



EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – DECEMBER 17, 2020

TAMIL NADU

- Tamil Nadu - has sought permission from the Dental Council of India to start two dental colleges in Virudhunagar and Pudukottai for 2021-22 admissions.
 - ✓ This is likely to increase the number of dental seats in the state by 200.
 - ✓ Until this year, the state had just one medical college – the Madras Dental College and Hospital in Chennai affiliated to Tamil Nadu Dr MGR Medical University with 100 BDS seats.
 - ✓ The proposed government colleges will help more students to take up dentistry, besides providing better and free oral health to people in rural areas
 - ✓ Every year, most of the seats in government dental colleges are filled up, while many seats in self-financing dental colleges remain vacant.
 - ✓ In June this year, 417 of 1,070 government seats and 640 of 690 management seats were vacant.
 - ✓ This is because the fee structure in self-financing dental colleges can go up to Rs 2.5 lakh compared to Rs 11,610 in Madras Dental College.
- On December 16, the Tamil Nadu government - decided to permit outdoor political and religious gatherings from December 19.
 - ✓ However, a maximum of 50% of participants of the total capacity and size of the open spaces would only be allowed
 - ✓ This was announced by chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami in a statement
 - ✓ As per the statement, the government has permitted social, political, sports, academic, cultural and entertainment and religious gatherings in open spaces, subject to the following of standard procedures
 - ✓ The state government revoked its earlier order permitting religious congregations, all social, political, cultural, academic and other functions from November 16, with a ceiling of 100 people.

- ✓ Later, it sanctioned permission for social, political, entertainment and religious gatherings with a maximum of 50% of the hall capacity or with a ceiling of 200 people in closed spaces from December 1 to 31.

NATIONAL

- **On December 16, the Cabinet - approved ₹3,500 crore subsidy to sugar mills for export of 60 lakh tonnes of sugar during the ongoing marketing year 2020-21**
- ✓ The move is aimed at helping the mills to clear outstanding dues of sugarcane farmers.
- ✓ The sugar industry as well as the farmers were in crisis with production at 310 lakh tonnes against the annual domestic consumption demand of 260 lakh tonnes
- ✓ The subsidy of nearly ₹6 per kg will also help the industry liquidate stocks worth ₹18,000 crore in the next 10-12 months, over and above the domestic sales .
- ✓ According to the government, the decision will benefit nearly five crore sugarcane growers as they will get subsidy directly into their accounts
- ✓ The ₹6 export subsidy or incentive has been fixed considering the prevailing international price of sugar, which is around ₹25 a kg.
- ✓ The minimum sale price set by the government is ₹31.
- ✓ This is the third time in a row when the government is providing export incentive for sugar.
- ✓ **Prime Minister Narendra Modi – will be the chief guest at celebrations marking 100 years of Aligarh Muslim University, one of the country's oldest varsities, on December 22.**
- ✓ Union HRD minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank will also be attending the event
- ✓ The last time a sitting Prime Minister attended an event at the university was in 1964, when Lal Bahadur Shastri delivered the convocation address.
- ✓ Earlier, President Ram Nath Kovind was supposed to be attending the centenary celebrations.
- ✓ Now, however, he has deferred his plan and will be attending in February 2021.
- ✓ All events will be held online, considering the Covid-19 restrictions in place.
- **The National High Speed Rail Corporation Limited (NHSRCL) - to commence soon a traffic study for the four proposed high-speed rail corridors, including the 435-km line between Chennai and Mysore**
- ✓ The study will assess the travel demand and assist in preparing a detailed project report
- ✓ This will assist the planning and preparatory work, so that land can be acquired and construction can begin on time.
- ✓ Out of the four corridors, the Centre is to prioritise the construction of Mumbai-Ahmedabad and Delhi-Varanasi belt

- ✓ The survey is to be conducted by an agency, which will be identified by the first week of January and is supposed to be completed in 180 days.
- ✓ The traffic survey is planned because detailed project report for the four lines — Chennai-Mysore (435km), Mumbai-Hyderabad (711km), Delhi-Amritsar (459km), Varanasi-Howrah (760km) — is being prepared
- ✓ The main objective is to assess the existing traffic characteristics and estimate the travel demand for high-speed rail systems on the proposed routes for 20 years.
- ✓ The travel demand assessment will include the details of people on the proposed routes, station load and section loads between stations and peak hour, peak direction traffic.

