

**EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – DECEMBER 8, 2020**

**TAMIL NADU**

- On December 7, the Tamil Nadu government - announced the appointment of A Kulasekaran, retired Madras High Court judge, to head a Commission that will survey and collect caste-wise data of the people of the state.



- ✓ The exercise is being undertaken to support the state's stance in a pending legal challenge in Supreme Court against 69% reservation implemented in the state
- ✓ Further, it will also ensure that the welfare schemes of the state government reach all the intended beneficiaries
- ✓ The Commission will decide on the procedures to be adopted to collect caste-wise complete quantifiable data, based on the present scenario and submit a detailed report to the state government
- ✓ It will also decide on the modalities of conducting the survey for preparing the caste-wise data report or use any existing primary data
- ✓ The constitution of the Commission comes into force immediately
- ✓ These details were announced by the chief minister, Edappadi K Palaniswami in a statement.
- ✓ The statement did not specify any timeline for the Commission to submit its report.
- ✓ On December 1, the CM announced the state government's decision to establish a Commission to conduct a survey and collect quantifiable caste-wise data as requested by several political parties and organizations at various times.

- ✓ He made the announcement against the backdrop of protests demanding 20% reservation for Vanniyars in state government jobs and educational institutions by the political party, PMK.
- **Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) - has re-entered into the top 10 in ICAR ranking for 2019.**
  - ✓ Last year, the university dropped to 33rd rank after not being able to produce enough research materials
  - ✓ However, this year the TNAU secured the eighth rank among 67 agricultural institutes
  - ✓ The university has taken several measures to improve its ranking, which includes inviting more external agencies to fund schemes, quantitative increase in paper publications and increasing its recognition in the international scene.
  - ✓ As per the recently released rankings, TNAU is ranked fourth among state agricultural universities and the first among southern agricultural universities.
  - ✓ Until 2016, the University always featured within the top seven ranks.
- **On December 7, the Tamil Nadu government - passed an order allowing state transport undertakings and private bus operators to run buses with 100% seating capacity.**
  - ✓ Till now, occupancy was restricted to 60% of the seating capacity.
  - ✓ This order will be applicable for those operators engaged to transport employees of private companies and schools and colleges as well.
  - ✓ State transport undertakings can now operate more number of bus services as well by following all standard operating procedures as mandated in the May 31, 2020 government order.

## NATIONAL

- **Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech – has sought emergency use authorization (EUA) for Covaxin on December 7**
  - ✓ It becomes the third company to seek such regulatory approval in India after pharma majors, Pfizer and Serum Institute of India (SII).
  - ✓ Covaxin is the first fully locally developed vaccine candidate that will be considered for emergency use authorisation.
  - ✓ The vaccine is being developed with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)
  - ✓ It was developed from a strain of SARS-CoV-2 isolated by ICMR-NIV, Pune.
  - ✓ Bharat Biotech is conducting the largest Phase-3 clinical trials in India over a population size of 26,000 people across 25 sites.
  - ✓ Currently, phase-3 clinical trials for Covaxin are under way in Delhi, UP, Bihar, Maharashtra, Punjab, Assam and other states.
  - ✓ The vaccine is based on a two-dose schedule and its efficacy is determined 14 days after the second dosage.

- ✓ Earlier, US drug maker Pfizer has sought the EUA for its vaccine, developed along with German firm BioNTech
  - ✓ Indian vaccine major, SII has also sought the approval for Covishield, which has been developed by Oxford University and AstraZeneca in the UK.
  - ✓ Covishield was logistically more feasible for use and distribution in India as it stored well at 2-8 degrees Celsius.
  - ✓ SII, the world's largest vaccine producer by volume, has conducted only bridging studies of the vaccine Covishield in India .
  - ✓ The regulatory authority, Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) has already started an internal review of applications submitted by SII and Pfizer
  - ✓ It will examine the applications based on three parameters — safety, quality and efficacy — before offering its recommendations to the Subject Expert Committee (SEC).
  - ✓ The SEC will evaluate the suggestions and advise the drug regulator, Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI), on whether emergency authorisation should be granted or not.
  - ✓ The meeting of SEC is expected to take place this week
  - ✓ It may also recommend conditions that may apply to companies manufacturing or marketing the vaccines in India.
  - ✓ Usually, the recommendation from the SEC — which comprises domain experts — is accepted by the DCGI, which grants final approval.
  - ✓ The SEC will also decide whether Pfizer would need to conduct bridging studies in India.
  - ✓ The Pfizer vaccine has already been approved in the UK and Bahrain for emergency-use authorisation
- **The government – is planning to cover around 80 crore people - 60% of the country's population - in the second phase of vaccination against Covid-19**
- ✓ The first phase, covering around 30 crore people, is expected to roll out from January and end latest by July.
  - ✓ It will cover high risk population including health and frontline workers as well as “vulnerable” sections
  - ✓ The first phase itself is aimed at reducing mortality by 80-85% from the viral disease
  - ✓ This phase is intended to cover sections of the population where prevalence of co-morbidities is higher.
  - ✓ The age criteria for second phase is likely to be 35 and above
  - ✓ During this phase, categories like teachers, drivers and media personnel will be considered
  - ✓ The second phase could start even before the priority group has been fully covered, depending on improved availability of vaccines.
  - ✓ This more ambitious phase aims to achieve herd immunity among the public

