



## EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS - DECEMBER 23, 2020

### TAMIL NADU

- **On December 22, the Tamil Nadu government - announced additional funds grant of ₹1,805.48 crore to increase the unit cost of houses built under the Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G).**
  - ✓ The decision is expected to benefit over 2.5 lakh beneficiaries of the scheme.
  - ✓ With this, the unit cost per house would be increased from ₹1.70 lakh to ₹2.40 lakh.
  - ✓ Under the PMAY-G, the unit cost per house stands at ₹1.20 lakh, including ₹72,000 from the State and ₹48,000 from the State.
  - ✓ In addition, the State grants ₹50,000 towards reinforced cement concrete roofing.
  - ✓ Further, an amount of ₹23,040 in wages under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme for 90 man-days and ₹12,000 for constructing toilets in each of the houses are also given to the beneficiaries.
  - ✓ The Chief Minister had now ordered an increase in the funds provided for reinforced cement concrete roofing from ₹50,000 to ₹1.20 lakh a unit.
  
- **The Tamil Nadu government - has sought central assistance of ₹1,514.06 crore towards temporary and permanent relief and restoration works in ten coastal and delta districts severely affected by cyclone Burevi.**
  - ✓ On December 21, the Centre had deputed the same inter-ministerial team, constituted for cyclone Nivar, to assess damages and relief work of the state administration.
  - ✓ Seven people died, while 719 cattle and 19,292 poultry deaths were reported due to heavy rains triggered by cyclone Burevi.
  - ✓ The state had sought for assistance towards temporary (₹484.97 crore) and permanent (₹ 1,029.09 crore) restoration works
  - ✓ The Central team is expected next week and will have a direct assessment before submitting a report to the Centre

- ✓ The team will also recommend whether the disaster can be considered of a 'severe nature.'
- **On December 22, Greater Chennai Corporation commissioner G Prakash - announced that the civic body would collect user fee from building owners for removing garbage from January 1, 2021**
- ✓ According to the solid waste management bylaws 2019, every property owner has to pay user charges along with property tax for collection of garbage in his neighborhood.
- ✓ Residential building with built area up to 500sqft would have to pay ₹10 a month while those with 501-1,200sqft will pay ₹25.
- ✓ Further, ₹100 will be paid by owners for building with built up area of 1,201 to 2,400sqft and those above 2,401sqft.
- ✓ Commercial establishments and schools, places of worship would be charged ₹500 a month.
- ✓ Hospitals will pay Rs.4000 per month, while luxury hotels will have to pay user charges of ₹5,000 a month
- ✓ Events held in open public spaces, except funeral and government awareness activities, would be charged ₹5,000 to ₹20,000 based on the number of participants.
- ✓ At least seven zones in the southern parts of the city will have private conservancy operations by January 1.
- ✓ The waste collection in four more zones will be privatised by February.
- **The lower courts in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry – are to resume physical hearing in full capacity from January 18 after a gap of nine months apart from the 'virtual' hearings**
- ✓ All the subordinate courts and the high court moved to 'virtual' mode hearing in view of the Covid-19 pandemic since March 2020.
- ✓ The decision to permit physical hearing in full capacity of the subordinate courts is taken by the administrative committee of the Madras high court, consisting of top seven judges
- ✓ The advocates could be given the option of arguing their cases by virtual mode or physical mode.

## **NATIONAL**

- **The Centre – has issued a new set of stringent Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for testing and tracing international passengers from UK arrived in the past four weeks — from November 25 to December 23.**
- ✓ The Bureau of Immigration will communicate the state-wise passenger list of flights from the UK which landed at various international airports in India to state governments and the integrated disease surveillance programme. All passengers

from the UK who have arrived in India will be subjected to a mandatory RT-PCR test at all airports

- ✓ If they are positive, they will also have to undergo a spike gene-based RT-PCR test and will be put in a separate isolation facility coordinated by state health authorities.
- ✓ If the sequencing matches the current strain of the virus going around in the country, then the ongoing treatment protocol, including home isolation or treatment as per case severity, will be followed.
- ✓ All community contacts, without exception, of travellers who test positive will be subject to institutional quarantine in separate centres
- ✓ District surveillance officers will ensure daily follow-up of those under observation for 28 days starting from the date of arrival.
- ✓ The health department will also be monitoring all passengers arriving the US and countries in Africa.

