

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – JANUARY 1, 2021

TAMIL NADU

- **The Tamil Nadu government - has announced the appointment of retired High Court judge S. Baskaran as the Chairperson of the Tamil Nadu State Human Rights Commission.**



- ✓ Justice S Baskaran assumed office on December 31.
- ✓ As per the order issued by the Governor Banwarilal Purohit, Justice S Baskaran would head the Commission for a period of three years or till he attained 70 years of age.
- **The Tamil Nadu government - has increased the number of recipients for Kalaichemmal Awards to six from the existing two.**
- ✓ The awards are conferred on exemplary artists of the state in recognition of their meritorious service in the fields of paintings and sculpture in traditional and contemporary arts.
- ✓ The cash award for the honour has also been revised to Rs. 1 lakh from the existing Rs. 50,000.
- ✓ Henceforth, a total of three recipients will receive Kalaichemmal Award under traditional and contemporary arts category.
- ✓ In this regard, the decision has been taken by the Ministry of Tamil Official Language and Tamil Culture

- **The Tamil Nadu government – has announced the constitution of a welfare board exclusive for the workers of firecracker and matchboxes industries, benefiting around 4 lakh workers.**
 - ✓ The state labour minister will be the welfare board’s chairperson while the commissioner of the labour department and director of industrial safety and health would act as ex-officio members of the board.
 - ✓ The representatives from the workforce will also be members, as per the government order.
 - ✓ The board has been constituted to ensure social security for the workers and to extend financial aid for the needy persons.
 - ✓ As on date, 62,661 workers of the firecrackers and matchbox industries have enrolled under the social security scheme.
 - ✓ At present, there were 1,250 licenced crackers manufacturing units and 870 licenced matchbox manufacturing units were functioning in the state, providing employment to around 1.20 lakh people in the state

- **The Tamil Nadu government - has amended the Tamil Nadu Registration of Marriages Act, 2009**
 - ✓ The amendment enables registration of marriages in sub-registrar offices within whose jurisdiction either or both the parties to the marriage have their permanent place of residence.
 - ✓ Earlier, registration of marriages could be done only in the sub-registrar office within whose jurisdiction the marriage was solemnised.

- **The Nilgiri Mountain Railway (NMR) - resumed service between Mettupalayam and Ooty on December 31 after a gap of nine months.**



- ✓ The train with four compartments and 180 seats was driven by a steam engine
- ✓ The train was earlier cancelled in March due to the pandemic.
- ✓ Southern Railway had announced the resumption of services two days ago.
- ✓ Union minister of railways Piyush Goyal had tweeted, “Get ready to soak in the beauty of Nilgiri Mountain Railway. This Unesco world heritage site will resume operations from December 31.”
- ✓ Nilgiri Mountain Railway is hailed as Asia’s steepest heritage mountain railway.

STATES

- **The Karnataka government – has initiated steps to preserve the Kolar leaf-nosed bats, which were found only in two caves in the villages of Kolar district**



- ✓ The bat recently became extinct in one of the caves
- ✓ The Kolar leaf nosed-bats have been listed under ‘Critically Endangered’ under IUCN list of threatened species.
- ✓ The habitats of leaf-nosed bats are under threat due to the setting of fires by the granite miners in Kolar district.
- ✓ Earlier, the Centre imposed a temporary ban on granite mining in the region to save the bats in 2014.
- ✓ The leaf nosed-bat is not protected under Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 1972

NATIONAL

- **The government - has ordered a probe against e-commerce players Amazon and Flipkart for alleged violation of foreign direct investment (FDI) norms**
- ✓ The move follows a review of the complaints by a three member committee of officers from the commerce and industry ministry.
- ✓ The panel had discussed complaints related to Amazon’s acquisition of stake in Kishore Biyani’s Future Group outfit and also More retail chain, which was earlier owned by the AV Birla Group.
- ✓ The ministry has asked the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Enforcement Directorate (ED), which is the agency tasked with looking into charges of FEMA violation, to investigate the issue.
- ✓ The FDI rules do not allow the entry of overseas retailers into the country in the multi-brand segment or ecommerce.
- ✓ As a result, Amazon and Flipkart, which is now majority controlled by Walmart, are operating what they call are ‘marketplaces’.
- **The Centre – had asked the states and UTs to conduct a nation-wide dry run for the Covid-19 vaccination on January 2**
- ✓ The activity is proposed to be conducted in all state capitals in at least three session sites.

