



EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – DECEMBER 30, 2020

TAMIL NADU

- **The Union housing and urban affairs ministry – has selected Salem municipal corporation (Tamil Nadu) as the third-best performing municipal corporation in the implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) urban 2020 scheme**
- ✓ Thedavur in Salem district was chosen as the fourth-best performing town panchayat in the country.
- ✓ The Union territory of Puducherry was selected for a special award for best practices and innovation in the implementation of the scheme.
- ✓ The ministry has selected three beneficiaries - one each from Karaikal (G Parimala), Mahe (K Devaki) and Yanam (Kamma Radha Kumari) under the 'best house construction' category.
- ✓ Union minister of state (housing and urban affairs) (independent charge) Hardeep Singh Puri will felicitate the representatives nominated by Puducherry and Tamil Nadu governments
- ✓ The Minister will present the awards to the winners via video conferencing at 11 am on January 1

- **The Chennai Corporation – is planning to launch a new website called ‘Chennai land administration portal (GCC-CLAP)’ with all land records in Chennai within the next two months**
- ✓ The process to enter land records and digitise them began on December 28 and is expected to be completed in about 20 days.
- ✓ After the records are digitised, it will be cross verified and made open to officials first, before launching it to the public.
- ✓ The extent of the land and the taluk name along with the survey number will be made available on the portal.
- ✓ Once the portal is ready, anyone can enter the survey number, taluk name or ward number and easily access land records.

- **Wildlife authorities - have set up sea turtle hatcheries at four places along the Chennai coast at Besant Nagar, Neelankarai, Kovalam and Pulicat.**



- ✓ The first of the sea turtles has started arriving now, even though the mass rush of the turtles usually begins by mid-January.
- ✓ The civic authorities have warned people against setting up private hatcheries or collecting eggs.
- ✓ Last year, an NGO, Tree Foundation, set up a hatchery at Neelankarai without government permission.
- ✓ Further, boards have been put up at all four hatcheries warning people not to set up hatcheries or disturb nesting turtles or their eggs.
- ✓ Violators face up to seven years rigorous imprisonment with a penalty of ₹10,000.
- ✓ On an average, the wildlife department used to collect nearly 45,000 eggs during the nesting season, which goes on till April and sometimes even till May.
- ✓ It takes 45 to 60 days for the turtle eggs to hatch.
- ✓ Of the four hatcheries, Pulicat is the ideal wild site, where the turtles come and lay the eggs without much human interference.
- ✓ According to wildlife experts, only one in thousand females come back to the same beach to lay eggs.
- ✓ Sea turtles are protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972.

STATES

- **On December 29, the Madhya Pradesh Cabinet - gave its nod to an ordinance on the Bill against religious conversion through fraudulent means, including those for the sake of marriage**
- ✓ The Bill has been sent now to the State Governor Anandiben Patel for approval.
- ✓ On December 26, the Cabinet had approved the Madhya Pradesh Freedom of Religion Bill, 2020.
- ✓ The Bill stipulates a jail term of up to 10 years and a fine of ₹1 lakh for “conversion through marriage or other forcible means”.
- ✓ The government took the ordinance route as the Bill could not be tabled in the winter session of the Assembly, which has been deferred due to the Covid-19 situation.

- **Chief Minister of Karnataka B S Yediyurappa - recently launched the “Bengaluru Mission 2022”**
 - ✓ The mission aims to provide necessary infrastructure and basic amenities to people of Bengaluru to find solution to their day-to-day problems and challenges.
 - ✓ It seeks to make Bengaluru “one of the best in the world” when the country marks its 75th year of independence.
 - ✓ The mission is to focus on reducing traffic congestion by encouraging public transport usage, suburban railway project and also speed up “Namma Metro”
 - ✓ To ensure greener city, the mission is to prioritise creating clean lakes and waterways, apart from developing parks and mini forests around the city.
 - ✓ The Government of Karnataka is also planning to institutionalise garbage menace of the city under the “Nanna Kasa Naan Jawabdari” (My Garbage My Responsibility) theme by means of community participation

- **Gujarat government – has recently enacted the Gujarat Land Grabbing (Prohibition) Act, 2020**
 - ✓ The law seeks to protect small farmers and citizens against land- grabbing through establishment of committees and special courts in each district.
 - ✓ It also has provisions for 10 to 14 years of imprisonment for land grabbers.
 - ✓ Persons illegally taking possession of land will be considered land grabbers under this law.
 - ✓ The act has included provisions to restore the possession of grabbed land
 - ✓ A committee of seven officials, headed by the collector, for each district has been set up under the act.
 - ✓ The committee will meet once in 15 days.
 - ✓ Any aggrieved persons can approach the committee for relief in case of land grabbing cases with a written complaint.
 - ✓ If the complaint was found to be genuine after verification, the committee will order registration of FIR against the accused person.
 - ✓ The special courts set up under the act have been provided with a time frame of 6 months to dispose these cases.

NATIONAL

- **The new UK variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus — which is 70% more transmissible — has been detected in India**
 - ✓ On December 29, the Government has announced that at least seven returnees from UK, including a two-year-old girl, tested positive for the mutant variant
 - ✓ Vaccines under evaluation will work against the new strain too, as per the Centre.
 - ✓ The changes seen in the variant virus allow it to attack and enter human cells more effectively.
 - ✓ Among passengers arrived from UK, only 114 have tested positive for Covid-19 till now based on RT-PCR tests

- ✓ These positive samples have been sent to 10 genome sequencing labs.
- ✓ Six samples of UK returnees found to be positive with the new UK variant genome are in NIMHANS Bengaluru (3), CCMB Hyderabad (2) and NIV Pune (1)
- ✓ Meanwhile, Uttar Pradesh confirmed its first case of the mutant strain with a two-year-old girl, who recently returned to Meerut with her parents from the UK, was found to be infected with it.

