



## EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – DECEMBER 21, 2020

### TAMIL NADU

- **On December 20, Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami - announced an increase in the subsidy for Christians going to Jerusalem on pilgrimage.**
  - ✓ As per the CM, the subsidy of ₹20,000, now being granted for Christian pilgrims from Tamil Nadu to Jerusalem, was being increased to ₹37,000.
  - ✓ The increase in subsidy was announced at the Christmas celebrations organised by the AIADMK at the Chennai Trade Centre in Nandambakkam, Chennai
  - ✓ The Chief Minister said the AIADMK had always stood by the minorities and ensured their safety.
  - ✓ Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam said the Christian community had done yeoman service to people, providing them with education and healthcare.
  
- **The Tamil Nadu government - has allowed resumption of sports training in swimming pools across the state**
  - ✓ In this regard, the state has issued Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to ensure the smooth resumption of training
  - ✓ According to the SOP, Monitoring and Swimming Pool Management Committee (MMC) must be constituted to guide and monitor all trainees and staff within the swimming complexes.
  - ✓ The MMC would comprise staff at various Sports Development Authority of Tamil Nadu (SDAT) swimming pools under the chairmanship of concerned SDAT officers.
  - ✓ The committee will ensure the communication with the athletes and other stakeholders regarding measures being taken to manage risk and urging them to follow the same.
  - ✓ The guidelines mandate disinfection of all common areas and surfaces at regular intervals.
  - ✓ The SOP also prescribed the maximum pool capacity.

- ✓ It also prescribes the chlorine level in water to be maintained at 2.0 PPM along with 7 to 7.40 pH of water
  - ✓ The chlorine levels in the pool to be measured 45 minutes before start of practice.
  - ✓ Water samples for chlorine level checks will be drawn uniformly from multiple points in the pool.
- **Chennai airport – received a batch of 125 Holstein-Friesian bulls from Germany on December 18**
- ✓ The bulls arrived the city by a cargo flight and were taken to the animal quarantine centre in Pallikaranai
  - ✓ They were imported from Germany for breeding native species such as Sahiwal, Tharparkar, Gir and Sindhi to get offsprings that yield more milk

**MEET HOLSTEIN-FRIESIAN CATTLE**  
**ORIGIN** | Northern Holland, popular all over Europe for its high milk yield 

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**LOOKS** | Has distinct, clear black and white patches. Bulls of the breed grow to be 170cm to 180cm tall and can weigh approximately 1,200kg

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**MILK YIELD** | Cows of the breed yield approximately 25 litres of milk a day and its cross-breeds can yield 10-15 litres daily. Indian breeds generally yield 2.5 litres to 10 litres per day

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**IDEAL FOR** | Coastal and delta districts

- ✓ In October, 105 bulls of the breed had been flown in.
  - ✓ The National Dairy Development Board has been importing bulls for a few years.
  - ✓ The bulls will be taken to the Centre's frozen semen production station in Alamathi near Red Hills, once they complete 45 days of quarantine
  - ✓ Semen samples will be collected from them twice a week for three years using special equipment.
- **A team of researchers - has discovered an inscription dating back to the late Pandya period engraved on the rear wall of the sanctumsanctorum of the Varadaraja Perumal temple in Ayyur Agaram in Villupuram district.**



- ✓ The inscription, which was partially buried, was found by researchers during a recent field study.
- ✓ The inscription belongs to the late period of Maravarman Vikrama Pandyan II.
- ✓ It appears to be an agreement, signed between the administrator, Kalingarayan, and the temple authorities.
- ✓ The record mentions Avviyur Agaram as Ayyur Agaram, as a Brahmin village, situated on the banks of the Pampai river
- ✓ The village, located on either sides of the Pampai river, was donated to the Brahmins by the administrator, as part of an agreement.
- ✓ The inscription mentions various crops cultivated during the period, such as arecanut, coconut, turmeric, sugarcane and banana
- ✓ The inscription also provided a list of taxes collected during the period.

## NATIONAL

- **General Motors – to shut down its last factory in India at Talegaon in Maharashtra on December 24, 2020**
- ✓ GM wanted to sell its Maharashtra factory to Great Wall Motors, China's largest SUV maker, for more than ₹2,000 crore
- ✓ It has also submitted an application for the closure of the site
- ✓ However, the deal is yet to be cleared by Indian authorities.
- ✓ With the closure of the plant, GM will bring the curtains down on its India operations which began almost a quarter century back in 1996.
- ✓ GM had already sold its other Indian factory (at Halol in Gujarat) to China's SAIC in 2017, which is now being used by MG Motors.
- ✓ There are 1,800 salaried and hourly employees at the Talegaon site
- ✓ GM vehicle, powertrain and completely knocked-down (CKD) production will be discontinued at the Talegaon manufacturing facility.
- ✓ The deal between GM and Great Wall was announced in January this year when they signed a binding term sheet, and this was to close in the second half of the year.
- ✓ Earlier, India put in place stricter rules for investments from China and other neighbouring countries.