# ECONOMY

- For the first time ever, the total value of all the listed stocks in the world - crossed \$100 trillion on December 5

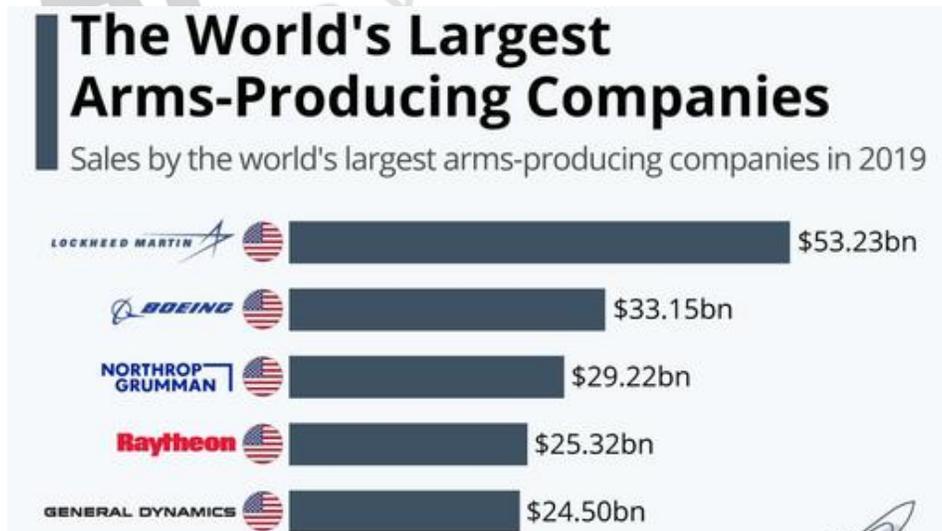


- ✓ The world's market capitalisation stood at \$100.5 trillion, or about ₹7,400 lakh crore, following major contributions from the US and Chinese markets.
  - ✓ A large part of this contribution is due to the upswing in tech stocks in the US, popularly known as FAANGM (Facebook, Apple, Amazon, Netflix, Google and Microsoft)
  - ✓ At close of trading last week, the US had an m-cap of \$41.6 trillion, while China's was \$10.7 trillion.
  - ✓ India, with a market cap of \$2.4 trillion, or about ₹180 lakh crore, was placed 10th.
  - ✓ On March 24, the global market cap had fallen to \$61.6 trillion — a level that was not seen since 2016, as per the data released by Bloomberg.
  - ✓ The US and China have increased their market share in 2020, while all the other eight in the top 10 m-cap league have lost their shares.
  - ✓ The US started the year at 39.5% and now has a share of over 41.6% to lead the global market cap table, while China with 10.7% from 8.4% at the start, is the secondmost valued.
  - ✓ On the other hand, Japan — the country with the third highest market cap — grew from \$6.3 trillion to nearly \$6.8 trillion, but its share in global m-cap dropped from 7.2% to just over 6.7%.
  - ✓ Likewise, India's share currently is 2.4%, dropped marginally from 2.5% at the start of the year.
  - ✓ Canada is the only country that increased its position in the global league table
  - ✓ It had improved to reach seventh place from eight last year, replacing Saudi Arabia
- **The government – has announced a new system of return filing under the Goods and Services Tax regime**
  - ✓ It is called 'Quarterly filing of Return with Monthly Payment' (QRMP) Scheme

- ✓ Coming into effect from January 2021, it will cover 92% of taxpayers with an annual turnover of up to ₹5 crore
- ✓ As many as 94 lakh registered GST taxpayers can now opt to file their GSTR-3B returns once a quarter instead of the present monthly system.
- ✓ It means, the small taxpayer would need to file only 8 returns (4 GSTR-3B and 4 GSTR-1 returns) instead of 16 returns at present in a financial year
- ✓ Taxpayers can join the scheme through the GST, with a facility to opt out or opt in again in the future, if one so wishes.
- ✓ The scheme was approved in-principle by the GST Council at its meeting on October 5 this year

## RANKINGS

- **The list of the 25 largest arms companies in the world, as per their annual sales - was released by leading conflict think-tank Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) on December 7.**
- ✓ Three Chinese state-owned entities - AVIC, CETC and Norinco - now figure in the top 10 arms companies in the world, with a fourth also making it to the top 25.
- ✓ The U.S. arms industry accounted for 61% of sales, ahead of China's 15.7%
- ✓ Six U.S companies and three Chinese firms were in the top 10, rounded out by Britain's BAE Systems in seventh spot.
- ✓ The US continues to dominates the list, with the top five companies being Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Northrop Grumman, Raytheon and General Dynamics, while L3Harris Technologies is at the 10<sup>th</sup> spot.