'USE MEDS/THERAPIES JUDICIOUSLY'

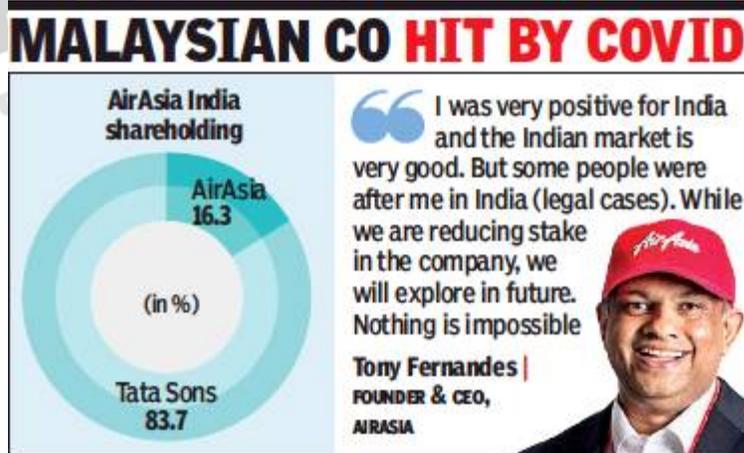
<p>➤ UK strain detected in 3 samples in Bengaluru, 2 in Hyderabad and 1 in Pune. In Meerut, a 2-year-old found infected. Her parents are also positive, but carrying the old strain</p> <p>➤ All 7 have been kept in single-room isolation in designated healthcare facilities.</p>	<p>Close contacts have been quarantined. Contact tracing initiated for co-travellers, family contacts and others</p> <p>➤ Experts have said despite mutation, a vaccine will be equally effective against it</p>
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“ This variant may have its own run and we have to be very careful. One cannot be careless, — Dr V K Paul, member (health), Niti Aayog

➤ One reason for mutation is non-judicious use of meds/therapies, experts say, with ICMR also warning about it

- ✓ The presence of the new UK variant has already been reported by Denmark, the Netherlands, Australia, Italy, Sweden, France, Spain, Switzerland, Germany, Canada, Japan, Lebanon and Singapore.
- ✓ The government has ramped up testing, surveillance and containment measures along with genome sequencing of positive samples
- ✓ It had also urged people to strictly adhere to Covid-appropriate norms even after vaccine becomes available.
- ✓ The government has set up the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium of 10 government labs to test and sequence 5% of the positive samples, including those of all international passengers.
- ✓ As per the current evidences, the new strain shows higher infectiousness with no increase in severity of the disease caused by it
- ✓ Of the 17 changes in the virus, eight are in the spike protein and are important.
- ✓ South Africa, which has also discovered various mutations in the virus, shared the N501Y change with the UK variant, in addition to other distinct changes.
- ✓ In the UK, prevalence of the spike gene variant was found in all positive results from samples collected from the field since October, indicating that this strain is more transmissible.
- ✓ India has suspended all flights coming from the UK with effect from midnight December 23 till December 31.
- ✓ From November 25 to December 23 midnight, about 33,000 passengers disembarked at various Indian airports from the U.K.
- ✓ All persons with the UK strain are in single-room isolation in designated healthcare facilities of respective state governments.
- ✓ Their close contacts have also been put under quarantine.

- ✓ In Tamil Nadu, a 25-year-old man who returned to Chennai from the United Kingdom recently has tested positive for the mutant strain of Covid-19.
- ✓ The test results of another nineteen UK returnees in Tamil Nadu and sixteen of their contacts who had tested 'positive' for the coronavirus are awaited from the National Institute of Virology in Pune
- **All new car models - would need to have air bags for front seat passengers from April 2021**
 - ✓ The existing models are asked to implement the safety standard from June 1, 2021
 - ✓ The step aims to improve passenger safety in case of accidents.
 - ✓ This was announced by the road transport ministry in a draft notification issued on December 28.
 - ✓ As per the ministry, this mandatory provision should be implemented across all cars irrespective of their class and price.
 - ✓ Air bags for drivers have been made mandatory in all cars since July 1, 2019.
 - ✓ The provision of just one air bag for the driver is inadequate since it leaves the co-passenger in the front seat vulnerable to serious injury, or even death, in case of a crash.
- **Tata sons – to buy 32.67% stake in AirAsia India for \$37.66 million**
 - ✓ Malaysia's budget airline AirAsia group has agreed to sell a 32.7% stake in its India venture to partner Tata Sons for about Rs 278 crore
 - ✓ This will reduce its stake in the budget carrier to 16.3% from 49%.



- ✓ Further, AirAsia also has the option to sell the remainder 16.3% in the local JV to Tata Sons in two years for 76.3 million ringgit (around ₹139 crore).
- ✓ Two years ago, Tata Sons raised its stake to 51% from 49%, becoming the budget carrier's majority owner.
- ✓ When the JV was formed in 2013, the Malaysian company was its largest shareholder with an equity holding of 49%.

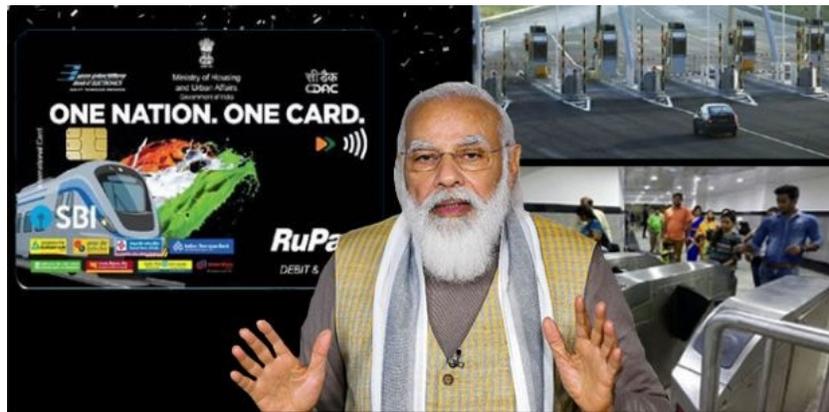
- **The India Meteorological Department (IMD) - has set up the country's highest meteorological centre in Leh at a height of 3,500m above the sea level.**



