

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS–JANUARY 14, 2021

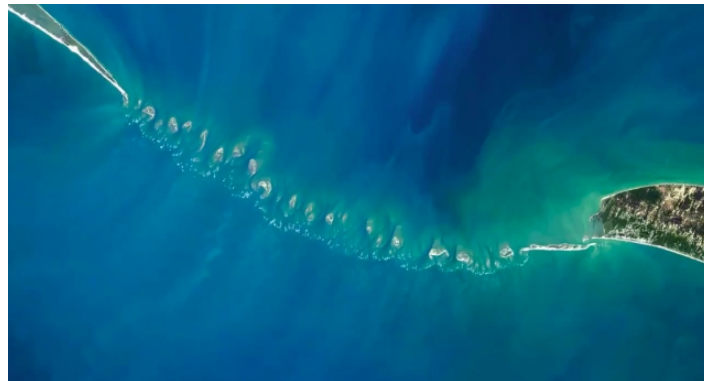
TAMIL NADU

- Tamil Nadu state archaeology department - will soon begin excavations at three more sites — Korkai (Tuticorin), Gangaikonda Cholapuram (Ariyalur) and Mayiladumparai (Krishnagiri) in the state



- ✓ This is in addition to the ongoing excavations at Keeladi cluster, Adichanallur, Sivagalai and Kodumanal.
- ✓ The department had obtained permission from the Central Advisory Board for Archaeology (CABA) for excavations in the seven sites.

- ✓ Further, the department will also conduct field studies in Tiruvannamalai, Salem, Krishnagiri and Vellore
 - ✓ The Korkai excavation will reveal more about the Thamirabarani river valley civilization because excavations are already on in sites such as Adichanallur and Sivagalai in the same region.
 - ✓ The state government has sanctioned ₹3 crore for conducting archaeological excavations in the state for the year 2021.
 - ✓ Besides, some heritage institutes and universities have sought permission for conducting excavations at some significant sites in Tamil Nadu.
 - ✓ The Sharma Centre for Heritage Education has applied for permission for excavation in Sendrananpalayam in Tiruvallur district
 - ✓ Alagappa University has sought permission to conduct excavation in Ilanthakarai in Sivaganga district.
 - ✓ The Tamil University, Thanjavur, has sought permission to carry out excavation at Moolapalayam in Coimbatore
 - ✓ The University of Madras has sought permission to conduct excavation at Vasalai in Vellore.
 - ✓ Tamil Nadu Open University has submitted its proposal to conduct excavation at Porpanikottai in Pudukottai district.
 - ✓ If all proposals get approved by the CABA, the state will have more than ten sites under excavation in 2021, which would be the highest in the country
 - ✓ In the case of archaeology department, Tamil Nadu has most excavations (seven sites) among state archaeology departments in the country
- **The Center – has approved an underwater exploration project to be started this year to determine the age, nature and formation of the Ram Setu**
- ✓ Ram Setu is a chain of shoals/sand bars between India and Sri Lanka
 - ✓ The Central Advisory Board on Archaeology, a body under the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), approved the proposal by the CSIR-National Institute of Oceanography, Goa, (NIO) last month.



- ✓ The study will be based on archaeological antiquities, radiometric and thermoluminescence (TL) dating for geological timescale and other supporting environmental data

- ✓ Radiometric dating looks for radioactive impurities to ascertain an object's age.
 - ✓ TL dating analyses light released when an object is heated.
 - ✓ According to the Hindu epic 'Ramayana', a "vanar sena" had built a bridge over the ocean to help Rama cross over to Lanka and rescue Sita.
 - ✓ The 48-km chain of limestone shoals has been associated with the 'Ramayana' as that bridge built for Lord Rama
 - ✓ In 2007, the ASI had said it had found no evidence that the Rama Setu is man-made, while it withdrew this affidavit in the Supreme Court later.
 - ✓ The NIO will use its research vessels, Sindhu Sadhana or Sindhu Sankalp, for the project
 - ✓ These vessels can collect samples of sediment core 35-40m below the 4,000-m water level.
 - ✓ The project will be overseen by Dr Sundaresh, principal technical officer with the NIO's marine archaeology department.
 - ✓ The study will also find out if there are any "submerged habitations" around Ram Setu.
 - ✓ In 1964, the entire village of Dhanushkodi near Ram Setu went under during a cyclone.
 - ✓ Five years ago, the NIO had signed an MoU with the ASI to revive underwater archaeology across the country.
 - ✓ At that time, the highlights were Ram Setu and the existence of Dwarka, the mythical city of Lord Krishna that scriptures say was submerged.
 - ✓ The Dwarka project has been on for the past two years.
- **Tamil Nadu – receives 20,000 doses of Covaxin on January 13 in a chartered flight**