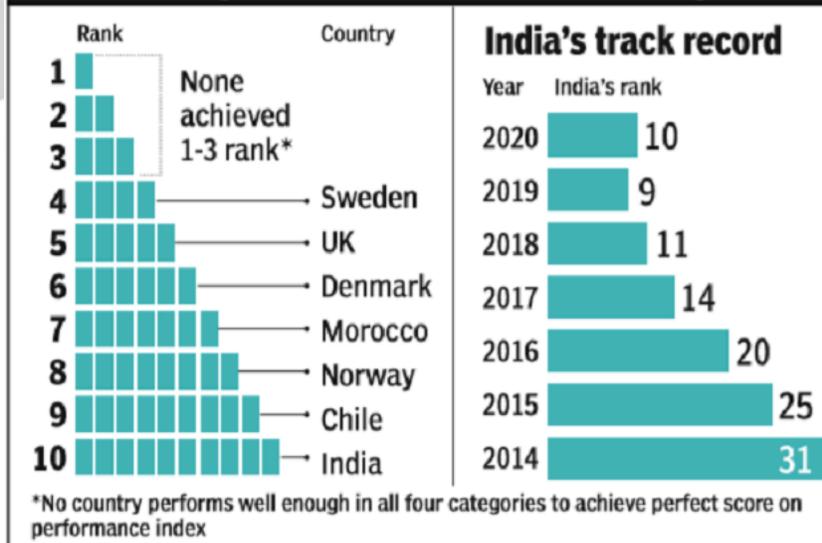


- ✓ There are seven other US firms, apart from six west European, two Russian and a UAE one, in the top 25 list.
- ✓ For the first time, a company from the West Asia made it into the "Top 25"
- ✓ EDGE, of the United Arab Emirates, was formed by the consolidation of some 25 defence entities in 2019 and is at 22<sup>nd</sup> spot in the rankings

- ✓ Overall, sales of arms and military services by these 25 companies totaled \$361 billion in 2019, 8.5% more than in 2018.
  - ✓ While the 12 US companies had reported sales worth \$220 billion, the four Chinese ones accounted for \$57 billion, as per SIPRI.
  - ✓ China, which has a \$180 billion defence budget this year, has been expanding its military capabilities, ranging from long-range missiles and nuclear submarines to space and electronic warfare, over the years.
  - ✓ It is now the world's fifth-largest arms exporter after the US, Russia, France and Germany.
  - ✓ The PLA-Navy, for instance, is now the biggest in the world with around 350 warships and submarines.
  - ✓ The US Navy, in contrast, has 293 warships.
  - ✓ India is, at present, the world's second-largest arms importer, just behind Saudi Arabia.
  - ✓ French group Dassault had rose up from 38th to 17th place, boosted by exports of its Rafale fighter jets in 2019.
- **India - remains in the top 10 for the second year in a row in the latest global Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) released in Germany on December 7.**

## BUT SLIPS ONE POSITION

### Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) Ranking 2020



- ✓ The biggest current emitter of greenhouse gases (GHG) China figures at 33rd rank while the largest historical polluter, the USA, appears at the bottom of the list.
- ✓ None of the countries were in top three ranks.
- ✓ Sweden was at fourth place followed by UK, Denmark, Morocco, Norway, Chile.
- ✓ India had shown a steady progress in its journey towards climate protection
- ✓ The country was ranked 31<sup>st</sup> in 2014 and improved significantly to 9<sup>th</sup> in 2019

- ✓ Globally none of the countries assessed for the annual CCPI report are on the path to meet their Paris Agreement commitment
- ✓ The Paris agreement aims to keep global warming increase below 2°C by the end of the century and actually to make efforts to restrict it to 1.5°C rise.
- ✓ The list is prepared by assessing performances of 57 countries and European Union (as a whole) since the year 2005
- ✓ The countries are ranked under four categories - GHG emissions (40%), renewable energy (20%), energy use (20%) and climate policy (20%).
- ✓ These 57 countries and the EU collectively are responsible for about 90% of global GHG emissions.
- ✓ The CCPI is released by not-for-profit organizations - Germanwatch and New Climate Institute (Germany) in association with the Climate Action Network (CAN International).
- ✓ It is an important tool to enhance transparency in international climate politics and enables comparison of climate protection efforts and progress made by individual countries.
- ✓ The CCPI 2021, covering the year 2020, shows that only two G20 countries— the UK and India— are among the high rankers
- ✓ Six other countries— the USA, Saudi Arabia, Canada, Australia, South Korea and Russia (52nd) — are at the bottom of the index.

