



## EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – DECEMBER 22, 2020

### TAMIL NADU

- **The Tamil Nadu government - has banned New Year-eve celebrations in restaurants, hotels, clubs and resorts, in view of the Covid-19 pandemic.**
- ✓ Celebrations are also banned on roads and in beaches on New Year's eve and on January 1.
- ✓ The government, however, allowed dining as usual in restaurants, hotels, clubs, resorts, including beach resorts, and other similar places.
- ✓ The state had 9,495 active cases as on December 21 with 12 districts reporting single-digit cases and zero cases in Perambalur district.
- **Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL) - floats tender notice for procuring 'driverless' trains under the 118.9km Phase-2 metro rail project**
- ✓ As per the tender notice, CMRL has called for design, manufacture, supply testing, commission of standard gauge metro rolling stock (electric multiple units) and training of personnel for phase-2 project
- ✓ At some point under the project, train operation may be driverless and that signalling system and rolling stock shall be procured accordingly

AT A GLANCE		HOW ARE TRAINS OPERATED IN PHASE-1	
<b>ABOUT DRIVERLESS TRAINS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ They can be operated automatically at all times</li> <li>➤ Doors open and close on its own</li> <li>➤ They can detect obstacles and emergency situations</li> <li>➤ Onboard staff may only perform customer service</li> <li>➤ Controls are, however, present in these trains to manually operate them if systems fail</li> </ul>		<b>Two modes   automatic train operation (ATO) and automatic train protection (ATP)</b>	<b>ATP  </b> Traction, braking, opening and closing of doors are controlled by train operator
 <b>SOME OF THE CITIES WITH DRIVERLESS TRAINS</b>		<b>ATO  </b> All operations except door opening and starting of train are automated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ During emergency, staff in operations control centre take control</li> <li>➤ Earlier, CMRL was operating in ATP mode during non-peak hours</li> </ul>
			
		> Line 14 of Paris Metro > Sydney > Copenhagen > Japan > Dubai	> Line 9 of Barcelona Metro

- ✓ The phase-2 rail service is expected to begin in six years with the construction of the three-corridor phase likely to begin by mid-2021
  - ✓ Around 25-30% of the trains operated on phase-2 are likely to be on 'wet lease'.
  - ✓ CMRL will only monitor these trains and not directly be involved in the daily operations, their maintenance or with the staff.
  - ✓ Driverless trains are likely to have smaller consoles, as all operations of a train will be automated.
  - ✓ In case of any emergency, the operations control centre (OCC) staff, who monitor the movement of trains, may take control of the operation
  - ✓ He will be managing the train until a controller from the nearest station, who is trained to operate a train, reaches the spot.
  - ✓ In phase-1, trains are mostly operated in the automatic train operation (ATO) mode
  - ✓ Under this mode, operators manually stop and start the train at stations and open/close the train doors, while the rest are automated and controlled from OCC.
  - ✓ They can also be operated in automatic Train Protection (ATP) mode where a train operator controls all operations including traction, braking, opening and closing of the train doors.
- **The Chennai Mathematical Institute (CMI) - to establish "Dr F C Kohli Centre of Excellence for Advanced Research in Mathematical and Computing Sciences" in honour of the Dr F C Kohli**



- ✓ F C Kohli, a visionary who shaped the IT industry in India, passed away on November 26.
- ✓ The Institute has announced a donation of ₹10 crore to establish this centre in memory of F C Kohli
- ✓ The institute plans to raise additional funds from corporate foundations, community groups, colleagues and well wishers to establish the centre of excellence and endowed chairs
- ✓ The funds will also be utilized to provide grants for advanced research in areas such as data science, quantum computing and complexity theory.

# NATIONAL

- **On December 21, India - suspended all scheduled passenger flights to and from the UK between December 23 and 31.**
- ✓ Meanwhile, several other countries have announced limited or comprehensive travel bans to arrest the spreading of new coronavirus strain from Britain.
- ✓ Travellers from the UK landing at any Indian airport before the flight ban kicks in at midnight on December 22 will have to undergo mandatory RT-PCR tests
- ✓ As per the results, institutional quarantine for at least 14 days or monitored home isolation for a week will be advised, as per civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri.
- ✓ In a related announcement, Maharashtra imposed an 11pm to 6am night curfew within municipal corporation limits across the state from December 22 till January 5, citing the emergence of the new coronavirus strain.
- ✓ Karnataka has made Covid tests mandatory for passengers arriving from Denmark and the Netherlands, too.