### SPIKE GENE TEST AFTER RT-PCR

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Those who travelled/transited from UK to declare <b>travel history of past 14 days</b>, fill up self-declaration form</li><li>➤ Arrivals between Dec 21 and 23 to <b>undergo RT-PCR test</b>. If positive, spike gene-based test to be done</li><li>➤ Those testing <b>positive to be sent to institutional isolation facility</b> by respective state authorities</li><li>➤ If carrying current Covid-19 strain, to be administered ongoing treatment protocol, including home isolation or treatment at facility level</li><li>➤ If infected with new variant, s/he to <b>remain in a separate</b></li></ul>	<p><b>isolation unit</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Those testing negative to be advised home quarantine</li><li>➤ <b>Contacts of travellers testing positive to be in institutional quarantine and tested</b> as per ICMR guidelines. Contacts are <b>co-passengers seated in same row, 3 rows in front and 3 rows behind</b> along with identified cabin crew</li><li>➤ Those who arrived from Britain between Nov 25 and Dec 8 will be contacted by district surveillance officers and advised to self-monitor health</li><li>➤ DSOs to conduct <b>daily follow-ups for arrivals between Dec 9 and 23 for 14 days</b></li></ul>
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- ✓ Overall, around 20 passengers and crew coming from Heathrow airport tested positive for Covid-19 virus at five international airports — Delhi, Amritsar, Kolkata, Ahmedabad, and Chennai
- ✓ All the swab samples have been sent to the National Institute of Virology, Pune, to check if the virus is of a different strain — a more virulent one — detected recently in south England.
- ✓ Indian government has temporarily suspended all passengers flights from the UK on December 22, 23:59 hrs.
- ✓ The super spreader Covid-19 viral strain found in the UK is claimed to be 70% more transmissible and more of a concern for children
- ✓ In the last 10 days, 1,078 people came to Tamil Nadu from the UK and other European countries.

- ✓ **As of now, the mutation had not been detected in India, and it would have no impact on the potential of the emerging vaccines being developed in India or internationally.**
- ✓ Meanwhile, drugmakers, including BioNTech and Moderna, have started testing their Covid-19 vaccines against the new fast-spreading variant of the virus
- ✓ The mutation of the virus is known as the B.1.1.7 lineage
- ✓ US President-elect Joe Biden was injected the Pfizer-BionNTech vaccine live on TV on December 21 in an effort to boost confidence in its safety.
- ✓ At 78, Joe Biden is in the high-risk group for Covid-19



- ✓ Antarctica became the last continent to report Covid-19, after 36 people stationed at a Chilean research base tested positive
- ✓ They were among a group of 60 people who were evacuated from the base to the Chilean city of Punta Arenas over the weekend and have since been isolated
- **Air pollution in India - killed nearly 1.7 million people in 2019, accounting for an alarming 17.8% of all deaths in the country in the year**
- ✓ This was revealed by a study conducted as a collaborative effort by Indian institutions that include ICMR.
- ✓ The economic loss due to premature deaths and disease caused by pollution last year was estimated at around Rs 2.6 lakh crore
- ✓ Among the states, Delhi suffered the highest per capita loss with nearly 1.4% of gross domestic product (GDP), followed by Haryana.
- ✓ The highest loss to GDP was recorded by Uttar Pradesh at nearly 2.6% followed by Bihar at 1.9% and Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan 1.7% each.
- ✓ Considering the impact of outdoor air pollution alone on state GDP, UP still recorded the highest loss to GDP at just over 1.3% followed by Punjab at 1.2%
- ✓ The study was conducted by the India State-Level Disease Burden Initiatives, a collaborative effort involving over 300 researchers from institutions like ICMR, Public Health Foundation of India, Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation and others
- ✓ The report provides data from across different states for policymakers.
- ✓ The findings show the per capita economic loss due to air pollution was generally higher in states with high per capita GDP.

