



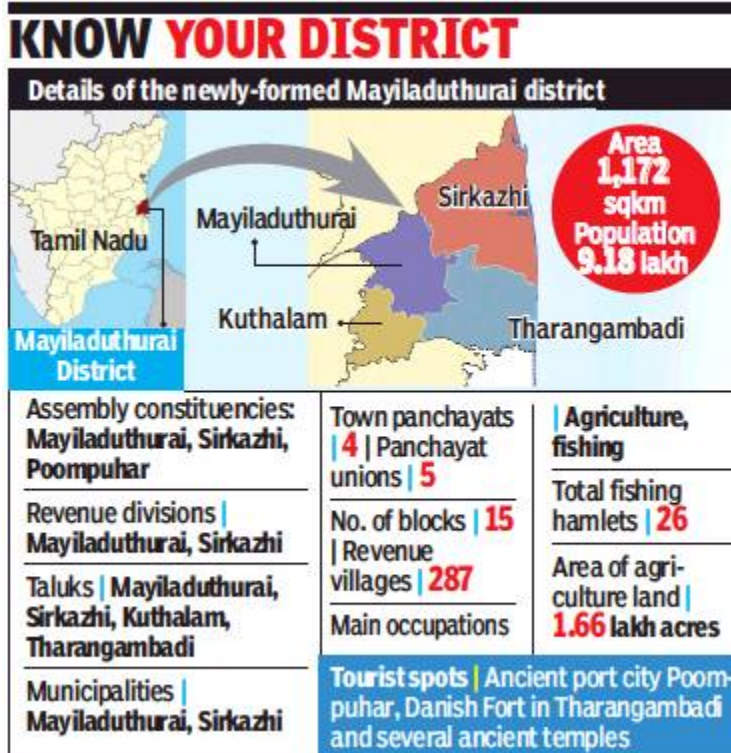
EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – DECEMBER 29, 2020

TAMIL NADU

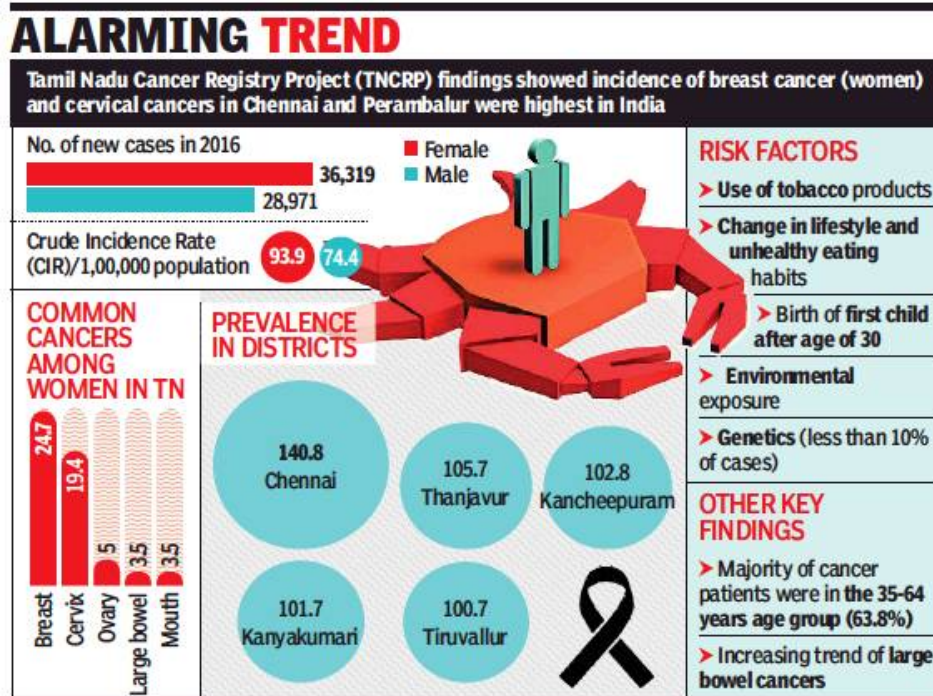
- On December 28, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami - formally launched Mayiladuthurai as the state's 38th district through video conferencing from Chennai



- ✓ On March 24, the Chief Minister informed the state Assembly under Rule 110 that bifurcation of Nagapattinam district was needed for administrative convenience and to speed up the public welfare measures
- ✓ Subsequently, on April 7, the state government issued a Government Order notifying that Mayiladuthurai would be created out of Nagapattinam district.
- ✓ Later, the State government appointed R Lalitha as special officer and N Shreenatha as superintendent of police on July 12.
- ✓ The new district consists of rural and semi-urban regions with a mix of traders, farmers, agriculture laborers and the fishing community
- ✓ In July 2019, the Tamil Nadu government carved Chengalpet and Tenkasi from Kanchipuram and Tirunelveli districts.
- ✓ A month later, Vellore was trifurcated into Tirupattur and Ranipet districts.
- ✓ The new districts were being created based on the longstanding demand of the people, as per the Chief Minister



- ✓ The newly created Mayiladudurai district consists of two revenue divisions Mayiladudurai and Sirkazhi.
- ✓ Mayiladudurai, Sirkazhi, Kuthalam and Tharangambadi areas will be the new revenue taluks of the district
- ✓ The new district also comprises of 15 revenue firkas and 287 revenue villages.
- The State health department and Cancer Institute – jointly released a Tamil Nadu Cancer Registry Project (TNCRP) report on December 28



- ✓ As per the report that covered the entire state population of 80 million, more women are fighting cancer in the state than men
 - ✓ This is the highest demographic evaluated by any cancer registry in the world.
 - ✓ The Crude Incidence Rate (CIR) of all cancers per 1,00,000 population was 93.9 among women compared to 74.4 in men
 - ✓ A total of 65,590 cancer cases were diagnosed in 2016 in the state, which increased to 78,641 in the year 2020.
 - ✓ Of this, the highest CIR of cancers was observed in Chennai (140.8) and the least in Krishnagiri (48.5).
 - ✓ The incidence of breast cancer in women observed in Chennai (46.4 per 1,00,000 women) was the highest in the entire country.
 - ✓ After Chennai, Thanjavur has the second-highest CIR and this could be attributed to rampant use of chewing tobacco there, as per the study
 - ✓ In districts such as Erode, Ramanathapuram and Sivaganga, 50%-70% cancer patients travel to another district for treatment while the figure was 10% in Chennai and Coimbatore.
 - ✓ The report was prepared by the institute without incurring any cost to the government.
 - ✓ Professor R Swaminathan from Cancer Institute co-authored the study with R Shanta
- **Dravidar Kazhagam president K. Veeramani – was announced as the recipient of this year’s Dr. Narendra Dabholkar Memorial Award**



- ✓ The award was instituted in memory of the Maharashtra-based rationalist Dabholkar, who was killed some years ago.
- ✓ The U.S.-based Maharashtra Foundation had instituted the award in his memory
- ✓ The award includes ₹1 lakh and a citation.
- ✓ The DK patriarch has dedicated his whole life to propagate rationalism and served for the cause of social justice in society, as per the award release.
- ✓ Due to Covid-19, the award ceremony would be held online this year.