- ✓ Three cartons containing the indigenous Covid- 19 vaccine manufactured by Bharath Biotech arrived at Chennai airport
- ✓ With this, Tamil Nadu has received 5.56 lakh doses, including 5.36 lakh doses of Covishield manufactured by Pune's Serum Institute.
- ✓ On January 12, the first batch of 5,12,200 doses of Covisheild vaccine was sent to regional vaccine stores
- ✓ The state vaccine store held back a buffer stock of 24,300 doses.

- ✓ The Centre has approved these two vaccines for emergency use and the vaccination drive will begin on January 16.
- ✓ Healthcare providers including doctors, medics, nurses, paramedics will be vaccinated at centres across the state.
- ✓ The beneficiaries will have to be compulsorily registered in the CoWin portal.
- ✓ The vaccine will be administered in the left arm for all doctors.
- ✓ After the first dose of 0.5 ml, the beneficiary will receive a message with dates for the booster vaccine.
- ✓ After the booster dose is administered, the healthcare provider will receive the inoculation certificate
- ✓ Vaccinations will be done using auto disabling syringes that become dysfunctional after one use.

NATIONAL


- **On January 13, the dispatches of India's first indigenous Covid-19 vaccine Covaxin – began from Hyderabad to various states in the country**



- ✓ Thousands of vials of the vaccine (each vial containing 20 doses) were airshipped to 11 cities across the country.
- ✓ The refrigerated trucks carrying the vaccine vials began rolling out of Bharat Biotech's Genome Valley facility in Hyderabad
- ✓ The first batch of vaccines was shipped to Ganavaram (Vijayawada), Guwahati, Patna, Delhi, Kurukshetra, Bangalore, Pune, Bhubaneswar, Jaipur, Chennai and Lucknow.
- ✓ Bharat Biotech has bagged an order for 55 lakh doses of Covaxin from the Indian government.
- ✓ The company would be donating 16.5 lakh doses to the government over and above the 55 lakh ordered
- ✓ The vaccine has been developed in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research-National Institute of Virology (ICMR-NIV).

- ✓ Multiple airlines like Air India, IndiGo, SpiceJet, Air Asia, Vistara and logistics services provider Blue Dart were involved in the airshipment exercise.
 - ✓ The government has placed the order for the vaccine at ₹295 a dose.
 - ✓ The temperature of the vaccine cargo was to be maintained between 2 and 8°C.
 - ✓ Covaxin is an inactivated two-dose SARS-CoV-2 vaccine, developed and manufactured in the company's BSL-3 (Bio-Safety Level 3) biocontainment facility, one of its kind in the world
 - ✓ The Phase III clinical trials involving 26,000 volunteers are currently on since November 2020.
 - ✓ Earlier this month, the Drugs Controller General of India had given emergency use authorisation for Covaxin.
- **On January 16, India's vaccination drive against Covid-19 - will be launched at around 3,000 sites, which will increase up to 5,000 by the end of the month.**
- ✓ Each site will have an average of around 100 recipients on the first day
 - ✓ The government is planning to increase the number of sites up to 12,000 or even more by March as the programme stabilises and supplies improve.
 - ✓ To avoid any confusion, only one brand of vaccine — either Covishield or Covaxin — will be made available at a particular site.
 - ✓ Depending on the availability and logistics, the state government will decide which vaccine goes to which site.