THE PLAN

CHENNAI-MYSORE HIGH-SPEED RAIL CORRIDOR

- Distance | 435km
- Speed | 300kmph
- Travel time | 1hr 40mins
- To be built by National High Speed Rail Corporation Limited

SURVEY WILL

- Assess travel demand
- Study passenger movement by trains, road, buses and flights in the past five years
- Map proposed development planned along the route
- Help prepare detailed project report based on findings
- A firm will be identified in the first week of January and the survey will take 180 days

OTHER CORRIDORS

| | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Delhi-Amritsar 459km | Mumbai-Hyderabad 711km | Varanasi-Howrah 760km |
|------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|

- ✓ The traffic data of road, rail and air travel for the last five years, fare structure, population density, urban developments or proposed development, the need for travel, category of travellers and other details will also be collected
- ✓ Based on the data collected, a travel demand modelling can be done for the route.
- ✓ Lidar-based technology and cameras may be used to take the vehicle count on the routes.
- ✓ A passenger demand forecast will be used to fix the fare from the choices offered by the high-speed rail corporation.
- ✓ As per an estimate, at least 5,000 acres may be needed to build a double line with fencing for the project.
- **The Ministry of road transport and highways – has notified that all national highways that act as feeder roads to Indo-China border or are of strategic importance for national security would be 10 metres wide**
- ✓ The highways ministry modified its two-year old circular limiting the width of such roads to 5.5 metres
- ✓ The issue of 5.5 metres width is the main concern for the Chardham road widening project.

- ✓ As per the ministry, earlier width standard does not address the issue concerning strategic roads.
- ✓ The present circular issued on December 15 is necessitated following the issues raised by the ministry of defence.
- ✓ As per the modified circular, the carriageway width should be 7 metres with 1.5 metres paved shoulder on either side
- ✓ It will be applicable for all roads in hilly and mountainous terrain which act as feeder roads to the Indo-China border or are of strategic importance for national security
- ✓ Earlier, the Supreme Court appointed high powered committee (HPC) chairman Ravi Chopra had cited the March 23, 2018 circular to point out how the ministry was violating its own decision while executing the Chardham road project.
- ✓ The new circular has been issued on the legal opinion of the attorney general of India that there is a need to build roads of 10 metres width that lead to Indo-China borders.

- **The government - will finally auction spectrum in March next year, after a gap of five years**
- ✓ However, it has decided to withhold sale of coveted 5G spectrum for now
 - ✓ The Union Cabinet gave approval to the sale of a total 2,251.25 MHz of spectrum, worth ₹3.9 lakh crore at the reserve price, on December 16
 - ✓ The move is expected to help boost the quality of 4G telecom services in the country.
 - ✓ Spectrum in the frequency bands of 700MHz, 800MHz, 900MHz, 1,800MHz, 2,100MHz, 2,300MHz and 2,500MHz would be offered for 20 years
 - ✓ The companies such as Airtel, Vodafone Idea and Reliance Jio will have the chance to buy replacement spectrum for certain airwaves whose term is ending soon.

TO HAVE 20-YEAR VALIDITY

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>➤ Auction will be for spectrum in frequency bands of 700MHz, 800, 900, 1800, 2100, 2300 & 2500MHz. Spectrum will be offered for a validity period of 20 years, says govt</p> <p>➤ No sale in regular 5G bands of 3,300-3,600MHz and also in 26GHz and 28GHz frequencies</p> <p>➤ 5G auctions expected to happen separately as govt working with defence to vacate certain spectrum</p> <p>➤ Govt to start work on 5G</p> |  <p>field trials before auctions</p> <p>➤ Government has retained rules of 2016 for payments in this auction. Apart from bid price, the telecom operator will also need to share 3% of revenue with government every year</p> |
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- ✓ To kickstart the auction process, the telecom ministry plans to issue the notice inviting applications (NIA) this month
- ✓ The decision was announced by telecom minister Ravi Shankar Prasad
- ✓ PM Modi and Reliance Jio, which has become the telecom industry leader in a period of just four years with 400 million subscribers, were pitching for auction of 5G airwaves during the recent meetings.

- **The government - is setting up a Centre of Excellence at IIT Bombay to promote courses in animation, visual effects, gaming and comic (AVGC)**
- ✓ This was announced by information and broadcasting minister Prakash Javadekar, while addressing the CII Big Picture Summit on December 16.
- ✓ According to the Minister, the move is aimed at promoting entrepreneurship and encourage start-ups in entertainment and media industry

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) - to launch a communications satellite, CMS-01, on December 17**
- ✓ It will be launched onboard the PSLV-C50 from the second launch pad of the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, SHAR.
- ✓ CMS-01 is a communications satellite envisaged for providing services in extended C Band of the frequency spectrum
- ✓ Its coverage will include the Indian mainland, and the Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep islands
- ✓ The satellite is expected to have a life of more than seven years.
- ✓ CMS-01 is the 42nd communication satellite of India and the PSLV, on its 52nd mission, has been configured in its 'XL' mode with six strap-on motors.
- ✓ The satellite is expected to be placed into the orbit around 20 minutes after lift-off.
- ✓ On November 7, ISRO had placed into orbit India's Earth Observation Satellite, EOS-01, and nine other customer satellites.