### DEAL WITH CHINA CO OFF

➤ Jan 2020: GM and China's Great Wall announce ₹2k cr deal for Talegaon plant

➤ June: But Maha govt puts investment plans of China cos on hold after border row

➤ Dec 24: GM to shut the car plant, its only unit, in India. Factory has 1,800 employees

- ✓ The Maharashtra government has put 'on hold' the dealings between the GM-Great Wall and two other deals (worth ₹5,000 crore) following discussions with the Centre and the external affairs ministry.
- ✓ Considering the absence of a fund flow from Great Wall Motors, GM will have to fund the closure liabilities on its own.
- **The Currency Note Press (CNP) in Nashik - has started working on Sundays to meet the note-printing target for the current financial year.**
- ✓ The CNP Nashik, which prints currency notes of various denominations, is a unit of the government-owned Security Printing and Minting Corporation of India Ltd (SPMCIL).
- ✓ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has set a target of printing 5,100 million units of currency notes for the current financial year.
- ✓ Out of this, the CNP, Nashik has printed only 50% of the target till the third quarter of the current financial year
- ✓ CNP Nashik was closed for almost two months from March 22 due to the lockdown and it started operations in the second half of May with reduced manpower
- ✓ The CNP was operational in June and July with 50% workforce.
- ✓ Now, CNP Nashik has decided to work on Sundays to meet the production target.
- ✓ It has completed the printing of currency notes of ₹100 and ₹50 denominations.
- ✓ At present, it is printing ₹500 and ₹20 notes.
- ✓ Soon, the printing of ₹200 and ₹10 will be started, added the sources.
- ✓ CNP Nashik has 2,300 permanent workers.

## INTERNATIONAL

- **Nepal Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli - recommended the dissolution of Parliament of Nepal and called for general election.**
- ✓ The PM announced the decision in an emergency cabinet meeting held on December 20
- ✓ The decision was ratified by President Bidhya Devi Bhandari in an official announcement hours later.
- ✓ The President has called for a two-phase election to be held on April 30 and May 10 next year.

## Difficult journey

A brief timeline of the events in the Himalayan country

**Nov.-Dec. 2017:** K.P. Sharma Oli wins the first poll held under the new Constitution of Nepal

**May 17, 2018:** Nepal Communist Party formed after the merger of Oli's CPN (UML) and Prachanda's CPN (Maoist-Centre)

**June 2020:** Amid the Kalapani dispute with India, Prachanda complains about lack of consultation



within the government

**June-July:** Tension intensifies. Oli talks of plots being hatched in India to topple his government

**June-Dec.:** Prachanda complains of unilateral ministerial appointments by the PM. Oli introduces Constitutional Council ordinance to gain control over the party but fails

- ✓ Oli's announcement was followed by deployment of quick action forces across capital Kathmandu and other major Nepal cities and towns where protests broke out spontaneously.
- ✓ Nepal held election in November-December 2017 and the elected 275-member Pratinidhi Sabha is expected to serve a full five-year term.
- **The United States – is planning to close down its last two embassies in Russia**
- ✓ The Trump administration has notified Congress members of Congress about its plan to close the last two remaining US consulates in Russia.
- ✓ The US state department is now planning to close the consulate in Vladivostok and temporarily suspend its operations at the consulate in Yekaterinburg.
- ✓ The closure of these consulates would leave the US with one remaining diplomatic consulate in Russia — the embassy in Moscow.
- ✓ According to the notification, the consulates are being closed because of caps imposed by Russian authorities in 2017 on the number of American diplomats allowed to work in the country.

## CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

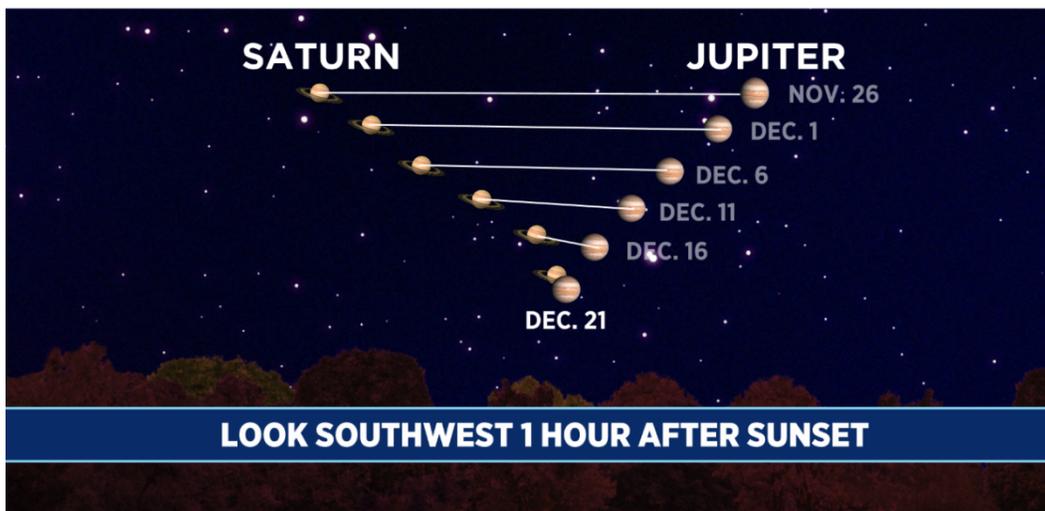
- **PM Narendra Modi - to hold a summit meeting with his Vietnam counterpart Nguyen Xuan Phuc on December 21, 2020**
- ✓ The meeting will focus on defence ties and the security situation in South China Sea (SCS) between both the countries
- ✓ In this regard, Vietnam is set to acquire a high-speed patrol boat from India
- ✓ Further, the two sides are looking to finally operationalise a \$500 million line of credit (LOC) offered by India to Vietnam for defence procurement.