- ✓ Around 96,000 vaccinators have been trained for the Covid-19 vaccination programme that will be rolled out in January once a vaccine is approved.
 - ✓ State governments, district officials and municipal commissioners have been asked to get ground staff, logistics and IT systems in place for the exercise
 - ✓ The vaccination drive aims to cover 30 crore 'priority population' by July 2021.
 - ✓ Maharashtra and Kerala are likely to schedule the dry run in major cities other than their capital cities.
 - ✓ For the dry runs, the medical officer in-charge of each session at site will have to identify 25 beneficiaries (healthcare workers).
 - ✓ States have been asked to ensure that data of these beneficiaries is uploaded in Co-WIN, which is the IT platform developed by the Centre to implement the vaccination drive.
 - ✓ These beneficiaries will also be available at the session site for the dry run.
 - ✓ The dry runs will also include physical verification of all proposed sites for adequacy of space, logistical arrangements, internet connectivity, electricity, safety etc.
 - ✓ The dry runs are also aimed at equipping the administrations at the state level to manage vaccine supply, storage and logistics including cold chain management.
 - ✓ The drug regulator's subject expert committee on Covid vaccine is scheduled to meet on January 1 to consider emergency use authorisation for Serum Institute of India's Covishield and Bharat Biotech's Covaxin.
 - ✓ Both the companies have submitted updated data to the regulator, which are currently under evaluation.
 - ✓ Once the SEC recommends the emergency use, the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) will take a final decision on the approval.
 - ✓ The National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for Covid-19 has already issued detailed operational guidelines for implementation of the vaccination process.
- **The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) - will conduct the Class X and XII board exams of 2021 between May 4 and June 10 and the results will be declared by July 15**
- ✓ This was announced by the education minister Ramesh Pokhriyal on December 31.
 - ✓ CBSE will hold the practical exams from March 1.
 - ✓ Usually practical exams are conducted in January and the written exams begin in February and conclude in March.
 - ✓ Considering the disruption of regular classes due to the pandemic, CBSE had reduced the syllabus by 30% earlier to make up for the academic losses.
 - ✓ The board is also working on a solution for conducting the exams in over 25 countries where CBSE has a presence.
 - ✓ Schools across the country were closed in March to contain the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic.

- ✓ They were partially reopened in some states from October 15.
 - ✓ The ministry of education had earlier announced that JEE (Main) for admission to engineering colleges will be held four times a year, starting 2021
 - ✓ The move is aimed at offering flexibility to students and a chance to improve their scores.
 - ✓ The first edition of the Joint Entrance Examination-Mains (JEE-Main) will be held from February 23 to 26, followed by rounds in March, April and May.
- **The Pension Fund Regulator, PFRDA - recently announced that the subscribers can use 'online' mode to exit from National Pension System.**
- ✓ Under the current process, the National Pension Subscribers have to physically approach their 'Points of Presence' to complete the withdrawal request.
 - ✓ They have to submit withdrawal forms along with other supporting documents for authorization by the 'Points of Presence'.
 - ✓ In the online process, the subscribers of the National Pension system will initiate 'exit' request in the Central Record Keeping Agency system.
 - ✓ Then, the subscribers will have to upload relevant withdrawal documents including Know Your Customer.
 - ✓ PFRDA is Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority, which was established in 2003.
 - ✓ It was made a statutory body under Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority Act, 2013.
 - ✓ National Pension System is a contribution pension system in India.
 - ✓ Under the system, the entire pension withdrawal amount is tax free.
 - ✓ The system is administered and regulated by the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority.

INTERNATIONAL

- **On December 31, China - authorised its first homegrown Covid-19 vaccine 'Sinopharm' for general purpose usage.**
- ✓ The Sinopharm vaccine had already been given to groups such as healthcare professionals and essential workers under emergency-use guidelines
 - ✓ China is planning a mass vaccination programme to inoculate 50 million people before the Lunar New Year holiday in February 2021.
 - ✓ The authorization comes one day after UK regulators authorised AstraZeneca's inexpensive and easy-to-handle vaccine.
 - ✓ Both shots have been closely watched by developing countries, many of which have been unable to secure the Pfizer and Moderna doses being offered by rich nations.
 - ✓ The Pakistan government said it will buy 1.2 million doses of a Sinopharm shot.
 - ✓ China is eager to ship its vaccines globally, to redeem its lost image caused by the pandemic that started a year ago in the city of Wuhan.

- ✓ Earlier, the state-owned firm announced that preliminary data from last-stage trials had shown it to be 79.3% effective.
- ✓ Meanwhile, China has detected its first imported case of the new virus variant that is spreading rapidly around Britain
- ✓ The variant was detected in a 23-year-old female student returning to China from Britain, who was tested in Shanghai on December 14

APPOINTMENTS

- **On December 31, Justice Sanjib Banerjee – was appointed as the Chief Justice of the Madras High Court**



- ✓ The senior-most judge of the Calcutta High Court, Justice Banerjee, was appointed by President Ram Nath Kovind, as per the announcement made by the Union Ministry of Law and Justice
- ✓ Justice Banerjee would be taking over from the date he assumes charge of his office
- ✓ He would be succeeding Chief Justice Amreshwar Pratap Sahi, who retired from service on December 31.
- ✓ Born on November 2, 1961, Justice Banerjee obtained a bachelor's degree with honours in economics in 1983, before completing his law degree in 1986-87.
- ✓ He was enrolled as an advocate in 1990 and practised primarily at the Calcutta High Court and the Supreme Court.
- ✓ He has appeared before the High Courts in Delhi, Bombay, Allahabad, Patna, Jharkhand, Gauhati, Odisha, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana.
- ✓ On December 31, the Ministry of Law notified the elevation of four judges as Chief Justices of Madras, Orissa, Telangana and Jammu & Kashmir High Courts (HCs)