- **Ramky Enviro Engineers – to manage solid waste management in north zones in Chennai, after obtaining the tender from the Chennai Corporation**
- ✓ From February 2021, the company will be responsible for collection and transportation of waste in Thiruvotriyur, Manali, Madhavaram and Ambattur zones.
- ✓ These zones in the north Chennai generate about 780 tonne of waste every day.
- ✓ The company was earlier handling waste collection and transportation in Adyar, Kodambakkam and Teynampet zones after winning the seven-year contract in 2012.
- ✓ Their contract lasted until the new contractor Urbaser-Sumeet took over this year.
- ✓ However, both the agencies performed poorly as they couldn't achieve 100% door-to-door collection and not able to keep the streets clean.
- ✓ The company will recruit 4,500 workers for door-to-door collection, purchase 1,200 bins and 810 battery operated vehicles this time.
- ✓ It has to be noted that no one else participated in the tender.

STATES

- **On December 28, the Karnataka Cabinet - decided to promulgate an ordinance for implementing the anti-cow slaughter Bill.**
- ✓ The Karnataka Prevention of Slaughter and Preservation of Cattle Bill, 2020, passed in the Legislative assembly during the winter session earlier this month, was not cleared by the Legislative Council.
- ✓ The new law would prohibit the slaughter of cows, but permit the slaughter of buffaloes aged 13 years and above.
- ✓ Slaughterhouses would continue to operate and beef consumption would not be prohibited, as the ban does not extend to buffaloes
- ✓ It seeks to ban slaughter of cows and proposes stringent punishment to those who indulge in smuggling, illegal transportation, atrocities on cows and slaughtering them.
- ✓ The new law proposes up to seven years in jail and a fine of ₹5 lakh for offenders.
- ✓ Earlier, the anti-cow slaughter law was enacted in the year 1964.
- ✓ The old law imposed a ban on slaughter of cows until the age of 13, whereas the new law would totally ban the slaughter of cows.
- ✓ Further, in the 1964 law, there was scope for litigation on deciding the age of the cow.
- ✓ The new law put an end to such confusion and imposed a blanket ban.
- ✓ The ordinance will be sent “within a day” to the governor to seek his nod and take effect immediately after being ratified by him
- **Odisha – to reserve seats in medical and engineering courses for students of government high schools in the state.**

- ✓ A committee led by a retired high court judge will finalise the modalities for the new reservation category
 - ✓ The proposal in this regard was decided by the Naveen Patnaik cabinet on December 28.
 - ✓ The committee will submit its report within three months so that the recommendations can be implemented from the next academic year
 - ✓ The proposed quota would be applicable only to students of state-run schools.
 - ✓ The committee will decide on the minimum number of years a student has to spend in a government school to get the quota benefit
 - ✓ The committee will also decide on the percentage of seats to be reserved for eligible students.
- **On December 28, the Assam government - introduced a Bill in the 126-member Assembly to convert the State-run madrasas into general educational institutes from April 1, 2021**
- ✓ It proposes to abolish government-funded and private madrassas regulated by the now-dissolved State Madrassa Education Board in the state
 - ✓ A third category of madrassas, which are purely privately-run and not regulated by the state madrassa education board, will not come under the purview of this proposed law and can continue to function
 - ✓ The new bill is called Assam Repealing Bill, 2020
 - ✓ It seeks to repeal two existing acts -
 - ✓ The Assam Madrassa Education (Provincialisation) Act, 1995 and
 - ✓ The Assam Madrassa Education (Provincialisation of Services of Employees and Re-Organisation of Madrassa Educational Institutions) Act, 2018.
 - ✓ The government had also announced that it was not taking any steps to close down or regulate the private madrasas.
 - ✓ The Bill proposed to convert the madrasas into upper primary, high and higher secondary schools with no change of status
 - ✓ The pay, allowances and service conditions of the teaching and the non-teaching staff will also be retained without any revision
 - ✓ Assam has more than 600 State-run madrasas, for which the government spends Rs 260 crore annually
 - ✓ Madrassas is a type of educational institution that teaches the religion of Islam.
 - ✓ They follow the Hanafi school of thought, which is one of the four principal Sunni schools of Islamic jurisprudence
 - ✓ The Madrassas mainly teach the holy book of Muslims, The Quran
 - ✓ They also teach Arabic language to youth.
 - ✓ The first network of Madrassas was built in Iran, Khorasan and Mesopotamia by Nizam-al-Mulk.

NATIONAL

- **The Government – has started the two-day dry run to test preparedness for the nationwide roll-out of a Covid-19 vaccine in four States — Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Punjab — on December 28.**
- ✓ The end-to-end dry run was carried out in Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh, Rajkot and Gandhinagar in Gujarat, Ludhiana and Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar (Nawanshahr) in Punjab and Sonitpur and Nalbari districts of Assam.
- ✓ The persons' who opted for the vaccination were asked to register on the Co-WIN app, the Union government's digital platform for vaccine delivery
- ✓ The beneficiaries were informed about the time and place of their "Covid-19 vaccination" through text messages under a mock drill to administer the shots at designated centres.
- ✓ A detailed checklist was prepared by the Union Health Ministry and shared with the four States for the dry run
- ✓ The actual vaccine shots will not be administered to people during the dry run
- ✓ In Punjab, the UN Development Programme and the WHO, the State's immunisation partners, supported the exercise.