- ✓ Vietnam has announced last week that it was looking forward to more investments by Indian companies in its oil and gas sector, in particular to Essar Exploration group ramping up its investment to \$11billion.
- ✓ India is also helping Vietnam, which remains locked in maritime territorial disputes with China in South China Sea, procure high-speed guard boats through a \$100 million Defence Line of Credit.
- ✓ The first of these boats has been built by L&T and is likely to be launched this week.
- ✓ India is again likely to reiterate its commitment to freedom of navigation and overflight and adherence to international laws, particularly UNCLOS.
- ✓ During the summit, the two leaders will exchange views on wide-ranging bilateral, regional and global issues and provide guidance for the future development of India-Vietnam Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.
- ✓ In addition, agreements/announcements are expected to be signed covering areas such as defence, energy, development partnership and healthcare.
- ✓ New opportunities in renewable energy cooperation will also be explored during the summit.

## SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- On December 21, the planet Jupiter's 'Great Conjunction' with Saturn - will be visible in the evening sky

### THE GREAT CONJUNCTION



- ✓ It is a phenomenon where the two large planets come so close that they appear to make a bright double planet.
- ✓ The Jupiter crosses the path of Saturn during its orbit around the sun once in every 20 years.
- ✓ Jupiter takes 12 years to complete its orbit around the sun, while Saturn takes about 30 years.

- ✓ While doing so, Jupiter passes Saturn at an angular distance of about one degree making them look like a pair, known as conjunction.
- ✓ The rarity of the present conjunction is that the angular distance is less — about one tenth of a degree — making the planets appear closer to each other, almost resembling a single planet.
- ✓ The last time the angular distance was this less was about 400 years ago
- ✓ Jupiter is at a distance of 88.6 crore km from earth, while Saturn is at a distance of 162 crore km from earth.
- ✓ Despite being at a distance of 73 crore km from each other, Jupiter and Saturn will appear to be close to each other during the great conjunction.
- ✓ Further, December 21 is also the first day of the winter solstice in the northern hemisphere
- ✓ It is the shortest day of the year in terms of hours of sunlight received in the northern hemisphere and summer solstice in the southern hemisphere.

## DEFENCE

- **The Army - will soon begin testing an indigenously developed artillery system with a record-breaking strike range of 48km.**
- ✓ The 155mm/52 caliber advanced towed artillery gun system (ATAGS) is set to undergo “winter user trials” by the Army in Sikkim in January-February, 2021
- ✓ It will be followed by the “mobility trials” and then the “summer trials” in May-June.
- ✓ If the gun gets approved, it can fulfill the Army’s requirement for 1,580 such guns worth over ₹25,000 crore.
- ✓ Also, the Army need not import such guns from Israel or other countries.
- ✓ The ATAGS will be developed with Bharat Forge (Kalyani Group) and Tata Advanced Systems as the production partners
- ✓ The plan to procure 400 Athos towed gun systems for ₹5,147 crore from Israeli firm Elbit Systems is not yet approved.
- ✓ It was originally supposed to be followed by the domestic production of another 1,180 guns in collaboration with the Ordnance Factory Board.
- ✓ The Israeli gun had emerged as L-1(lowest bidder) a year ago to beat the French one from Nexter Systems after trials.
- ✓ The user-trials of the indigenous ATAGS are delayed after the barrel of one of the guns burst during test-firing at the Pokhran field firing range in Rajasthan, which injured four personnel, in September.

## SPORTS

- **Indian women boxers Simranjeet Kaur (60kg) and Manish (57kg) - bagged gold medals with final victories in the Cologne World Cup in Germany.**



- ✓ Manish beat compatriot Saskhi 3-2, while Simranjeet defeated German Maya Klienhaus 4-1 to finish on top in their respective categories.
- ✓ Indian boxers finished at the second place after bagging nine medals including three golds, two silver, and four bronze at the World Cup.
- ✓ The three gold medals were bagged by Amit Panghal, Manisha Moun, and Simranjit Kaur as the Indian boxers successfully ended their 67-days Europe training and competition campaign.
- ✓ Sonia Lather (57kg), Pooja Rani (75kg) Gaurav Solanki (57kg), and Mohamed Hussamudin (57kg) claimed the bronze medal in their respective categories.