- ✓ The state-of-the-art centre will provide detailed weather forecasts for Ladakh region, which has extreme wide-ranging climate and topography.
 - ✓ The Leh centre was inaugurated by Union Minister of Earth Sciences Dr. Harsh Vardhan on December 29.
 - ✓ The IMD, to begin with, established a surface observatory at Leh for reporting daily meteorological parameters like pressure, humidity, temperature and snowfall.
 - ✓ The Centre will provide short-range weather forecasts (three days), medium range weather forecasts (twelve days) and long-range weather forecasts (one month).
 - ✓ The major services to be provided also includes forecast for agriculture, mountaineering, trekking, flash flood warning, highway forecast, information on low and high temperatures etc.,
 - ✓ There are four automatic weather stations in Ladakh.
 - ✓ The Indian Meteorological Department has six regional meteorological centres such as Kolkata, Guwahati, Mumbai, New Delhi, Chennai and Nagpur.
- **Union Minister for Science and Technology Dr. Harsh Vardhan - launched the 'Digital Ocean' platform of Indian National Centre for Oceanic Information Services (INCOIS) to share marine data information and forecast services**



- ✓ The platform will serve as a one stop-solution for all data related needs of a wide range of users, including research institutions, operational agencies, strategic users, academic community, maritime industry, and the public.
 - ✓ The Digital Ocean platform will be accessible at 'www.do.incois.gov.in'
 - ✓ Dr. Harshvardhan virtually unveiled the web platform in the presence of secretary of Ministry of Earth Science M. Rajeevan, Joint Secretary Vipin Chandra and other dignitaries in New Delhi.
 - ✓ This first-of-its-kind platform for ocean data management has a set of applications that present heterogeneous oceanographic data with geospatial technology.
 - ✓ It will facilitate an online interactive web-based environment for data integration, 3D and 4D data visualization, data analysis to assess the evolution of oceanographic features obtained from multiple sources like on site monitoring devices, remote sensing and model data
 - ✓ INCOIS provides ocean information and advisory services to various stakeholders in the country
 - ✓ The services include Potential Fishing Zone (PFZ) advisories, Ocean State Forecast (OSF), high wave alerts, tsunami early warnings, storm surge and oil-spill advisories, among others
 - ✓ It uses state-of-the-art technologies and tools to get real time information on oceanographic and marine meteorological data.
 - ✓ The institute has been serving as the National Argo Data Centre and Regional Argo Data Centre of the International Argo Programme
 - ✓ The Digital Ocean Platform will serve as a platform of capacity building on ocean data management in all Indian Ocean Rim Countries
 - ✓ The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) comprises of fourteen members - India, Bangladesh, Seychelles, Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Maldives, Oman, Mozambique, Australia, Indonesia, Kenya, Iran, Malaysia, Madagascar, Singapore, South Africa, Tanzania, Sri Lanka, UAE, Thailand and Yemen
 - ✓ The ten dialogue partners of IORA are Germany, Italy, China, Egypt, France, Italy, Japan, Turkey, UK, Republic of Korea, USA, UK
 - ✓ IORA became the member of United Nations General Assembly and African Union in 2015
- **On December 28, Prime Minister Narendra Modi - launched the National common Mobility Card.**
- ✓ The National Common Mobility Card will allow passengers with RuPay debit card to use it at all transit locations.
 - ✓ The card makes all new metro and transit payments interoperable with a single card.
 - ✓ The National Common Mobility Card can be obtained from twenty-three banks across the country, which includes UCO, SBI, Canara Bank, Punjab National Bank etc.,



- ✓ The National Common Mobility Card facility is to be available in all Metro by 2022.
- ✓ In order to make the National Common Mobility Card compatible, the metro stations and transit systems should be installed with Automatic Fare Collection system
- ✓ The system will turn the smartphones into an inter-operable transport card that commuters can use to pay for bus, metro and railway services.
- ✓ The National Common Mobility Card was launched under the One Nation One Card initiative.
- ✓ The idea of the National Common Mobility Card was proposed by Nandan Nilekani Committee set up by Reserve Bank of India.
- **Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) - developed a new eye cancer therapy, which has been successfully used for the first time for the treatment of patients with ocular tumours in AIIMS-Delhi**
- ✓ The results of using Ruthenium 106 plaque for treatment of a patient with choroidal hemangioma (benign tumor in blood vessels) have been found to be satisfactory.
- ✓ Union minister of state for atomic energy Jitendra Singh facilitated the collaboration between the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and Dr Rajendra Prasad Centre for Ophthalmic Sciences, AIIMS for the breakthrough therapy
- ✓ The Minister informed about the technology and lauded the BARC for developing the “simple and cost-effective therapy” for eye cancer patients.
- ✓ The handling of BARC-developed plaque is very convenient for surgeons and it is said to be on a par with international standards
- ✓ Ruthenium plaque therapy involves placing a radioactive source like Ruthenium-106 (a radioisotope) in contact with the surface of the eyeball for cancer therapy.
- **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) - has recently rolled out contactless ‘offline’ transactions feature in RuPay cards**
- ✓ The RuPay prepaid card was introduced by NPCI in the year 2014, to offer the feature of one card for all payments.

