of Posts and the India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) - unveiled a new digital payment application “DakPay”.**



- ✓ The application was launched by the Union Minister for communications, law and Justice and electronics and information technology Sri Ravi Shankar Prasad.

- ✓ The launch of new digital payment service is part of IPPB's ongoing initiatives to provide digital financial inclusion to the country.
- ✓ The customers of IPPB and the department of post can now operate their banking services digitally through the mobile application DakPay.
- ✓ Through the new App, the customers can send money by domestic money transfers and scan the QR code and make payment for merchant establishments.
- ✓ The application is currently available only in Google Play Store and not in Apple App store.

INTERNATIONAL

- **The U.S. - has imposed sanctions on NATO-ally Turkey for its purchase of Russia's S-400 missile defence system**



- ✓ This was announced by U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on December 14
- ✓ The sanctions were issued under Section 231 of the 'Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act' (CAATSA) for purchase of Russian system
- ✓ The move is of particular interest to India, which is also in the process of buying the S-400 from Moscow.
- ✓ Sanctions were imposed on Turkey's main defence procurement agency, the Presidency of Defense Industries (SSB) for "knowingly engaging in a significant transaction with Rosoboronexport (ROE), Russia's main arms export entity"
- ✓ These SSB sanctions comprise a ban on granting specific U.S. export licences and authorisations for any goods or technology, a ban on loans or credits by U.S. financial institutions totalling more than \$10 million in any 12-month period
- ✓ Further, the sanctions cover a ban on U.S. Export-Import Bank assistance for exports and mandated U.S. opposition to loans by international financial organisations to SSB.
- ✓ Additionally, sanctions will include full blocking sanctions and visa restrictions on SSB president Ismail Demir and other officials.

- ✓ Last year, the U.S. had removed Turkey from its F-35 jet programme over concerns that sensitive information could be accessed by Russia if Turkey used Russian systems along with U.S. jets.
- ✓ S-400 is an air defence Missile system capable of destroying hostile Jets, missiles and drones at a range of 380 kilometres

INDIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES

- **UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson - has accepted the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's invitation to be the chief guest at the Republic Day parade on January 26, 2021**



- ✓ This was confirmed by UK foreign secretary Dominic Raab, who is currently on a visit to India
- ✓ On December 15, Raab had a meeting with foreign minister S Jaishankar
- ✓ The meeting focussed on trade and investment, with UK pushing India for a free trade agreement, along with Indo-Pacific, defence and security and cooperation for early recovery from Covid-19
- ✓ The future FTA with India was expected to be a part of the post-Brexit British economic plans.
- ✓ Further, Raab confirmed that HMS Queen Elizabeth Carrier Strike Group would visit the Indo-Pacific region in 2021.
- ✓ Raab is only the second foreign minister to visit India since the onset of the pandemic after his US counterpart Mike Pompeo
- ✓ Both countries agreed on a 10-year 360 degree roadmap for upgrading the India-UK partnership to the next level
- ✓ Further, Raab listed out enhanced trade partnership next year and a future free trade agreement as the top priority.
- ✓ The trip of UK PM Boris Johnson will be his first major bilateral visit since taking office, the first since the UK's departure from the EU on January 31 and the first since the end of the transition period on December 31.
- ✓ Johnson will become the second British leader to attend the Republic Day parade, after ex-PM John Major in 1993.

- ✓ Prime Minister Johnson has invited Prime Minister Modi to join the U.K.-hosted G7 summit next year
- ✓ Britain views India as a key strategic partner in a post-Brexit post-pandemic world.

CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi – to conduct virtual meeting with his Vietnamese counterpart Nguyen Xuan Phuc next week**
- ✓ The meeting is expected to boost Indian investment in energy sector of Vietnam, apart from strengthening defence and security cooperation
- ✓ Oil and gas exploration company Essar Exploration has proposed to increase its investment in the southeast Asian country to \$11 billion.
- ✓ Once implemented, the project will be the single biggest investment by an Indian company in Vietnam
- ✓ The summit next week is also likely to coincide with the launch of the first high-speed patrol boat for Vietnam
- ✓ The patrol boat was built by infra major, L&T using the \$100 million defence line of credit (LC) India announced earlier for Vietnam
- ✓ However, despite its disputes with China, Vietnam has been measured in its efforts to build defence ties with India.
- ✓ There was significant delay in operationalising a \$500 million defence LC India had announced for Vietnam in 2016
- ✓ The delay is because Vietnam wanted to use the funding for infrastructure development instead of defence procurement.
- ✓ Recently, an Implementation Agreement (IA) on Hydrography was signed between India and Vietnam in the presence of defence minister Rajnath Singh and his Vietnamese counterpart General Ngo Xuan Lich

PERSONALITIES

- **Nasa and European Space Agency (ESA) have selected three astronauts, including Indian-American Raja Chari - to serve as crew members for SpaceX Crew-3 mission to the International Space Station (ISS)**
- ✓ The mission is expected to be launched in the autumn of 2021.
- ✓ Chari will serve as commander while Nasa's Tom Marshburn will be pilot and ESA's Matthias Maurer will serve as a mission specialist
- ✓ A fourth crew member will be added at a later date.
- ✓ This will be the first spaceflight for Chari, who became a Nasa astronaut in 2017.
- ✓ He is a colonel in the US air force and joins the mission with extensive experience as a test pilot.
- ✓ Chari was among the 18 astronauts selected last week to form the Artemis Team for the next lunar missions.



- ✓ Chari's father immigrated from Hyderabad.

DEFENCE

- **The country's first Maritime Theatre Command (MTC) - is set to be created by next year under a commander-in-chief**
- ✓ The commander-in-chief will have full operational control over the western and eastern naval fleets, maritime strike fighter jets and transport aircraft, two amphibious infantry brigades and coastal patrol vessels.
- ✓ The main objective of the Maritime Theatre Command is to integrate the assets of Indian Air Force, Indian Navy and Army and the Coast Guard.
- ✓ The MTC will be the first new "geographical" theatre command to be created as part of the biggest-ever military restructuring plan to build an integrated land-air-sea war-fighting machinery
- ✓ The final MTC plan will be submitted to the government for approval "within the next few days".
- ✓ To be headed by a senior three-star naval officer, the MTC will have its headquarters at the Karwar naval base in coastal Karnataka.
- ✓ Once approved, the MTC can come up within a year.
- ✓ It will look after the country's 7,516-km coastline and 1,382 islands as well as the entire Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and beyond.
- ✓ The plan for the MTC was prepared by a group led by Navy vice chief Vice Admiral G Ashok Kumar
- ✓ Presentations on the MTC and the integrated "functional" Air Defence Command have already been made to the Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat and the three service chiefs, Admiral Karambir Singh, General M M Naravane and Air Chief Marshal R K S Bhadauria.
- ✓ The MTC will subsume the Western Naval Command (Mumbai), Eastern Naval Command (Vizag), the tri-service Andaman and Nicobar Command (Port Blair) and the Southern Air Command (Thiruvananthapuram).

- ✓ The 91 Brigade located at Thiruvananthapuram and the 108 Brigade located at Port Blair is to bring the requisite “Expeditionary Reaction Capability” of land forces to the Maritime Theatre Command.
- ✓ India currently has seventeen single-service commands, which includes seven Army commands, three Navy commands and seven Indian Air Force commands

SPORTS

- **Grandmaster P. Iniyan and V. Pranav - won gold medals in the under-18 and u-14 open categories respectively in the Asian continental online selection chess tournament recently**



- ✓ The winners will participate in the FIDE online world u-10 to 18 rapid championships to be held from December 19 to 23.
- ✓ With 10 medals — two gold, six silver and two bronze — India finished on top, followed by China and Iran.
- ✓ The six silver medal winners include Sankalp Gupta (open u-18), Aditya Mittal (open u-14), Mrinmoy Rajkhowa (open u-10), L. Jyothsna (girls u-16), Mrityika Mallick (girls u-12) and Shreya G. Hipparagi (girls u-10).
- ✓ The two bronze medal winners are N. Priyanka (girls u-18) and Rakshitta Ravi (girls u-16).