JUSTICE S.
MURALIDHAR



JUSTICE
HIMA KOHLI



JUSTICE
PANKAJ MITHAL

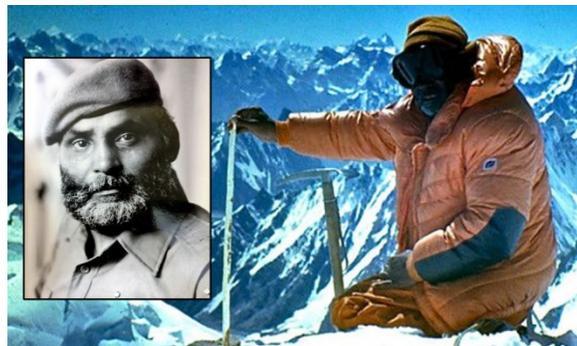
- ✓ While Justice Dr S. Muralidhar of Punjab and Haryana High Court was elevated as the Chief Justice (CJ) of Orissa HC, Delhi HC judge Hima Kohli has been made the CJ of Telangana HC.
 - ✓ Justice Pankaj Mithal was named as the next Chief Justice of Jammu and Kashmir
 - ✓ The Law Ministry also notified the transfer of 10 other judges including four Chief Justices.
- **Former cabinet minister in the West Bengal government, Suwendu Adhikari – is likely to be appointed chairman of the Jute Corporation of India (JCI)**



- ✓ Suwendu joined BJP from Trinamool Congress recently during the visit of Union Home Minister, Amit Shah to West Bengal
- ✓ The position of Chairman in JCI is equivalent to the status of a cabinet minister
- ✓ The JCI was formed in 1971 with the sole purpose of helping farmers get the MSP for their produce.
- ✓ Headquartered in Kolkata, JCI has played a key role in jute cultivation in nearly 17 districts of Bengal.
- ✓ At present, JCI is in a transformation phase
- ✓ JCI has already introduced geo-mapping of jute growing areas with the assistance of ISRO.
- ✓ It has also introduced an e-passbook for farmers to eliminate middlemen.

OBITUARY

- **Colonel Narendra ‘Bull’ Kumar (Retd.) (87 years) - died due to age-related illness at the Army’s Research & Referral Hospital in Delhi on December 31.**



- ✓ Colonel Kumar, the soldier-mountaineer, was instrumental in the Army launching Operation Meghdoot and securing Siachen Glacier for India in 1984
- ✓ Born in Rawalpindi in 1933, Col. Kumar was drawn towards his life-long obsession towards mountains when he met Tenzing Norgay in Darjeeling.
- ✓ He lost his toes to frostbite during his first expedition in Ladakh in 1961.
- ✓ He became the first Indian to scale the Nanda Devi in 1964.
- ✓ A year after that, he was deputy leader of the first Indian expedition to scale Everest.
- ✓ In 1977, he climbed Kanchenjunga from its northeastern spur, the toughest.
- ✓ But most significant of all was his series of expeditions in the Siachen.
- ✓ The Karachi Agreement of 1949, signed by India and Pakistan after a UN-mediated ceasefire, had not clearly demarcated authority over parts of Siachen because they were too remote.
- ✓ Starting in 1978, Col. Kumar led a recce across seven mountain ranges — Pir Panjal, Himalayas, Zaskar, Ladakh, Saltoro, Karakoram and Agil — and came back with evidence that Pakistan was planning to occupy Siachen glacier.
- ✓ Pakistan had planned an operation to conquer Siachen in May 1984 but India preempted the attack.
- ✓ On April 13, 1984, India launched Operation Meghdoot and got control over the 76.4-km glacier on the Saltoro ridge.
- ✓ Col. Kumar was serving as Commandant of the “High Altitude Warfare School (HAWS)” during that period
- ✓ A platoon of the 4 Kumaon led by then Captain Sanjay Kulkarni planted the Indian flag at Bilafond La.
- ✓ Col. Kumar was awarded Padma Shri in 1965.
- ✓ For his valour, he was decorated with the Arjuna Award, the Param Vishisht Seva Medal in all three services (the only Colonel so far), the Kirti Chakra and the Ati Vishisht Seva Medal
- ✓ He is a recipient of the Mac Gregor Medal awarded to armed forces personnel for military reconnaissance.
- ✓ The battalion headquarters on the glacier close to an altitude of 16,000 feet is named “Kumar post” in his honour.
- ✓ Col. Kumar served Kumaon Regiment for 34 years