- ✓ The new feature called the “RuPay Contactless (Offline)” is a reloadable wallet feature where the customers can store money to ensure quick and seamless transactions.
 - ✓ Money can be availed from this feature at Points of Sale outlets, even during poor internet connection.
 - ✓ It uses ‘Near Field Communication (NFC)’ technology and thereby reduces the time taken for doing physical payments.
 - ✓ The contactless feature does not provide the option of entering pin numbers at Point of Sale.
 - ✓ The cards simply need to be swiped, making the process easier.
 - ✓ The contactless feature can also be used in ATMs across the country.
 - ✓ The offline wallet feature has been introduced under the National Common Mobility Card programme.
 - ✓ The programme was launched with the mission “One Card for all Payments” that will work across all the public transport system in the country
 - ✓ It is a joint initiative of Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and RuPay.
 - ✓ The RuPay contactless cards, with an inbuilt radio frequency antenna, are already introduced long back
 - ✓ Only the wallet feature is being added now.
 - ✓ This antenna uses near field communication technology, through which the card communicates with the point-of-sale machine with a simple ‘tap’
- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi - was invited by his British counterpart, Boris Johnson to attend the UK-hosted G7 summit to be held in 2021.**
- ✓ India is one of the three guest nations alongside South Korea and Australia.
 - ✓ This year, the grouping is expected to become D10 following the expansion to include 10 democracies.
 - ✓ Britain has proposed the formation of D10 by including G7 countries along with India, Australia and South Korea.
 - ✓ D10 stands for ten biggest Democracies of the world.
 - ✓ G7 was formed to discuss the political and economic concerns prompted during oil crisis of 1973.
 - ✓ It is a group of seven most industrialised countries of the world namely, US, UK, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and Canada.
 - ✓ It was earlier called G8.
 - ✓ It was renamed as G7 after Russia stepped out of the group in 2014.
 - ✓ These countries hold the largest gold reserves and are the top contributors of United Nations Funds.
 - ✓ Every year, the summit is hosted by one of the members.
- **Indian Government and the World Bank – have signed a \$400 million project to protect India’s poor and vulnerable population affected by the adverse economic crisis caused by the pandemic.**

- ✓ The credit is from the International Development Association of the World Bank.
 - ✓ The \$400 million funding will help in accelerating India's COVID-19 social protection response.
 - ✓ The funds are to be used to ensure food, social insurance and cash-support to migrants spread all over the country
 - ✓ It will also support the government in providing benefits for the unorganised sector workers and the urban poor
 - ✓ This is the second assistance provided by the World Bank as part of a two-tier programme.
 - ✓ The first funding worth \$750 million was approved in May this year.
- **The 107-year-old Billimora Waghai Line in Gujarat – is one of the 11 such narrow gauge lines to be scrapped by the Western Railways due to viability poor patronage and economic constraint issues**
- ✓ In 2018, it was one among the 5 routes put forth by the Indian Railways for preservation as 'industrial heritage'



- ✓ The Billimora Waghai line was started by the Gaekwad Dynasty which ruled the Princely State of Baroda in 1913.
 - ✓ It was laid by the British and operated by Gaekwad Baroda State Railway owned by Sayajirao Gaekwad III.
 - ✓ It was used by the Gaekwad rulers to transport precious sag wood from forests.
 - ✓ After independence, GBSR merged with the Western Railways.
 - ✓ A narrow-gauge train powered by steam engine was running in the route for more than twenty-four years.
 - ✓ It was then put-on display in Mumbai Churchgate station as a Railway heritage.
 - ✓ The train service is now being used by the tribal people predominantly for carrying their vegetables to sell at Billimora.
 - ✓ The train made only two trips a day.
- **The Centre – has recently invited bids for Green Ammonia Projects to reduce their imports.**

- ✓ As per the Union power and new and renewable energy Ministry, the bids for Green Ammonia projects will be conducted by SECI (Solar Energy Corp. of India Ltd).
 - ✓ Green ammonia refers to ammonia, which has been produced through a 100% renewable and carbon-free process
 - ✓ At present, ammonia is produced from Methane, which is not a green process
 - ✓ To manufacture fertilisers, India is importing a significant volume of ammonia every year.
 - ✓ 80% of Ammonia produced in the world is used in Agriculture as fertilizer.
 - ✓ The Green Ammonia Projects are to be launched to reduce the import of ammonia.
- **The IIT Hyderabad incubated start up Pure EV - has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with CSIR-Central Electro Chemical Research Institute (CECRI).**
- ✓ Under the agreement, Pure EV and CSIR are to undertake joint research to develop Lithium-Ion Battery technology for electric vehicles.



- ✓ Currently, India is importing Lithium cells from China.
- ✓ To avoid the dependence on China, India has launched a project called CSIR Innovation Centre for Next Generation Energy Storage Solutions (ICeNGESS) to produce Lithium-Ion Batteries within the country
- ✓ The main objective of the scheme is to produce Lithium-Ion Batteries in the scale of 100 MW.
- ✓ As per the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles Policy (FAME II), at least 30% of entire transport of India is to be electrified by 2030.
- ✓ Hence, the manufacturing of sufficient quantity of Lithium-Ion Batteries is needed to bridge their demand
- ✓ Under the Production Linked Incentive Scheme, the Government of India had allocated Rs 18,000 crores of subsidies for the local Lithium-Ion Battery manufacturing companies to increase their production.
- ✓ This is part of the total of 3 trillion rupees worth incentives announced by Government of India in November 2020.
- ✓ A total of around ten sectors were selected under the scheme and Lithium-Ion Battery manufacturing is one among these.

- **The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare - recently announced that the eSanjeevani Telemedicine has crossed one million tele-consultations.**
- ✓ The eSanjeevani is the first of its kind 'online' health service delivery system that is implemented in 28 states and Union Territories.
- ✓ It is implemented in two streams - eSanjeevani AB-HWC and eSanjeevani OPD
- ✓ The doctor-to-doctor telemedicine system under the eSanjeevani is implemented under the Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centre (AB-HWC) scheme.
- ✓ The second stream eSanjeevani OPD provides remote health services to patients confining them to their homes
- ✓ The top two states that have registered the highest number of tele-consultations through eSanjeevani are Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.
- ✓ Under eSanjeevani, the government plans to connect all the 1,50,000 HWCs under a hub by December 2022.
- ✓ The eSanjeevani OPD (Out Patient Department) services host more than 40 online services at free-of-cost basis on a two-way interaction basis.
- **A promotional activity called 'Vigyan yatra' – was launched to promote scientific temper as part of the sixth edition of India International Science Festival (IISF) held recently**
- ✓ The festival was organised by the Ministry of Science and Technology.