DEFENCE

- **India - plans to launch a major ₹10,500 crore project to indigenously develop six Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircrafts**
- ✓ The project is expected to get the initial approval or "acceptance of necessity" by the Rajnath Singh-led Defence Acquisitions Council soon.
- ✓ The six aircrafts, acquired from Air India, will be mounted with indigenous 360-degree coverage AESA (active electronically scanned array) radars
- ✓ The new project will involve cost-sharing between the IAF and DRDO
- ✓ Earlier, the government planned to mount the indigenous AESA radar on two new Airbus A-330 wide-body jets, which was pending for the last five years.

- ✓ Under the new project, DRDO will acquire six smaller A-320 variants from the existing Air India fleet, get the airframes modified, and then mount the radars on them.
- ✓ This project for six AWACS or advanced AEW&C (airborne early-warning and control) aircraft will be much more cost-effective than the earlier one of acquiring two new A-330s from the European multi-national company.
- ✓ DRDO has promised to deliver the six AWACS in a four-to-seven year timeframe
- ✓ IAF currently has just three Israeli Phalcon AWACS, with a 400-km range and 360-degree radar coverage, and two indigenous “Netra” AEW&C aircraft.
- ✓ The “Netra” AEW&C aircrafts have indigenous 240-degree coverage radars, with a 250-km range, fitted on smaller Brazilian Embraer-145 jets.
- ✓ Though the IAF needs at least 10 AWACS, they were not yet acquired due to the high costs involved.
- ✓ The long-pending IAF’s proposal for two more Israeli Falcons mounted on Russian A-50 aircraft, worth over \$1.5 billion, is yet to be cleared by the cabinet committee on security.

SPORTS

- **On December 16, the All India Football Federation - unveiled the logo for its bid to host the 2027 AFC Asian Cup**
- ✓ The federation has also released the campaign slogan, ‘Brighter Future Together’, on the occasion.
- ✓ India is among five countries bidding for the tournament along with Asian champions Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Uzbekistan.

- **The 2030 Asian Games - were awarded to Doha and the 2034 event went to Riyadh, following a deal struck between the rival nations.**
- ✓ Doha beat Riyadh for the 2030 Games in the vote at the Olympic Council of Asia’s (OCA) general assembly.
- ✓ The vote took place amid a bitter and long-running political dispute between Saudi Arabia and Qatar.
- ✓ Saudi Arabia is one of four countries which had imposed a trade and travel boycott on Qatar since 2017.
- ✓ The OCA reached a deal to vote on the 2030 host but to give the other candidate the 2034 event.
- ✓ Qatar will also host the 2022 World Cup.

RANKINGS

- **India – is ranked 129th among 162 countries with just 21.2% skilled workforce, as per the just-released Human Development Report (HDR) 2020**
- ✓ Accordingly, only one in five Indians in the labour force is “skilled”
- ✓ The countries closest to India are Ivory Coast, Sudan, Liberia and Cameroon, most of which are classified in the low human development category.

- ✓ Others with similar level of skill in their labour force are mostly in sub-Saharan Africa.
- ✓ The United Nations Development Programme's HDR ranks countries according to a wide range of human development parameters apart from core economic factors like GDP and per capita income.
- ✓ The report defines 'skilled labour' as people who are 15 years or older and have "intermediate" or "advanced" level of education as classified by the UNESCO.
- ✓ Nearly all countries at the top of this list are advanced economies with very high Human Development Index.
- ✓ Japan, which tops this list, is ranked 19th in the overall HDI ranking and has 99.9% of its labour force classified as skilled.
- ✓ Belarus, the US, Lithuania and Russia have over 96% of their labour force classified as skilled.
- ✓ Apart from the US, Japan and Canada, most countries at the top of this list with over 90% of their labour force being skilled are from Eastern Europe. For advanced economies in Western Europe like Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, France and the UK, the proportion ranges between 80% and 90%.
- ✓ In India's neighbourhood, only Bhutan has a lower proportion of skilled labour than India.
- ✓ In Nepal and Sri Lanka, nearly 40% of the labour force is skilled, while it is 28.1% in Myanmar, 27.8% in Pakistan and 25.8% in Bangladesh.
- ✓ Bhutan's 19.5% is lower than India's proportion.
- ✓ Data for China was not available.
- ✓ India's labour force is also characterised by a high proportion of employment in agriculture and the informal sector
- ✓ Almost half of India's workforce is classified as "working poor" — employed people who live on less than \$3.2 a day in purchasing power parity terms (about ₹70 a day at the 2020 rate).