12K SITES LIKELY BY MARCH

<p>100 beneficiaries expected to be inoculated on the first day at each site</p> <p>5,000 vaccination sites by the end of January. Aim to ramp up to 12,000 or more by March</p> <p>5 staffers, including vaccinator, at each site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Only one brand, Covishield or Covaxin, to be made available at any particular site to eliminate confusion over second shot. State govts to decide which vaccine goes to which site ➤ Govt says vaccine orders will be placed in a staggered manner to ensure smooth supply ➤ Vaccination programme may continue for up to a year or even longer, govt says 	 <p>Bharat Biotech shipped its first tranche of 2.4 lakh Covaxin doses on Wednesday</p>
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- ✓ This will ensure that beneficiaries are inoculated with the same brand when they come back for the second dose

- ✓ Information relating to vaccination will be recorded on Co-WIN — the IT platform being used for implementation and monitoring of the immunisation exercise.
 - ✓ Each vaccination site will be manned by a team of around five members, including one vaccinator.
 - ✓ The drug regulator has granted emergency-use approval to Oxford University/ AstraZeneca's Covishield, locally manufactured by the Serum Institute of India, and Bharat Biotech's Covaxin based on safety and immunogenicity data.
 - ✓ Bharat Biotech shipped its first tranche of 2.4 lakh Covaxin doses on January 13 to 11 cities — Gannavaram, Guwahati, Patna, Delhi, Kurukshetra, Bengaluru, Pune, Bhubaneswar, Jaipur, Chennai and Lucknow
 - ✓ It had initially signed an agreement to supply 55 lakh doses of Covaxin for the programme
 - ✓ SII will supply around 110 lakh doses of Covishield as of now and the consignee list includes around 60 locations across the country.
 - ✓ The government is expecting to administer at least the first dose of the vaccine to all healthcare workers, estimated at one crore, over the next two months.
 - ✓ The American pharma major Pfizer Inc was the first company to seek the emergency use nod in India early in December
 - ✓ **Meanwhile, the Centre has asked all states to defer annual Pulse polio Immunisation drive scheduled to take place from January 17 till further notice.**
 - ✓ The move comes in the wake of the launch of the massive vaccination drive against Covid-19 on January 16.
 - ✓ The polio vaccination drive is conducted in January every year, with a second round in the second half of the year.
- **The National Highways Authority of India - has launched a new portal for vehicles that are exempted from payment of toll charge at its plazas.**
- ✓ These vehicles will be issued with radio-frequency enabled FASTag cards if they apply online on <http://exemptedfastag.nhai.org/>
 - ✓ There are around 35 categories of vehicles that are exempted from paying toll since they are travelling in the service of the nation.
 - ✓ Official vehicles used by Members of Parliament, Ministers, MLAs, MLCs, High Court Judges, Chief Secretaries, Governors, Lt. Governors, foreign dignitaries, executive magistrates and vehicles used by the armed forces, police and fire services, those used as ambulances and vehicles classified as invalid carriages, used by the differently-abled, can apply through this portal.
 - ✓ At present, around 74% of national highway users in the State are FASTag compliant.
 - ✓ Motorists have time till February 15 to procure FASTags for their vehicles.
- **The government - has stepped into the raging privacy controversy over WhatsApp's latest update and has started an "examination" of the new policy that the company has asked users to agree to by February 8.**

Platform	 WhatsApp/WhatsApp Business	 Telegram	 Signal
End to end (e2e) Encryption	Not completely open source Backups not encrypted	Not open source Servers have access to keys	Open source Truly e2e chats
Chat Backups	Third-party cloud backup	In-built cloud backup Secret chats not backed up	Local backups can be enabled; off by default
Screen Security	✗	Only for secret chats	✓
Group chat security	✗	✗	✓
Self Destructing Messages	✗	Only for secret chats	✓
Voice + Video Calls Share files, photos, videos Cross-platform MFA	✓	✓ Video calls will be available soon	✓