- ✓ Under the initiative, vans that serve as mobile science exhibitions, were flagged off from 30 locations across various cities.
- ✓ It covered all local schools and universities and aims to take the culture of science to the masses.
- ✓ The IISF is a celebration to promote science and technology.
- ✓ The number of events under IISF has increased from 28 to 41 covering STI (Science, Technology and Innovation) solutions to tackle new challenges. In 2020, 12 new events on energy, waste, clean air and sanitation have been added.
- ✓ This year, the festival is celebrated under the theme 'Science for Self-Reliant India and Global Welfare'

SUPREME COURT VERDICT

- **The Supreme Court - recently upheld the order of Allahabad High court to grant immunity from investigation and prosecution, if a person voluntarily declares possession or acquisition of exotic species.**
- ✓ This is applicable under the new amnesty scheme of the centre named 'One-Time Voluntary Disclosure Scheme for Exotic Animals'
- ✓ It has been launched by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
- ✓ The voluntary disclosure scheme allows owners of exotic animal species to declare their stock – both legal and illegal - between June and December this year.
- ✓ Under the scheme, the Chief Wildlife Warden has to be informed about the death, new acquisition or change in possession of animals within 30 days.
- ✓ The scheme has specified guidelines to surrender the animals to a zoo.
- ✓ The owner of the animal will have to provide details of the acquired species, address of the facility where they are kept, their quantity, etc.
- ✓ 'Exotic live species' includes animals listed under Appendices I, II and III of CITES.
- ✓ The scheme does not include species from the Schedules of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.
- ✓ CITES is a multilateral treaty to protect endangered plants and animals.
- ✓ India is a member of CITES.
- ✓ There are more than 5,950 species protected under CITES against over-exploitation through international trade.

INTERNATIONAL

- **On December 29, 1,804 Rohingya refugees carried in seven Bangladesh navy ships – were relocated at an isolated island**



- ✓ The relocation of the refugees was undertaken by the government despite concerns among human rights groups about their safety.

- ✓ They reached Bhashan Char island, 34 km from the mainland, after a four-hour naval journey from the port city of Chittagong
 - ✓ As per the government authorities, all were willing to be relocated and no pressure was placed on them.
 - ✓ It was the second group of Rohingya refugees transferred from crowded, unhygienic camps in Cox's Bazar district to the island.
 - ✓ Authorities sent a first group of 1,642 on December 4 despite calls for a halt by human rights groups.
 - ✓ The island surfaced only 20 years ago and was not previously inhabited.
 - ✓ It was regularly submerged by monsoon rains but now has flood protection embankments, houses, hospitals and mosques built at a cost of more than \$112 million by the Bangladesh Navy.
 - ✓ The island's facilities are designed to accommodate 1,00,000 people
 - ✓ More than 700,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh from Myanmar after a military crackdown in 2017
 - ✓ At present, around million Rohingya Muslims were living in the camps in Cox's Bazar
- **NASA and the Canadian Space Agency - recently signed a historic agreement called 'Gateway Treaty' under which Canada is to be a part of the Lunar Gateway Space Station.**
- ✓ Canada will contribute a new robotic arm called "Canadarm3" for the space station.
 - ✓ The Canadian Government recently allocated \$22.8 million towards the development of Canadarm3
 - ✓ As per the agreement signed, a Canadian is to be a part of the Artemis II mission.
 - ✓ Artemis II is the first crewed mission to the moon by NASA since 1972.
 - ✓ The mission is to be launched in 2023.
 - ✓ The Lunar Gateway Space Station is about one-sixth of the size of the International Space Station.
 - ✓ It is to be built in the lunar orbit.
 - ✓ The space station is expected to play a major role in the Artemis Programme of NASA after its launch.
 - ✓ The Gateway is to be developed and utilized by international and commercial partners from CSA (Canadian Space Agency), JAXA (Japanese Aerospace Exploration Agency), European Space Agency.
 - ✓ The Artemis programme will demonstrate new technologies and future explorations (including Mars) on the lunar surface.
 - ✓ The astronauts are to be uplifted by NASA's new Space Launch System aboard the Orion spacecraft.
 - ✓ The Orion spacecraft can last up to twenty one days undocked and six months docked.

- **Pakistan – had recently passed the Anti-rape Ordinance, 2020, which proposes to create its first ever National Sex Offenders Register**
- ✓ The Ordinance has been approved by the President Arif Alvi
- ✓ Further, the ordinance also proposes to create special courts for dealing with specific cases.
- ✓ Anti-rape cells are to be established to provide medical examination within six hours of the complaint.
- ✓ Only 3% of rapes and sexual abuse are reported in Pakistan.
- ✓ There are more than 2,000 honour killings occurring in the country.
- ✓ For these reasons, it is essential to bring in strict legislations to protect the women in the country.
- ✓ India was the ninth country in the world to have a National Database on Sexual Offenders.
- ✓ The proposal to create a National Sex Offenders Registry in India was mooted after the 2012 Nirbhaya case.
- ✓ In India this database is maintained by the National Crime Record Bureau.
- ✓ It has records of around 4.4 lakh convicts under various sexual crimes, including their names and details, from the year 2005.

INDIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES

- **The United States - has again included India in its monitoring list of ‘currency manipulating’ countries for the third time**
- ✓ These countries are with potential of “Currency Manipulation” and “Questionable Foreign Exchange Policies”.
- ✓ The move follows the Reserve Bank of India’s (RBI) continuous dollar purchase, leading to forex reserves rising by \$100 billion this fiscal.
- ✓ The move was disclosed in the US Treasury’s semi-annual currency manipulation report

WHAT IT MEANS...

For India | There will be **pressure on RBI to cut down intervention**, allow the rupee to appreciate

In terms of restrictions | The tag **does not involve any** kind of trade restrictions

For economy | A stronger rupee would **partially offset the impact of rising oil prices** on imports

For RBI | The central bank can **increase diversification of its reserves** to include non-dollar assets



- ✓ It labelled Switzerland and Vietnam as currency manipulators, and added Taiwan, Thailand and India to the seven others already in the watch list
- ✓ Those already under watch are China, Japan, Korea, Germany, Italy, Singapore and Malaysia.