- **The Centre - has identified 10 advanced regional laboratories to serve as regional hub laboratories for genome sequencing of new mutant of Covid-19**
- ✓ The labs were set up as part of the government's surveillance strategy to monitor the genomic variations in the Sars-Cov-2 virus.
- ✓ The health ministry has devised a detailed action plan which the genomic surveillance consortium (INSACOG) would follow if the new Covid variant, which is more infectious, is detected in the samples of returnees from the UK.
- ✓ Accordingly, in case the UK variant or any other variant mutation is detected in any sample, the virus will be sent to any of the two notified Covid Virus Repositories at RCB- Faridabad or NIV, Pune for isolating the virus and further culturing.
- ✓ The 10 regional genome sequencing laboratories spread across the country will cater to the nearest states
- ✓ These states are advised to send 5% of the positive samples to these labs for genome sequencings.
- ✓ The viral genome sequencing data generated by regional genome sequencing laboratories will be sent to the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), Delhi for collation and integration.
- ✓ Further, the relevant case details and travel details of any sample detected with the new UK variant, will be communicated to NCDC (Director) Nodal Unit.
- ✓ No details shall be revealed before due approval by the competent authority.

- ✓ All the genomic sequencing data will be maintained in a national database at two sites, National Institute of Biomedical Genomics, Kalyani (West Bengal), and Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology, New Delhi.
- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi - to inaugurate the 351-km 'New Bhaupur-New Khurja' section in Uttar Pradesh of the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC) via video conferencing on December 29**



- ✓ During the event, the EDFC's Operation Control Centre (OCC) at Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh will also be inaugurated.
- ✓ The OCC, which will be the command centre for the entire route length of the corridor, is said to be one of the largest control centres in the world.
- ✓ The building is environment friendly and has been built under the norms of "Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan" with Green building rating of GRIHA-4
- ✓ The Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath was also present during the virtual inauguration of the project
 - ✓ As per the CM, the speed of freight trains will double from 25km/hour to 75 km/hour following the launch of Corridor
- ✓ The Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor is a 1875-km stretch that connects Punjab's Ludhiana to Dankuni in West Bengal.
- ✓ It is fully electrified and consists of both double track and single track over the entire length
- ✓ The freight train running the in corridor will stop only at Ludhiana, Khurja, Dadri and Haryana
- ✓ The project is aimed supporting freight movement by decongesting the railway lines and transport goods smoother without any delays.
- ✓ The boost in connectivity with the development of the freight corridor will also help Kisan Rail and farmers to transport their harvest on time
- ✓ The dedicated corridor will reduce the logistical cost of the railways network, thereby reducing the price of the goods, increase ease of doing business and attract greater foreign investment
- ✓ The new route will open more opportunities for local industries such as textile production, glassware industry, block printing, pottery products, asafoetida production, locks and hardware

- ✓ Apart from EDFC, the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor is also being developed.
 - ✓ The 1506 km stretch of WDFC will connect Mumbai to Uttar Pradesh's Dadri.
 - ✓ The EDFC project was implemented by Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India Limited (DFCCIL), which is a Special Purpose Vehicle established by Ministry of Railways.
 - ✓ It is responsible for the planning, development, mobilization of financial resources, construction, operation and maintenance of the dedicated freight corridors
 - ✓ The project work for the EDFC commenced in 2014
 - ✓ The corridor will supply coal power plants in the northern regions of UP, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and parts of Rajasthan.
 - ✓ Also, it will be utilised to transfer steel, cement, food grains, lime stone, fertilizers from Rajasthan.
 - ✓ The corridor is highly beneficial as it will connect lower Ganga basin which is densely populated.
 - ✓ The EDFC project was funded by World Bank and Indian Railways
 - ✓ The bank released \$975 million in 2011, \$1.1 billion in 2014 and \$650 million in 2015 to implement the project.
 - ✓ The Indian Railways provided \$544 million towards the project.
- **The Jal Jeevan Mission and the Department of Industry and Internal Trade Promotion - have launched a 'New Innovation Challenge' to design and develop portable water testing equipment.**



- ✓ The purpose of this challenge is to develop inexpensive and modular solutions for testing the quality of drinking water 'easily and instantly'
- ✓ This innovation challenge is open to individuals, startups, MSMEs and corporate till January 18, 2020.
- ✓ The challenge invites proposals to design three types of devices
 - ✓ The first instrument to test one or more parameters in the potable water
 - ✓ The second instrument to check for the presence of dissolved solids, pH, bacterial contamination, alkalinity, and many other material contaminants.

- ✓ The third device to check for microbial contamination in the drinking water.
- ✓ The results of this challenge will be announced on April 1, 2021.
- ✓ The water quality testing is one of the priority areas of Jal Jeevan Mission.
- ✓ So far, under Jal Jeevan Mission, more than 2.9 crore households have been provided tap water connections.
- ✓ The Jal Jeevan Mission aims to provide tap water supply to all rural households by 2024.

13 water - quality parameters under Jal Jeevan Mission

pH value- 6.5-8.5	Total dissolved Solids- 500 mg/ litre	Turbidity- 1 NTU	Chloride- 250 mg/ ltr
✓ Total alkalinity- 200 mg/ ltr	✓ Total hardness- 200 mg/ ltr	✓ Sulphate- 200 mg/ ltr	✓ Iron- 1.0 mg/ ltr
✓ Total arsenic- 0.01mg/ ltr	✓ Fluoride- 1.0 mg/ ltr	✓ Nitrate- 45 mg/ ltr	✓ Total coliform bacteria & E.coli or thermotolerant coliform bacteria- Not detectable in any 100 ml sample

#JalJeevanMission

- ✓ It was launched in August 2019.
 - ✓ The Jal Jeevan Mission will focus in integrated demand and supply management of water.
- **On December 28, Prime Minister Narendra Modi – flagged off the country’s hundredth Kisan Rail**



- ✓ The train runs between Sangola in Maharashtra and Shalimar in West Bengal.
- ✓ It carried vegetables such as capsicum, cauliflower, cabbage, chillies, drumsticks, onions alongwith fruits such as oranges, grapes, bananas, pomegranates, custard apples, etc.