Miles to go

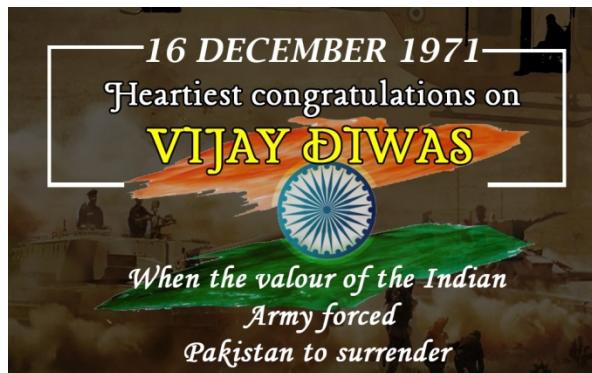
Though India improved its absolute value of the Human Development Index (0.645 in 2019 from 0.642 the previous year), it dropped a place in the overall ranking

| Country | HDI rank (2019) | Change from 2018 |
|--------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Russia | 52 | -3 |
| Sri Lanka | 72 | 1 |
| Brazil | 84 | 0 |
| China | 85 | 2 |
| South Africa | 114 | 1 |
| India | 131 | -2 |
| Bangladesh | 133 | 1 |
| Nepal | 142 | 1 |
| Pakistan | 154 | 0 |

- ✓ **India dropped two ranks in the United Nations' Human Development Index this year, standing at 131 out of 189 countries.**
- ✓ Human development index of India was 0.640.
- ✓ In 2019 India was ranked at 129th place
- ✓ For the first time, the United Nations Development Programme introduced a new metric to reflect the impact caused by each country's per-capita carbon emissions and its material footprint
- ✓ The new parameter measures the amount of fossil fuels, metals and other resources used to make the goods and services it consumes.
- ✓ Norway, Ireland and Switzerland occupied the top 3 ranks in the report, followed by Hong Kong, Iceland and Germany at 4th, 5th and 6th places respectively.
- ✓ Norway, which tops the HDI, falls 15 places if this metric is used, leaving Ireland at the top of the table.
- ✓ In fact, 50 countries would drop entirely out of the "very high human development group" category, using this new metric, called the Planetary Pressures-adjusted HDI, or PHDI.
- ✓ The HDI itself is an assessment of a nation's health, education and standards of living.
- ✓ The theme of 'Human Development and Anthropocene' was utilized in this year's Human Development Report
- ✓ Further, the report showed that out of 167 countries, India would rank 155th on bed availability for Covid-19 patients, with just 5 beds for 10,000 patients
- ✓ There are only 12 countries which fared worse than India regarding bed availability.
- ✓ As per the report, India has 8.6 doctors per 10,000 population in India
- ✓ In comparison, 76 countries have fewer doctors per 10,000 population than India,
- ✓ India's life expectancy is 69.7 years, as per the report.
- ✓ India's infant mortality rate stood at 32 deaths per 1,000 live births.
- ✓ Countries in the "very high human development" category typically have about 25 to 50 doctors per 10,000 and 25-35 beds per 10,000.
- ✓ In the next category of 'high' human development countries, the availability of beds ranges from 10 to 45 per 10,000 and the availability of doctors ranges from 15 to 40 per 10,000.
- ✓ The labour force participation in the category of females was 27.2 % and in the category of males was 78.8%
- ✓ Literacy rate in India was still lowest to 74%.
- ✓ The gross enrolment ratio of the pre-primary schooling was 13%, while it was 75% for secondary schooling and 27% for tertiary schooling.
- ✓ The Human Development Report was first launched in 1990 by the Indian Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen and Pakistani economist Mahboob Ul Haq.

INTERNATIONAL DAY

- Vijay Diwas - December 16



- ✓ The day is observed in India and Bangladesh to mark the victory of Bangladesh over Pakistan.
- ✓ On December 16, 1971, the Chief of Pakistani forces Abdullah Khan Niazi surrendered along with 93,000 troops to the allied forces of Mukti Bahini and the Indian Army.
- ✓ Vijay Diwas is observed in Bangladesh as Bijoy Dibos.
- ✓ The 1971 war resulted in the liberation of East Pakistan.
- ✓ The war was first fought between East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and Pakistan.
- ✓ India entered the war after Pakistan conducted aerial strikes on eleven Indian air stations.
- ✓ The war ended after Pakistan military signed the Instrument of Surrender with the Eastern command of the Indian Army.
- ✓ The Kargil Vijay Diwas is observed on July 26, which is celebrated in honour of Kargil war heroes.
- ✓ The Kargil conflict is also referred to as Operation Vijay.