- ✓ The designation of a country as a currency manipulator does not mean any penalties are imposed immediately
 - ✓ The US Government names a country as currency manipulator if it believes that the country is engaging in unfair trade practices by deliberately devaluing its currency against Dollar to gain unfair advantage over the US.
 - ✓ Usually, a country artificially devalues its currency to reduce the cost of its exports.
 - ✓ This in turn will boost its exports and artificially show trade deficits.
 - ✓ Before this India was on the list from October 2018 to May 2019.
 - ✓ When a country is put under the list, it will remain in the list for the next two consecutive reports.
 - ✓ A country needs to meet two of the three criteria in the US Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act of 2015 to be labeled as a currency manipulator
- **India and Austria – had recently signed an agreement on technology cooperation in road infrastructure sector in New Delhi.**



- ✓ The MoU seeks to create a framework for the countries' mutual cooperation in the field of road transportation, road/highways infrastructure development, management and administration, road safety and intelligent transport systems.
- ✓ Austria has the latest technologies for highways and roads such as intelligent transportation system, electronic toll system, traffic management system, landslide protection measures and tunnel monitoring systems.
- ✓ The relations between the countries were established in 1949.
- ✓ The Indo-Austrian Joint Economic Commission was established in 1983.
- ✓ The bilateral trade between India and Austria in the year 2018 was 1.869 billion Euros.
- ✓ The major Indian exports to Austria are apparels, footwear, textiles, vehicles, electrical machinery, railway parts and mechanical appliances.
- ✓ The major Indian imports from Austria are machinery, railway parts, mechanical appliances, iron and steel.

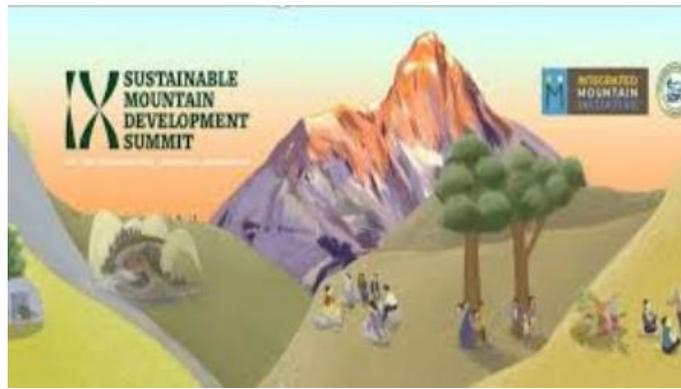
- ✓ The first two satellites of Austria namely UniBRITE and TUGSAT-1/BRITE were launched by the PSLV-C20 of India from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre located in Sriharikota, India in 2013.
- **India and Bangladesh - are set to revive and operationalize the Chilahati-Haldibari rail link to enhance the connectivity between the two countries.**



- ✓ Chilahati-Haldibari link was cut off during the 1965 India-Pakistan war.
- ✓ The inauguration of this link was done during the virtual summit that was recently held between the Prime Ministers of India and Bangladesh.
- ✓ Chilahati-Haldibari Rail Link is a broad-Gauge route from Kolkata to Siliguri.
- ✓ The rail route will increase the connectivity between West Bengal, Assam and Bangladesh.
- ✓ The rail link will also help to increase the bilateral trade between the countries.
- ✓ Also, Siliguri corridor is the only passage through which the Indian main land is connected with the North Eastern states.
- ✓ In future, the Karimganj and Mahisashan rail link between Assam and Bangladesh is to be operational from 2022.
- ✓ The other rail link between Akhaura (Bangladesh) and Agartala (India) is to be operational by 2021.
- ✓ Bangladesh is one of the fastest growing economies in South Asia.
- ✓ Bangladesh is expected to graduate from the status of “Least Developed Country” to “Developing Country” by 2024.
- ✓ India and Bangladesh have a time tested and long lasted Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade.
- ✓ It was signed in 1972 and renewed for the first time in 2015.

CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

- **The ninth edition of the Sustainable Mountain Development Summit (SMDS) - was held in Dehradun recently.**



- ✓ This year, the summit was held under the following theme 'Emerging Pathways for Building Resilient Post COVID-19 Mountain Economy, Adoption, Innovation and Acceleration'
- ✓ The event was attended by Uttarakhand Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat and Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma.
- ✓ The summit was organised by Indian Mountain Initiative.
- ✓ It focused on varied issues such as water security, migration, climate resilience and innovative solutions for disaster risk reduction and farm sector in the Indian Himalayas.
- ✓ The first edition of the summit was launched in 2011 in Nainital.

PERSONALITIES

- **Vidyut Mohan of India – has been named among the Young Champions of the Earth by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) recently**



- ✓ He figures among the seven dynamic Environmentalists who were named winners of the UNEP 2020 Young Championships of the Earth award
- ✓ Vidyut Mohan is the co-founder of Takachar, a bio-technology company
- ✓ He has developed affordable and portable biomass upgrading equipment
- ✓ It allows farmers to prevent open burning by converting crop to fuels, activated carbon and fertilizers.
- ✓ The other winners of the award include Nzambi Matee of Kenya, Xiaoyuan Ren of China, Lefteris Arapakis of Greece, Niria Alicia Garcia of USA, Fatehmah Alzelzela of Kuwait and Max Hidalgo Quinto of Peru.