- ✓ The first multi-commodity service of Kisan Rail was launched in August 2020 between Devlali in Maharashtra and Danapur in Bihar, which was then extended to Muzaffarpur.
 - ✓ The Centre has provided a subsidy of 50% on the transportation of fruits and vegetables through the scheme
 - ✓ The idea of Kisan Rail and Krishi Udan were proposed during the Union Budget 2020-21.
 - ✓ The Kisan Rail Scheme was launched to develop a national cold supply chain for perishables such as milk, meat, fish, fruits and vegetables.
 - ✓ It comprises of refrigerated coaches in freight and express trains.
 - ✓ For this purpose, the Indian Railways has developed refrigerated parcel vans with carrying capacity of 17 tonnes.
 - ✓ These parcel vans were procured through the Rail Coach Factory Kapurthala.
 - ✓ The Krishi Udan scheme will operate under Ministry of Civil Aviation.
 - ✓ It will transport perishable goods on national/international routes and also on less accessible areas such as tribal districts and the north east.
- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi – inaugurated the country’s first driverless train operations on December 28**



- ✓ The service will be available on Delhi Metro's 38-km Magenta Line which connects Janakpuri West in West Delhi to Botanical Garden in Noida
- ✓ **During the event, the PM also launched the National Common Mobility Card**
- ✓ It is an inter-operable transport facility that allows users to pay for travel, toll duties, retail shopping, and withdraw money using one card
- ✓ With these new trains, Delhi Metro Rail Corporation will enter the elite league of 7% of the world's Metro networks that can operate without drivers
- ✓ Under the driverless Train operation mode, the trains can be controlled 'automatically' from three command centres of the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation in a remote manner
- ✓ This is achieved through the advanced communication-based train control signalling technology.
- ✓ Under the system, the command centres have been equipped with controllers to handle passenger information system and crowd control.
- ✓ The Delhi Metro commenced its operation in 2002.

- ✓ It is now the largest urban rapid transit system of India.
- **India - recently added the Tso Kar Wetland Complex as the country's forty-second Ramsar site.**



- ✓ This is the second Ramsar site in the Union Territory of Ladakh.
 - ✓ The Tso Kar Basin consists of two main waterbodies - Startsapuk Tso and Tso Kar – which are located in a high-altitude wetland complex
 - ✓ The Startsapuk Tso is a freshwater lake of 438 hectares, while the Tso Kar lake is a hypersaline lake of 1800 hectares.
 - ✓ Tso Kar Basin is an A1 Category 'Important Bird Area' according to the Bird Life International.
 - ✓ It is a key staging site in the Central Asian Flyway and the most important breeding areas of the black necked cranes in India.
 - ✓ The Important Bird Area is an area identified internationally by a set of criteria for the conservation of bird population.
 - ✓ There are 12,000 Important Bird Areas worldwide.
 - ✓ The A1 category site hosts the globally threatened species of birds, which are categorised as Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable by the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.
 - ✓ The Central Asian Flyway covers continental area of Eurasia between Arctic Ocean and Indian Ocean.
 - ✓ It includes northern most breeding grounds in Siberia, non-breeding winter grounds in India, West Asia, Maldives and British Indian Ocean Territories.
- **The Ministry of Urban Affairs - recently launched a new mobile application and a portal called “E-Sampada”.**



- ✓ The application provides a single window for services like allotment for more than one lakh Government residential accommodations and office space allotment to Government organisations.
 - ✓ The portal was launched by Directorate of Estates that operates under Ministry of Urban Affairs.
 - ✓ Four websites eawas.nic.in, gpura.nic.in, estates.gov.in and holidayhomes.nic.in and two mobile applications such as m-Ashoka5 and m-Awas have been integrated as 'E-Sampada'
 - ✓ The automated processes in the system, which also includes a chatbot facility, will lead to greater transparency.
 - ✓ It is designed to help reduce administration cost, resources and also will save time.
 - ✓ Further, the system also allows the user to lodge complaints, appear for virtual hearing and submit documents.
- **The Centre - announced that the Central Investment Clearance Cell is to be launched by April 2021.**
- ✓ The Centralised Investment Clearance Cell will act as a single window system to provide all necessary information, approvals and clearances.
 - ✓ The Single Window System is being worked out by Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
 - ✓ The idea of establishing Central Investment Clearance Cell was announced by Finance Minister during the Union Budget 2020-21
 - ✓ The cell will enable potential investors to interact with all the ministries whose approvals are required in the same place.
 - ✓ Already six states have announced to join the Cell once it is launched
 - ✓ They are Haryana, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Goa, Odisha and Gujarat.
 - ✓ This is because these cells are already a part of GIS-enabled land bank under the Industrial Information System (IIS).
 - ✓ The IIS is one of the key initiatives of Department for the Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), that is operated under Digital India initiative.
 - ✓ The IIS portal serves as a one-stop solution for all trades and investors to access industrial information.
 - ✓ This includes availability of raw materials, horticulture, agriculture, minerals information, layers of terrain, natural resources and urban infrastructure.
- **The Centre – is planning to implement Coal Import Monitoring System (CIMS).**
- ✓ The system will allow the importers to submit advance information through 'online' mode and obtain an automatic registration number to handle coal imports in the country.
 - ✓ The importers of bituminous coal, anthracite coal, coking coal and steam coal are to be monitored under the system.

- ✓ It will also monitor steel products being dumped in India.
 - ✓ The CIMS will also monitor the compliance of dumping duty to be imposed on cheap, less quality steel products.
 - ✓ The system is to come into effect from February 1, 2021.
 - ✓ The monitoring system is launched to keep track of imported volumes of coal along with details of specific grades.
 - ✓ The information being collected under the system will help the Centre fine-tune its policies to discourage coal imports.
 - ✓ The Government of India is to impose dumping duty on steel products from a few countries such as Korea, Malaysia, Taiwan and Japan for a period of five years.
 - ✓ This is being done to prevent the domestic players from importing cheap quality steel.
 - ✓ India has set a target to increase the coal production to 1 billion tonnes by 2024.
- **The ‘Jal Shakti Abhiyan II: Catch the Rain Awareness Generation Campaign’ - was recently launched in New Delhi.**



- ✓ The campaign was launched by National Water Mission.
- ✓ It was launched under Ministry of Jal Shakti, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan.
- ✓ The Campaign focuses on water conservation and the creation of rainwater harvesting structures
- ✓ The campaign will cover 623 districts under phase II of Jal Shakti Abhiyan.
- ✓ The tag line of the Campaign is “Catch the rain, where it falls, when it falls”.
- ✓ The campaign aims to create awareness about water harvesting pits, roof top rain water harvesting systems and check dams, removal of encroachments and obstructions, de-silting of tanks, carrying out repairs to traditional water harvesting structures and using defunct bore-wells and old wells
- ✓ The Jal Shakti Abhiyan was planned in two phases.
- ✓ The Phase I was planned between July and September, 2019 covering all the states.