## 14-DAY QUARANTINE IN MAHA

➤ **India suspends all flights to and from UK from Dec 23 till Dec 31. Mandatory RT-PCR test at airports for UK arrivals. Institutional quarantine for those testing positive, 7-day home isolation for others**

➤ **Maha imposes 7-day institutional quarantine followed by 7 days in home isolation for arrivals from UK, Europe & Middle East. 7-day home quarantine for others**

➤ **Poland, Spain, Switzerland, Russia, Jordan and Hong Kong suspend travel from Britain, joining France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Austria, Ireland, Israel, Belgium and Canada**

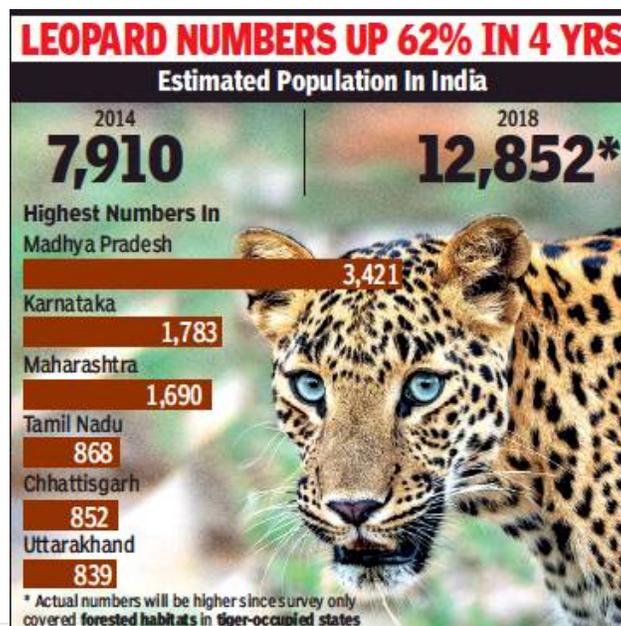
➤ **Saudi Arabia, Kuwait & Oman close borders completely**

➤ **Night curfew from 11pm to 6am in Maharashtra from Tuesday. Christmas and New Year parties to end by 11pm**

- ✓ Cargo and special flights are exempt from the nine-day suspension for now.
- ✓ India has had an air-bubble agreement with the UK since international travel resumed
- ✓ Four airlines currently operate 67 weekly flights — British Airways (29), Air India (23), Virgin Atlantic (8) and Vistara (7) — between various Indian cities and London.
- ✓ The new variety is being referred to as Variant Under Investigation (VUI) and was identified by COVID-19 Genomics UK (COG-UK).
- ✓ The new variant is the result of multiple mutations in the spike protein of COVID-19
- ✓ The COG-UK had identified these mutations as “N501Y”
- ✓ According to Indian Association of Preventive and Social Medicine, the mutated virus is 1.7 times more infective but may not affect the effectiveness of vaccines under development