- ✓ The Young Champions of the Earth prize is awarded every year to seven entrepreneurs under the age of thirty for their ideas on sustainable environmental change.
- ✓ The winners of the award receive mentoring, seed funding, communications support to amplify their efforts.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) - has recently set up a dedicated control centre called 'NETRA' for Space Situational Awareness (SSA) activities in the country**



ISRO SETS UP DEDICATED CONTROL CENTRE FOR SPACE SITUATIONAL AWARENESS 'NETRA'

- ✓ NETRA refers to Network for space object Tracking and Analysis (NETRA).
 - ✓ The project aims to monitor, track and protect space assets of India.
 - ✓ Countries like Russia, US already have their own Space Situational Awareness Centres.
 - ✓ The ISRO SSA Control Centre has been set up within ISTRAC campus at Bengaluru.
 - ✓ NETRA will basically track objects both natural and man-made in the satellite orbits.
 - ✓ Space Situational Awareness (SSA) is the science of tracking objects in space to provide warnings about satellite collision.
 - ✓ The main elements of NETRA are an optical telescope, a radar and a control centre.
 - ✓ NETRA does not carry any provisions to remotely operate its observational facilities.
 - ✓ As of January 2020, there are more than two thousand active satellites orbiting the earth.
- **Project Loon, a subsidiary of Google - recently announced that its balloons have successfully stayed in the stratosphere for almost a year.**
 - ✓ The balloons are helium filled and cover a distance of 2.1 lakh kilometres.
 - ✓ Project Loon aims to provide internet connectivity to the remote parts of the world.
 - ✓ Recently, Loon has created a new record for the longest stratospheric flight by staying in air for 312 days.



How the balloons work

The balloons are sent up 20km (12 miles) into the stratosphere

Software moves them up or down to find the right winds to direct them into position

Each balloon beams an internet connection down to antennas on the ground



- ✓ Last year, the company announced that its balloons reached over one million hours of stratospheric flight.
- ✓ The project involves helium-filled balloons that remain in the stratosphere and create aerial wireless networks to provide internet connectivity to the remote parts of the world.
- ✓ Under the project, several countries and their technology partners have collaborated to provide internet connectivity.
- ✓ Lately, the Project Loon balloons are also used as weather monitors.
- ✓ The 15 metres wide and 12 metres tall Helium balloons are launched at an altitude of 20 km above the earth and above the zone where the airplanes fly.
- ✓ The solar-panel powered balloons act as cell towers, thereby receiving and transmitting signals.
- ✓ The path of the balloons is controlled by changing their altitude.
- ✓ The users need special antenna to receive and transmit signals from and to the balloon.

DEFENCE

- **The Goa Shipyard Limited - recently launched the fifth and final Offshore Patrol Vessel ICGS (Indian Coast Guard Ship) Saksham.**
- ✓ It is to be commissioned by October 2021.



- ✓ These Patrol Vessels are armed with 30-mm guns and weigh 2,350 tonnes.

- ✓ The OPVs are to be equipped with Quick Response Boats for anti-piracy and rescue operations
 - ✓ The ICGS Saksham was constructed under the Indigenous Offshore Patrol Project.
 - ✓ The Project was launched by PM Narendra Modi in 2016.
 - ✓ Under the project, five Indian Coast Guard Ships are to be launched.
 - ✓ Two Offshore Patrol Vessels have already been commissioned namely ICGS Sachet and ICGS Sujeet.
 - ✓ The third in the series called ICGS Sajag was launched in November 2019.
 - ✓ In August 2020, the fourth OPV, Indian Coast Guard Ship Sarthak was launched.
 - ✓ All these five OPVs are of Samarth class.
 - ✓ The other Samarth class OPVs include ICGS Shoor, ICGS Sarathi, ICGS Shaurya, ICGS Sujay, ICGS Shaunak and ICGS Samarth.
 - ✓ The Vikram Class Offshore Patrol Vessels are being built at Katupalli Shipyard by L&T.
 - ✓ They are long range surface ships that are to be deployed for coastal and offshore patrolling.
 - ✓ Around seven offshore patrol vessels are being built.
 - ✓ It includes ICGS Vikram, ICGS Veera, ICGS Varaha, ICGS Vighraha, ICGS Vajra, ICGS Veera and ICGS Vijaya.
 - ✓ The Vikram class is to be armed with 30-mm Naval guns and two 12.7 mm heavy machine guns.
 - ✓ The Vikram-class was preceded by Samarth class Offshore Patrol Vessels.
- **The Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE) - launched a new Project 17A ship called 'Himgiri' for the Indian Navy recently**
- ✓ It is a Nilgiri-class Stealth Frigate that was launched into the waters of Hooghly river.



**PROJECT 17A STEALTH FRIGATE INS HIMGIRI
LAUNCHED AT GRSE YARD KOLKATA**

- ✓ The Project 17A was approved by the Government of India in 2015.
- ✓ Under the project, a total of seven advanced frigates are to be delivered to the Indian Navy.

- ✓ Four of these are to be constructed by the Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited and three are to be launched by GRSE.
- ✓ The cost of the project was estimated at 7 billion USD.
- ✓ The Project 17A ships are guided missile frigates.
- ✓ Frigate is a type of warship that has different roles over time
- ✓ Each of these 149 metres long ships has a displacement of approximately 6,670 tonnes and a speed of twenty-eight knots.
- ✓ The ships are built using indigenously developed steel.
- ✓ They are integrated with indigenous sonar system and weapons such as BrahMos missile, LRSAM.
- ✓ Earlier Himgiri was commissioned into the Indian Navy in 1974 and decommissioned in 2005.
- ✓ In 1976, Himgiri was the first ship of Indian Navy to shoot a pilotless aircraft.
- ✓ The Nilgiri-class Frigates are the updated class of Leander class.
- ✓ It includes Himgiri, Dunagiri, Udaygiri, Vindhya giri and Taragiri.
- ✓ The ships have been named after the prominent hills in the country.