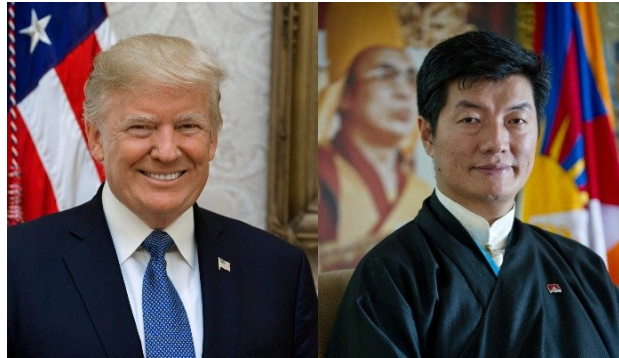
- ✓ The phase II was to focus on states with retreating monsoon, which includes Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Puducherry.
- **The country's first ever Lithium refinery – is to be set up in Gujarat**
- ✓ Manikaran Power Limited, India's third largest power trading and renewable energy company, has proposed to invest Rs 1000 crores to set up the refinery.
- ✓ The lithium ore for the refinery is to be imported from Australia.
- ✓ The Neometals, an Australian firm and Manikaran Ltd., have signed agreement to produce lithium in India.
- ✓ The production of lithium in the country plays a crucial role in the centre's drive towards the electrification of transport and storage of renewable energy.
- ✓ Lithium is a rare element and is not found in India.
- ✓ India is importing the entire lithium required to make lithium-ion batteries.
- ✓ India is currently dependent on China, Japan and Taiwan for its electrical batteries as lithium in India is highly expensive
- ✓ In April 2019, India and Bolivia signed an agreement, under which Bolivia has agreed to supply Lithium Carbonate to India.
- ✓ Bolivia has one-fourth of the world lithium reserves.
- ✓ China controls - 51% of global lithium and 62% of cobalt - the two elements which are the main components of lithium-ion batteries.
- ✓ The top Lithium producing countries in the world are Australia, Chile, China, Argentina, Zimbabwe and Portugal.
- ✓ India has set an ambitious goal of increasing the Electric Vehicle numbers to 30% by 2030 under the 'FAME-Faster Adoption and Manufacture of Hybrid and Electric vehicles' scheme
- **The Centre – had identified new routes for ferry services through inland waterways to promote coastal shipping and boost tourism.**
- ✓ The new routes include Hazira, Somnath temple, Okha and Jamnagar.
- ✓ Also, new destinations along the international routes have also been identified under the Sagarmala Project to boost tourism
- ✓ These routes include four international destinations such as Seychelles, Chattogram of Bangladesh, Madagascar and Jaffna of Sri Lanka.
- ✓ The Sagarmala project aims to promote port led development in the country along the 7,500 km long coastline.
- ✓ The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways has planned to replicate the success of the RO-PAX Vessel service that was recently launched between Ghogha and Hazira.
- ✓ The Inland Waterways Authority of India has planned to increase the cargo handling capacity of the country to 100 million tonnes by 2021-22.
- ✓ The National Waterways Act, 2016 proposes to add another 106 National waterways in the country.

- **The Cabinet Committee on Security - announced the National Security Directive on Telecommunication sector recently.**
- ✓ It mandates telecom service providers to purchase equipment from trusted sources.
- ✓ Under the provisions, the Centre will declare a list of trusted sources and trusted products to be installed in the Telecom network of the country.
- ✓ It has been framed in the perspective of national security.
- ✓ The National Cyber Security Coordinator will devise a methodology to designate trusted products.
- ✓ A committee is to be formed under the leadership of Deputy National Security Advisor to approve the list of trusted sources and products.
- ✓ It will consist of members from different ministries and industrial experts.
- ✓ The committee will be called 'the National Security Committee on Telecom'.
- ✓ The directives do not require mandatory replacement of existing equipment that are already inducted in the network of Telecommunications Service Provider.
- ✓ The Department of Telecommunications will certify the Telecom Service Providers as "Indian Trusted sources" if they meet the requirements of the Preferential Market Access scheme.
- ✓ The Preferential Market Access scheme provides weightage to telecom gears developed and manufactured by local companies.

INTERNATIONAL

- **On December 27, US President Donald Trump – signed the Tibet Policy and Support Act (TPSA) to support autonomous conduct of Tibetan affairs and the Taiwan Assurance Act (TAA) which strengthens military ties with Taiwan.**
- ✓ The United States Senate had passed the Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020 recently
- ✓ The bill was earlier passed in the house of representatives of the United States in January 2020.
- ✓ The Tibetan Policy and Support Act, 2020 is based on the Tibet Policy Act of 2002.
- ✓ It addresses various aspects involving the Tibetan people such as their fundamental rights, environmental rights, Human Rights, religious freedom and Tibetan democracy in exile.
- ✓ The act strengthens funding for Tibetans inside and outside Tibet.
- ✓ It commends His Holiness, the Dalai Lama to implement a democratic governance and also the Tibetan exile community to successfully adopt a system of self-governance.
- ✓ The TPSA reaffirms the rights of Tibetans to choose a successor to their spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, while mandating sanctions on Chinese officials who interfere in the selection

- ✓ The act acknowledges the central Tibetan administration as a legitimate institution reflecting the aspirations of the Tibetan community all around the world.
- ✓ It also has provisions to protect the environment and water resources of Tibetan plateau.
- ✓ The Act recognises the importance of traditional Tibetan grassland in mitigating the negative effects of Climate Change in the region.



- ✓ The act encourages the American citizens and companies engaged in business activities in Tibet to practice corporate social responsibility other into the United Nations guiding principles on business and Human Rights.
- ✓ The act calls for the establishment of United States Consulate in the capital of Tibet, Lhasa.
- ✓ Lobsang Sangay is the president of the government in exile of Tibet.
- ✓ In October 2020, the United States state department allowed the first and official entry of Lobsang Sangay, recognizing his government.
- ✓ The TAA supports Taiwan’s meaningful participation in UN bodies while normalising regular arms sales and strengthening its defence capability.