- **On December 22, the government – announced that the Class X and XII Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) exams 2021 will not be held at least till February**
  - ✓ The fresh dates will be announced later considering the pandemic situation in the country and consultations with stake-holders.
  - ✓ Usually, the practical exams are conducted in January and theory exams begin every year in February and conclude in March.
  - ✓ The CBSE had earlier announced that the Board exams in 2021 would be conducted in the written mode and not online.
  - ✓ Schools across the country were closed in March to contain the spread of the pandemic.
  - ✓ They were partially reopened in some States in October.
  - ✓ Moreover, assembly polls are slated to be held in four states and Puducherry during April-June next year.
  
- **The Central government - plans to set up a Development Finance Institution (DFI) in the next three to four months**
  - ✓ The move will help mobilizing the ₹111 lakh crore required for funding of the ambitious national infrastructure pipeline
  - ✓ In her last Budget speech, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had proposed to set up DFIs for promoting infrastructure funding.
  - ✓ About 7,000 projects have been identified under the National Infrastructure Pipeline with projected investment of ₹111 lakh crore during the period from 2020-25.
  - ✓ The DFI would have a key developmental role apart from the financing role.
  - ✓ Prior to liberalisation, India had DFIs engaged in development of industry.
  - ✓ Financial institutions, ICICI and IDBI, in their previous versions, were DFIs.
  - ✓ The country's oldest financial institution IFCI Ltd. too had acted as a DFI.

## **AWARDS**

- **President Donald Trump - conferred the Legion of Merit (Degree : Chief Commander), one of America's highest military honours, on PM Narendra Modi on December 21**
  - ✓ PM Modi has been honoured for his “leadership in elevating bilateral strategic partnership and accelerating emergence of India as a global power”.
  - ✓ The PM thanked Trump for the honour and said the award recognised efforts of people of India and the US to improve ties.
  - ✓ He said the 21st century presented both unprecedented challenges as well as opportunities.
  - ✓ India's ambassador to the US Taranjit Singh Sandhu accepted the award on behalf of the PM from US NSA Robert O'Brien at the White House



- ✓ The Legion of Merit was also awarded to Australian PM Scott Morrison and former PM of Japan Shinzo Abe.
- ✓ Morrison was presented the award for “addressing global challenges and promoting collective security” and Abe “for his leadership and vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific”
- ✓ The awards were received by the Australian and Japanese Ambassadors in Washington DC.
- ✓ India, the U.S., Japan and Australia constitute the ‘Quad’ group of countries — seen as an alternative to Chinese dominance in the Indo-Pacific region.
- ✓ The Legion of Merit was instituted in 1942 by former U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt
- ✓ It is awarded to members of the U.S. Armed Forces and also members of foreign (i.e., non-U.S.) Armed Forces and sometimes heads of state or government.
- ✓ The award is presented to foreign recipients in four categories - Chief Commander, Commander, Officer and Legionnaire.
- ✓ The Legion of Merit is the seventh in the order of precedence of all the United States military awards.
- ✓ Other Indians who have won the award include Field Marshal K.M. Cariappa, who received the Legion of Merit (Degree: Chief Commander) in 1949 from then U.S. President Harry S. Truman
- ✓ Field Marshal K.M. Cariappa was the first Indian Commander in Chief of the Indian Army.
- ✓ He is the one of the only two Indian Army officers to hold the Five-star rank of field marshal, apart from Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw.
- ✓ Later, General S.M. Srinagesh of Indian Army was awarded with the Legion of Merit honour in 1955
- ✓ In India, the Army Day is celebrated on January 15 in recognition of Field Marshal Cariappa’s taking over as the first Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army.

## **SPORTS**

- **Tamil Nadu’s Grand Master (GM) D Gukesh and Woman International Master (WIM) Rakshitta Ravi - won the U-14 open and U-16 girls titles respectively at the FIDE Online World Rapid championships on December 22.**



- ✓ Gukesh defeated Murzin Volodar 2-1, while sixth seeded Rakshitta prevailed over Yuxin Song 1.5-0.5.
- ✓ This is Gukesh's second age-group category title.
- ✓ He had won the U-12 world title in Spain two years ago.
- ✓ For Rakshitta, this is the second age-group world title as well.
- ✓ She had won the U-10 world title in Greece back in 2015.
- ✓ **Further, India's Nihal Sarin defeated Shant Sargsyan 1.5-0.5 to clinch the U-18 open category title.**
- ✓ In the semis stage, Nihal defeated Francesco Sonis 1.5-0.5 earlier in the day.