- ✓ At present, there are no quick diagnostic tests to check for the new 'UK Covid strain'.
  - ✓ For a swab sample to be certified as Covid-19 positive, the RT-PCR test needs to identify two genes located on the Covid-19-causing coronavirus SARS-CoV-2.
  - ✓ The kits in use usually detect N, S and ORF genes, among others.
  - ✓ However, in the UK-mutated strain, the S gene target is not detected during RT-PCR tests.
  - ✓ **India, Pakistan, Poland, Spain, Switzerland, Sweden, Russia, Jordan and Hong Kong suspended travel for Britons after PM Boris Johnson warned a mutated variant of the virus, which was 40% to 70% more transmissible, had been identified in the country.**
  - ✓ Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Oman closed their borders completely.
  - ✓ Several other nations blocked travel from Britain over the weekend, including France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Austria, Ireland, Belgium and Canada
  - ✓ The discovery of the new strain came just months before vaccines are expected to be widely available, amidst the pandemic that has killed about 1.7 million people worldwide and over 67,000 in Britain.
  - ✓ The new variant is rapidly become the dominant strain in parts of southern England, including London.
  - ✓ Cases of the new strain have also been in detected in some other countries, including Denmark, Italy and the Netherlands.
  - ✓ The European Union bloc is on course to start vaccinations within a week after its medicines regulator approved the use of a shot from Pfizer and BioNTech on December 21.
  - ✓ Meanwhile, South Africa has also announced that a new variant of the coronavirus is driving the country's current resurgence of the disease, which is seeing higher numbers of cases, hospitalisations and deaths.
  - ✓ The variant, known as 501.V2, is different from the one in Britain and appears to be more infectious than the original virus.
- **On December 21, the Centre – announced the first-ever service rules and consumer rights for the power sector**
- ✓ This is the first time that the power supply has been recognised as a service industry and standards have been prescribed to ensure consumers get value for their money.
  - ✓ As per the rules, distribution companies (discoms) will be liable to pay compensation of up to ₹1 lakh for engaging in 'unnecessary' power outages
  - ✓ Further, the discoms are mandated to deliver other services such as installing a new connection, replacing or shifting a meter and changing the load within stringent timelines.
  - ✓ Power is a concurrent subject and under the (Electricity) Act, the Centre has the authority to frame laws and rules

- ✓ The norms also prescribe penalties for any violations, as the rules are not deemed 'optional' for states
  - ✓ Under the new rules, getting a new connection too has been made easy.
  - ✓ Consumers will just need two documents - proof of identity and ownership or occupancy of the premises - and can apply online to set up a connection of 10 KW of load.
  - ✓ The new connection is to be installed within seven days in metros, 15 days in other municipal areas and 30 days in the villages.
  - ✓ The need to estimate the demand charges for loads up to 150 KW has been removed
  - ✓ A new category of Prosumers has been identified under the new rule.
  - ✓ They are the consumers who have set up rooftop units or solarised irrigation pumps.
  - ✓ Prosumers have the right to produce electricity for self-use and inject excess to the grid.
  - ✓ Further, a consumer grievance redressal forum is to be established with representatives of consumers at various levels
- **The leopard population in India - recorded a steep increase of 62% in four years — from 7,910 in 2014 to 12,852 in 2018**
- ✓ This was revealed by the latest estimates of the leopard population released on December 21.
  - ✓ Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar released the 'Status of Leopards in India, 2018' report.
  - ✓ Madhya Pradesh has the highest number of leopards (3,421), followed by Karnataka (1,783) and Maharashtra (1,690).
  - ✓ These three states together account for more than 50% of leopards in the country's tiger habitats, which serve as a common ecosystem for different species of wild animals.



- ✓ The enumeration of leopards was done by National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) in association with state forest departments only on the tiger habitats in forest environment
  - ✓ In general, leopards are also found in non-forested habitats (coffee and tea plantations), higher elevations in the Himalayas, arid landscapes and most northeast states
  - ✓ Estimates show that leopards have occupied nearly 1.86 lakh sq km of forest area in the country.
- **On December 21, Union Minister of State for Prime Minister's Office Jitendra Singh - released the Central Bureau of Investigation's revised Crime Manual**



- ✓ The manual will assist in guiding the agency on legal matters and offer tools for an efficient probe.
- ✓ The process of updating the manual in accordance with the current requirements took almost 18 months, under CBI chief Rishi Kumar Shukla.
- ✓ It was last revised in 2005.
- ✓ The new manual offers information about the laws, procedures and their interpretations.
- ✓ Apart from details on Interpol notices and its functioning, the manual has a separate chapter on investigation in foreign jurisdictions.

## **INDIA AND NEIGHBOURS**

- **The Pakistan government - has finally permitted the construction of a Krishna temple in Islamabad on December 21**
- ✓ The state-run Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) ruled that Islamic laws allowed minorities to have their own religious place.
  - ✓ CII had earlier issued a 'fatwa' against the construction of any new Hindu temple in Pakistan.
  - ✓ The Capital Development Authority (CDA), Islamabad, gave permission to the Islamabad Hindu Panchayat (IHP) to construct the boundary wall around the

temple, a community centre and cremation ground for the Hindu community in Islamabad.