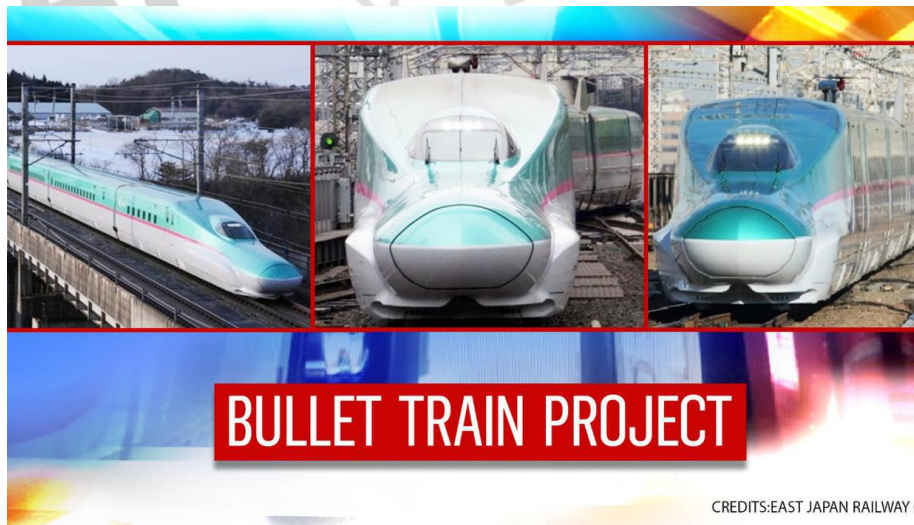
➤ **The UNICEF - has recently launched the COVID-19 Vaccine Market Dashboard as the designated COVAX procurement coordinator and procurement agent.**



- ✓ It is an interactive tool for countries and industries to track the developments of the rapidly evolving scenarios in various COVID-19 vaccines.
- ✓ With this, the UNICEF aims to ensure fair and equitable access of COVID-19 vaccine for all countries.
- ✓ The dashboard will also provide regular updates on global research and development of COVID-19 vaccine, publicly announced bilateral and multilateral supply agreement, projected production capacity and reported price points.
- ✓ The dashboard will provide details to track the status of deliveries by UNICEF and other participating national and institutional buyers.
- ✓ COVAX is the vaccine pillar of the ACT-Accelerator.
- ✓ It is led by CEPI (Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovation), vaccine alliance and GAVI (Global Alliance for Vaccine and Immunisation).
- ✓ The alliance aims to bring countries and vaccine manufacturers under one platform.
- ✓ It aims to secure two billion vaccine doses by the end of 2021.
- ✓ US refused to join COVAX.
- ✓ ACT-Accelerator refers to the 'Access to COVID-19 Tools' Accelerator.
- ✓ It is a global collaboration to accelerate the development, production and equitable access to new COVID-19 diagnostics.

INDIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES

- **The Japanese Embassy - recently released the first images of Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project.**



- ✓ The E5 Series Shinkansen trains are to be used for the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail (MAHSR) Project.
- ✓ The project, at an estimated cost of Rs. 1,08,000 crore, is to be completed by 2023.
- ✓ It is a 508-kilometre project executed by National High-Speed Rail Corporation Limited.

- ✓ The financial and technical assistance to the project is provided by the Japanese Government.
 - ✓ E5 Series Shinkansen is a high-speed train operated by the East Japan Railway Company.
 - ✓ The speed of the train ranges between 320-400 kmph to ensure passenger and environment comfort.
 - ✓ It features electric active suspension that controls vertical movement of the vehicle wheels.
 - ✓ The train is a ten-car high speed Electric Multiple Unit, which is part of the new Generation Japanese high-speed train called Hayabusa.
 - ✓ The other two important features of E5 Series Shinkansen are Body Tilting System to ensure passenger comfort and features to reduce tunnel boom.
 - ✓ Tunnel boom are noises produced due to uneven air pressures as the train enters a tunnel at high speed.
- **China – has announced the opening of its world largest Radio Telescope for international scientists**

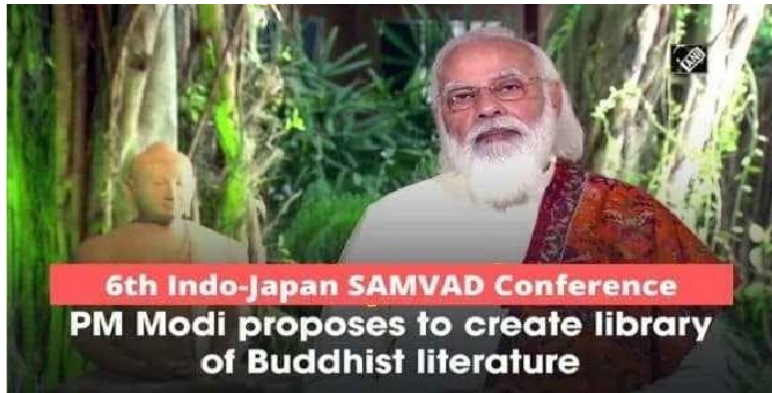


- ✓ Recently, world's second largest Arecibo Observatory collapsed in Puerto Rico after the 900-tonne receiver platform became loose and plunged 140-metres onto the radio dish below.
- ✓ Following this, China recently announced that it is open its world largest Five Hundred Metre Aperture Spherical Telescope (FAST) to international scientists
- ✓ The construction of FAST, at a cost of \$175 million, was completed in 2016.
- ✓ It is located in the Dawodang depression, which is a natural basin in Guizhou, southwest China.
- ✓ It is the largest filled-aperture Radio Telescope and second largest single dish aperture.
- ✓ The RATA-600 in Russia is the world largest Single-dish aperture telescope.
- ✓ The telescope has a reflecting surface of 500-metres in diameter, even though only a circle of 300 metres diameter can be used at one time.

- ✓ It has super sensitivity to detect cosmic phenomena, which includes radio bursts, interstellar signals, interstellar molecules and pulsars as well.
- ✓ The only problem faced by the Chinese scientists in regard to FAST is the challenge of storing the data collected by FAST.
- ✓ The solution to this issue is to be provided by Australia and European Union.

CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

- **The Prime Minister Narendra Modi - recently addressed the sixth India-Japan Samvad Conference through video conferencing.**



- ✓ During the address, the Prime Minister proposed to create a library of digital copies of traditional Buddhist literature and scriptures from different countries.
- ✓ It will aim to translate and make them freely available for all monks and scholars of Buddhism.
- ✓ The first Samvad Conference was held in New Delhi at Bodh Gaya in 2015.
- ✓ Buddhism is the second most popular religion in Japan after Shintoism.
- ✓ The country has the third largest Buddhist population in the world after China and Thailand.
- ✓ According to the 2011 census, Buddhists make to 0.7% population.
- ✓ The largest concentration of Buddhists in India is in Maharashtra.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **The Serum Institute of India - unveiled the first indigenously developed Pneumococcal Vaccine called Pneumosil recently**
- ✓ The vaccine was launched by the Union Health Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan.