APPOINTMENTS

- **Union Health Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan - has been nominated by the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI) as a member on the GAVI Board.**



- ✓ Dr. Harsh Vardhan will be representing the South East Area Regional Office (SEARO)/ Western Pacific Regional Office (WPRO) constituency on the GAVI Board.
- ✓ The seat is currently held by Myint Htwe of Myanmar.
- ✓ Dr. Harsh Vardhan will be representing India from January 1, 2021 till December 31, 2023.
- ✓ The GAVI Board is responsible for strategic direction and policymaking, oversees the operations of the Vaccine Alliance and monitors programme implementation.
- ✓ It provides a forum for balanced strategic decision making, innovation and partner collaboration
- ✓ The Board has members drawn from a range of partner organisations, as well as experts from the private sector.
- ✓ GAVI is Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation

- ✓ It works to achieve the objective of “Immunisation for All”
- ✓ It works in partnership with World Health Organization on COVAX.
- ✓ COVAX is an alliance that aims to provide equal access to COVID-19 vaccines to all developing countries
- ✓ GAVI played a major role in the Immunization drives of India such as Rotavirus vaccine, Measles-Rubella vaccine, Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (PCV), Tetanus and Adult diphtheria vaccine, inactivated polio vaccine
- ✓ GAVI has recently announced that it is to withdraw its financial support to India from 2022

AWARDS

- **Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) - has been awarded with the Golden Peacock Environment Management award for the year 2020 in the steel sector.**
- ✓ The award was given for its efforts in adopting various environmental measures like upgrading pollution control facilities, treatment and recirculation of wastewater from individual units and outfalls, enhancement in green cover and efficient solid waste management.
- ✓ SAIL has received the award for two consecutive years.



- ✓ Golden Peacock Environment Management Award is a prestigious award that was instituted by the World Environment Foundation in 1998.
- ✓ The award encourages the corporates to enhance their environmental performances.
- **UNESCO - is to launch an international prize in the creative economy field in the name of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.**
- ✓ The UNESCO-Bangladesh Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman International prize is to be launched from November 2021.
- ✓ The year 2021 has been declared as ‘International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development’ by UNESCO.
- ✓ At present, there are twenty-three UNESCO International Awards in the name of international celebrities and organisations.



- ✓ The prize will create knowledge sharing mechanism by capturing, celebrating and communicating the best practice in developing creative entrepreneurship.
- ✓ The prize will be \$50,000 and is to be given once in every two years.
- ✓ Creative economy is an economic system in which value is based on use of creative imagination rather than the traditional factors of land, capital and labor.
- ✓ The concept was given by John Howkins in 2001.
- ✓ Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is also called the "Father of Bangladesh".
- ✓ He was the first President of Bangladesh.
- ✓ He also served as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh from April 17, 1971 till his assassination on August 15, 1975.
- ✓ He was the central figure leading the Bangladesh Liberation Movement and the Bangladesh Liberation war in 1971.

INTERNATIONAL DAY

➤ International Day of Epidemic Preparedness – December 27

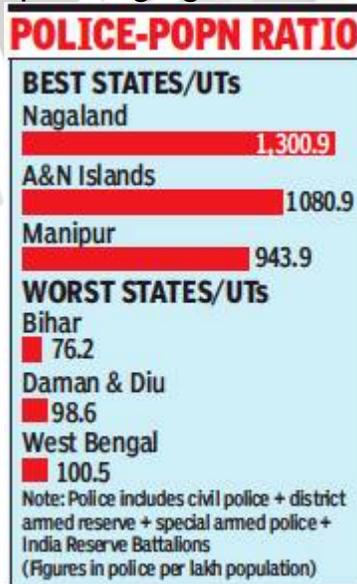


- ✓ The first International Day of Epidemic Preparedness was celebrated by the United Nations on December 27, 2020.
- ✓ The day is being celebrated to facilitate exchange of information, transmission of scientific knowledge and exchange best practices on the epidemic preparedness regionally, locally, and internationally.

- ✓ The day will help to prevent Covid-19 like situations and help to equip the world fight against epidemic like scenarios.

REPORT

- **Bihar police – covering civil police, district armed reserve, special armed police and India Reserve Battalions – had the highest share of women in the entire country at 25.3%.**
- ✓ This was revealed by the data on police organisations released by the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) on December 29
- ✓ Bihar was followed by Himachal with 19.15%, Chandigarh with 18.78% and Tamil Nadu police with 18.5% women personnel
- ✓ Overall, the strength of women personnel in State/UT police forces registered a significant 16% jump last year
- ✓ The strength of women personnel across state and UT police grew from around 1.85 lakh to 2.15 lakh, marking a 16 % increase.
- ✓ The share of women personnel in police force has increased to 10.30% as on January 1 this year (reflecting 2019 data) from 8.98% on January 1, 2019.
- ✓ The police-population ratio or the actual strength of police personnel per lakh population has declined to 155.7 from 158.2.
- ✓ However, the sanctioned police personnel per lakh population stood at 195.39 this year, as against the corresponding figure of 198.39 on January 1, 2019.



- ✓ The state-wise data on police- population ratio (per lakh population) was also calculated based on the actual strength of police
- ✓ As per this data, Nagaland stood at the top with 1,301 police personnel per lakh population, followed by Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Manipur, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh.

- ✓ The states and UTs with the lowest police-population ratio were Bihar (76.2 police personnel per lakh population), Daman & Diu, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.
- ✓ Another significant parameter for police coverage – police-area ratio or personnel (sanctioned) per 100 square kilometer – stood at 79.8, slightly increasing from 78.9 as on 01.01.2019.
- ✓ As per the latest data on police organisations, the actual strength of police force in the States/UTs stood at 20.9 lakh, as against a sanctioned strength of 26.23 lakh.
- ✓ While women in khakhi comprised 10.3% of the state and UT police forces, their share in the central armed police forces (CAPFs) was just 2.9 %.
- ✓ Of the total 29,249 women personnel in the 9.9 lakh-strong CAPFs, 8,631 belonged to CISF, 7,860 to CRPF, 5,130 to BSF.
- ✓ The share of women in state and UT police has shown a steady rise since 2014, from around 1.11 lakh in 2014 to 2.15 lakh in 2019.
- ✓ This has been facilitated by reservation policy being followed in some states and UTs.
- ✓ Around 14 states and UTs offer 33% reservation for women in their police, two states offer 20% quota and three states have set aside 10% quota.
- ✓ Even Central forces like CISF, SSB and RPF have introduced reservation for women in different percentages.
- ✓ Among all States, Jammu & Kashmir police has the worst share of women at 3.31%, followed by Telangana (5.11%).