- ✓ In 2017, the CDA had allotted a 20,000sqft plot to IHP for the construction of temple
- ✓ Later, on June 23, 2020, the groundbreaking ceremony of the Krishna temple was held.

## COMMITTEES

- **On December 21, the Centre – announced its decision to constitute a high-level committee headed by home minister Amit Shah to commemorate the 125th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.**
- ✓ The panel will work out activities for year-long commemoration starting on January 23 next year.
- ✓ On December 19, Amit Shah paid glowing tributes to Khudiram Bose, another iconic freedom fighter from West Bengal who was hanged .
- ✓ The celebrations were conceived as a mark of gratitude to the colossal contribution Netaji made to India's freedom struggle.
- ✓ The members of the high level commemoration committee will include experts, historians, authors, family members of Netaji as well as eminent people associated with Azad Hind Fauj and INA.

## CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

- **India and Vietnam – signed seven agreements in varied areas such as defence, petrochemicals and renewable and nuclear energy**



- ✓ Further, a framework agreement for cooperation is also signed between defence industries of both the countries
- ✓ The agreement is expected to help Vietnam utilise two defence lines of credit India announced earlier, \$500 million and \$100 million, for the Asean country
- ✓ On December 21, PM Narendra Modi held an Indian-Vietnam virtual summit with his counterpart Nguyen Xuan Phuc
- ✓ The PM hailed Vietnam as a pillar of India's Act East policy.

- ✓ India and Vietnam announced implementation of the High Speed Guard Boat (HSGB) manufacturing project for Vietnam Border Guard Command under the \$100 million line of credit
- ✓ India handed over a completed HSGB, while announcing that seven more HSGBs to be manufactured in Vietnam.
- ✓ Both leaders also agreed to further institutionalise defence exchanges through mutual logistics support, regular ship visits, joint exercises, exchanges in military science and technology, information sharing, and also cooperation in UN peacekeeping.

## OBITUARY

- **Motilal Vora, veteran Congress leader and 2-time CM of Madhya Pradesh (93 years)**



- ✓ Veteran Congress leader Motilal Vora — two-time Madhya Pradesh chief minister — passed away at a Delhi hospital on December 21, a day after he turned 93.
- ✓ He had contracted Covid-19 infection in October and was hospitalised but recovered and was sent home.
- ✓ MP and Chhattisgarh have declared three days of mourning.
- ✓ Vora occupied several key positions, including Chief Minister of undivided Madhya Pradesh twice (1985-88 and 1989), Health Minister in Rajiv Gandhi's Cabinet and Governor of Uttar Pradesh in the mid-1990s.
- ✓ He had also served as the Congress's treasurer for 16 years and represented Chhattisgarh in the Rajya Sabha for four terms, until this April.
- ✓ Vora, a native of Durg, was the 13th chief minister of Madhya Pradesh and later Governor of Uttar Pradesh.
- ✓ Vora came from a humble background and started as a journalist for NavBharat, and then became a supervisor for a private bus company in Durg.
- ✓ In 1980, Arjun Singh became CM of Madhya Pradesh, and Vora was appointed vice president of Madhya Pradesh Road Transport Corporation. In 1984, he was appointed state Congress president.

- ✓ Congress won the 1985 election as Arjun Singh took oath of office for a second term on March 11.
- ✓ However, the very next day he was appointed Governor of Punjab by then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.
- ✓ Singh picked Vora to be his successor.
- ✓ Vora's first term as CM was from March 13, 1985, till Arjun Singh's return on February 13, 1988.

## SPORTS

- **Tamil Nadu's D Gukesh and Rakshitta Ravi - made the final of the FIDE Online World rapid championship on December 21.**



- ✓ Gukesh beat Denis Lazavik 1.5-1.5 in the U-14 open category.
- ✓ Rakshitta beat Leya Garifullina 1.5-0.5 to make the U-16 girls final.
- ✓ In the quarterfinals stage, Rakshitta had beaten Ineymig Hernandez 2-1.