- ✓ Pneumosil was developed through collaboration with Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and PATH organization.
 - ✓ It has been approved by the Drugs Controller General of India.
 - ✓ The price of Pneumosil is \$2 per dose, which is 30% cheaper than the PCV (Pneumonia Conjugate Vaccine) that is currently administered against Pneumonia in India.
 - ✓ The two vaccines - NYSE:PFE produced by Pfizer and LSE:GSK produced by GlaxoSmithKline - are currently used in India for immunisation against Pneumonia.
 - ✓ The Clinical trial of the vaccine for all the three phases was conducted in Gambia and India.
 - ✓ Pneumosil is a WHO prequalified vaccine, indicating that it can be procured by both GAVI and United Nations for use in Low Income Countries.
 - ✓ The newly developed vaccine is to be used for immunisation against pneumonia caused by “Streptococcus Pneumonia”.
 - ✓ The PCV consumes 50% of the budget allocated to the Universal Immunization Programme.
 - ✓ The programme administers twelve vaccines preventing mortality and morbidity in pregnant women and children
 - ✓ They are Tuberculosis, tetanus, rubella, Japanese Encephalitis, measles, hepatitis, pertussis, etc.
 - ✓ It was highly supported by funds from GAVI (Global Alliance for Vaccine Immunization).
 - ✓ Recently, GAVI announced that it is to withdraw its support to India from 2022 as the country is getting close to the threshold level.
 - ✓ India accounts to 20% of pneumonia death in the world.
 - ✓ Around 50% of the world annual Pneumococcal child deaths occur in four African and Asian countries - India, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo and Pakistan.
 - ✓ According to UNICEF, more than one lakh children under the age of five die every year due to pneumococcal disease.
 - ✓ The top five contributors of Pneumonia in India are Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh.
 - ✓ Pneumonia is an infection that inflames the air sacs of the lungs, causing difficulty in breathing
 - ✓ It is caused by variety of micro organisms such as viruses, bacteria and fungi.
- **NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant – announced the launch of new file sharing and cloud storage platform ‘DigiBoxx’**
- ✓ It provides 20 GB of free cloud storage and 100 GB free space per month at a nominal charge of Rs.30 per month
 - ✓ DigiBoxx is a first-of-its-kind platform that was launched under “Make in India, Store in India” policy of India



- ✓ The 'Software as a Service' (SaaS) product has a feature called "InstaShare", which allows users to share high resolution images, videos, large-size documents and PDFs
- ✓ Currently DigiBoxx is available only to Android users and is comparatively cheaper than other cloud storages, especially Google
- ✓ Google currently offers 15 GB of free storage space for mail, drive, photos and other services.
 - ✓ For 100 GB subscription, a fee of Rs 130 per month is charged
 - ✓ Google had recently announced that it will not offer unlimited free photo uploads after June 1, 2021
- ✓ DigiBoxx offers special plans of Rs 999 providing up to 50 TB of storage data exclusively for small and medium businesses.
- ✓ Other cloud storage services includes MEGA, Amazon Prime etc., which charges relatively high charges from the customers for using the storage spaces
- **An international team of scientists – have confirmed the first possible radio signal received from an exoplanet which is 51 light years away from the earth.**
 - ✓ This is possibly the first radio signal received from a planet beyond solar system.
 - ✓ The signals were received by a Low Frequency Array radio telescope located in Netherlands.
 - ✓ The exo-planet is located in the Tau Bootes star-system.
 - ✓ It hosts Jupiter like giant planet and the planet is close to its star.
 - ✓ The Tau Bootes is a binary star system with an exoplanet.
 - ✓ The Exoplanets are planets outside the solar system.
 - ✓ Doppler Spectroscopy and Transit Photometry are the best methods to detect Exoplanets.
 - ✓ Exoplanets are hard to detect as they are close to the stars they are orbiting.
 - ✓ Thus, the brightness of the stars prevents from being detected easily.

DEFENCE

- **The Defence Minister Rajnath Singh - recently inaugurated the Advanced Hypersonic Wind Tunnel test facility in Hyderabad.**



- ✓ This is the first of its kind being launched in the country.
 - ✓ India is the third country after United States and Russia to launch the facility.
 - ✓ Wind Tunnels are large tubes with air blowing through them, thereby causing the object to move at flying speeds
 - ✓ The Hypersonic flow is a flow where the speeds are much higher than the local speed of sound.
 - ✓ The hypersonic flow is generally defined as the flow at Mach 5 or greater.
 - ✓ The recently inaugurated Hypersonic Wind Tunnel Test Facility will simulate hypersonic flow over a wide spectrum ranging from Mach 5 to Mach 12.
 - ✓ It will play a major role in realizing highly complex futuristic aerospace and defence system.
 - ✓ Mach is the multiplication factor to the speed of sound, i.e. Mach 5 means the speed is 5 times the speed of sound.
 - ✓ A flight of an object can be classified based on Mach number
 - ✓ Subsonic - Mach number is less than 0.8
 - ✓ Transonic - Mach number is between 0.8 and 1.2
 - ✓ Object travelling at speed of the sound - Mach number is 1
 - ✓ Supersonic - Mach number is between 1.2 and 5.0
 - ✓ Hypersonic - Mach number is between 5 and 10
 - ✓ Hypervelocity - Mach number is greater than 8.8
- **The Medium Range Surface to Air Missile, MRSAM - was recently tested from a defence facility in Odisha.**



- ✓ It was jointly developed by the Defence Research development Organisation and the Israel Aerospace Industries.
- ✓ MRSAM is a one command control system that tracks missiles, radar and mobile launcher systems.
- ✓ It is capable to transport and launch eight canisterised missiles in two stacks.
- ✓ The weapon weighs 276 kilo grams and is 4.5 metres long.
- ✓ The system tracks the threat using a tracking radar and then calculates the distance between the launcher and the target to determine if the target needs to be attacked or not
- ✓ The MRSAM is powered by the dual-pulse solid propulsion system developed by DRDO.
- ✓ It is coupled with a vector control system that allows the missile to move at Mach 2 speed, which can engage multiple targets simultaneously at range of 70 kms.
- ✓ The MRSAM deal was signed in 2009.
- ✓ According to the agreement, the Indian Air Force was to purchase 450 MRSAMs and eighteen firing units that were worth of \$2 billion.
- ✓ In 2017, the MRSAM was exhibited at the Aero India.
- ✓ In the same year, a \$2 billion agreement was signed to supply MRSAM to the Indian Army.
- ✓ In 2019, a \$93 million Agreement was signed with Cochin Shipyard and Indian Navy to provide maintenance and other services to MRSAM and its sub systems.

AWARDS

- **The Chief Minister Secretariat of Bihar, National Informatics Centre and the Disaster Management Department of Bihar - have been jointly chosen as winners in Digital India Awards, 2020.**




- ✓ Bihar was selected under the 'Pandemic Category' for its initiative to transfer financial assistance directly to the accounts of beneficiaries during the COVID-19 pandemic
- ✓ The State has provided financial assistance to more than 21 lakhs of stranded workers both within and outside Bihar

- ✓ The Bihar Government provided Rs 1000 to workers coming from outside to Bihar, workers stuck in other states and also to the workers of other states, who got stuck in Bihar due to the pandemic
- ✓ The workers will have to register on the mobile app “Bihar Corona Sahayata Mobile App”.
- ✓ Once the verification of the workers was complete, the amount will be directly added to their account.
- ✓ The Uttar Pradesh Food and Civil Supplies Department won the Digital India Award, 2020 under the “Excellence in Digital Governance” category.
- ✓ It was selected for its Points of Sale (PoS) based food distribution, online billing and payment for food grains purchased from farmers, GPS tracking of vehicles transporting food grains.
- ✓ President Ram Nath Kovind will give away the Digital India Awards to winners on December 30 in New Delhi.
- ✓ The Digital India Awards, instituted under the Centre’s National Portal of India, serve the purpose of highlighting innovative digital solutions and inspiring steps taken in e-governance by government entities.
- ✓ The Digital India Award was formerly known as Web Ratna Awards
- ✓ The categories in Digital India Awards includes - Innovation in Pandemic, Excellence in Digital Governance, Open Data Champion and Exemplary Product
- **The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs - has selected Vishakhapatnam Municipal Corporation as the best performing civic body.**
- ✓ Vishakhapatnam was placed under the Annual Awards for Excellence that recognises outstanding contribution of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban in 2019.
- ✓ The award is to be presented virtually on January 1, 2021.
- ✓ Further, Andhra Pradesh has secured the third position in the best performing State category
- ✓ This is the third time the state has received the award.
- ✓ Also, the state bagged special category award in innovative construction technology and project monitoring tools.
- ✓ Mirzapur won the best performing Municipal body award
- ✓ Among the Nagar Panchayats, Malihabad Lucknow was selected for the first place and Hariharpur was selected for the second place.
- ✓ The Ministry has also decided to include awards under the category of “Best Performances for utilisation of technology and transparency in selection of housing beneficiaries in urban areas”.
- ✓ A total of five awards are presented -
 - ✓ Best Performing States
 - ✓ Best Performing Municipal Corporation
 - ✓ Best Performing Municipality
 - ✓ Best House Construction

- ✓ Special Awards to recognise best practices
- ✓ Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana is a government initiative, which aims at providing affordable housing to the urban poor with a target of building 20 million affordable houses by March 31, 2022.
- ✓ As on January 1, 2019, 68.5 lakhs of houses have been built under the scheme that promises “Housing for All”

SPORTS

- **On December 28, India captain Virat Kohli – was named as the ‘Best male cricketer of the decade’ and won Sir Garfield Sobers award**
- ✓ Kohli was also picked for the ODI Cricketer-of-the-Decade award and won the best Men’s ODI cricketer award.



- Virat Kohli has been named ICC Male Cricketer of the Decade (Jan 1, 2011-Oct 7, 2020). Kohli scored **20,396 runs** in Tests, ODIs and T20I combined during this period, **the most by anyone in the world**
- Kohli was also awarded the ICC Men’s **ODI Cricketer of the Decade**. He scored **10,388 runs (avg 61.8)** and was the **only player to score more than 8,000 runs in ODIs** in the decade
- Steve Smith won the Men’s **Test Cricketer of the Decade** award (7,040 runs, average 65.8)
- Afghanistan’s **Rashid Khan** named **T20I Cricketer of the Decade**. He took **89 wickets** (average 12.6, economy rate 6.1) – more wickets than anyone else despite starting only in 2015
- **Ellyse Perry** (4,349 runs and 213 wickets in all international cricket) swept the women’s awards for **T20I, ODI and Female Cricketer of the Decade**

- ✓ Former India skipper M.S. Dhoni won the ICC Spirit-of-Cricket award, chosen by fans for his gesture of calling back England batsman Ian Bell after a bizarre run out in the Nottingham Test in 2011.

Garfield Sobers Award for ICC male cricketer of the decade	Virat Kohli
Men’s ODI cricketer of the decade	Virat Kohli
Men’s Test cricketer of the decade	Steve Smith
Men’s T20i cricketer of the decade	Rashid Khan
Spirit of Cricket award of the decade	MS Dhoni
Rachael Heyhoe-Flint Award for ICC Female Cricketer of the Decade	Ellyse Perry
Women’s ODI cricketer of the decade	Ellyse Perry
Women’s T20I cricketer of the decade	Ellyse Perry
Men’s Associate cricketer of the decade	Kyle Coetzer
Women’s Associate cricketer of the decade	Kathryn Bryce

- ✓ Australia's Steve Smith was named as the best Men's Test cricketer
- ✓ Afghanistan's spinner Rashid Khan was named as the best T20I cricketer.
- ✓ The International Cricket Council (ICC) made the announcements via Twitter
- ✓ During this time, Kohli scored most fifties (94), most runs (20,396) besides having the best average (56.97) among players with 70 plus innings.
- ✓ He had also scored 66 of his 70 international hundreds, in the ICC Awards period.
- ✓ Kohli was also part of the World Cup-winning India squad in 2011.
- ✓ Australia's Ellyse Perry swept the women's awards, winning the Female Cricketer-of-the-Decade along with ODI and T20 Cricketer-of-the-Decade awards.
- ✓ The International Cricket Council recently announced the Men's T20I (Twenty 20 International), ODI (One Day International) and Test Teams of the decade, based on the player's performances in the last decade
- ✓ The former Indian Captain MS Dhoni was named as the Captain of ODI and also the Captain of T20I
- ✓ Virat Kohli was announced the Skipper of ICC Test team of the Decade.