- ✓ Recently, WhatsApp announced that it proposes to share certain business/transactional data with Facebook, the parent of the world's biggest messenger.
 - ✓ WhatsApp's new privacy terms give it the right to share user data, including location, phone number, contacts list and usage pattern, with Facebook and its units such as Instagram and Messenger.
 - ✓ The move has been questioned by privacy advocates, entrepreneurs such as Tesla's Elon Musk, and certain government agencies abroad, citing Facebook's poor track record in handling user data.
 - ✓ However, WhatsApp still maintained that its iterated messages would remain encrypted
 - ✓ The government may also seek certain explanations from WhatsApp regarding the proposed changes
 - ✓ While WhatsApp has been in the middle of a storm over the proposals, rival platforms such as Telegram and Signal (started by former WhatsApp co-founder Brian Acton) have been gaining in numbers and popularity.
- **On January 13, Defence minister Rajnath Singh and external affairs minister S Jaishankar - called on President Ram Nath Kovind to inform him formally that there would be no foreign dignitary as chief guest at the Republic Day parade this year.**
- ✓ The move follows after UK PM Boris Johnson cancelled his visit to be the chief guest at the parade in view of the Covid-19 pandemic.
 - ✓ The two senior ministers visited Rashtrapati Bhavan and informed the President about the government's decision to not extend invitation to any other foreign dignitary.

- ✓ The President was also formally informed about the government decision of truncated version of the Republic Day celebrations this year in compliance with the Covid-19 protocol
- ✓ This will be the first time in over five decades that the Republic Day celebrations would not have a foreign dignitary as the chief guest.
- ✓ The last time the parade did not have a chief guest was in 1966 when Indira Gandhi was sworn in as PM on January 24 after the demise of Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri on January 11

INTERNATIONAL

- **On January 13, the US House of Representatives - began proceedings to impeach Donald Trump for a second time in an unprecedented move in US presidential history.**

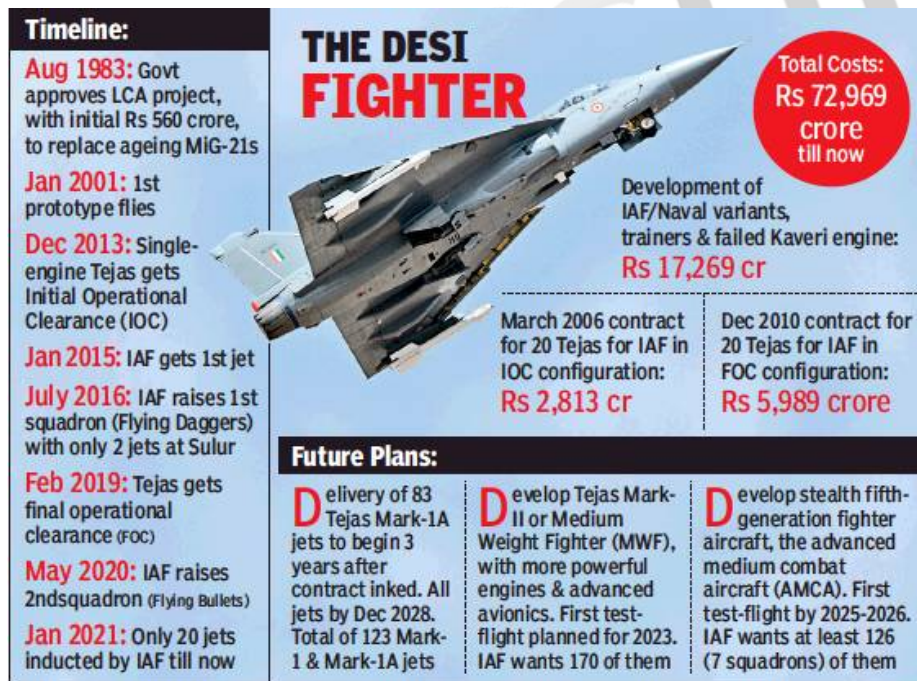


- ✓ Trump would be the first American president to be impeached twice, after his first impeachment in 2019
 - ✓ Democrats pushed ahead with the impeachment process on the day
 - ✓ Earlier, Vice-president Mike Pence rejected a House resolution asking him to fire Trump by invoking the 25th amendment, which allows a majority of the cabinet to remove an incapacitated president.
 - ✓ The House vote on a single article of impeachment that accuses the president of “inciting an insurrection” is expected to pass.
 - ✓ While the House impeachment will have no consequences beyond the indictment, the Senate can effectively debar him from running for office with a conviction, which requires a 2/3rd majority of those “Present and Voting”.
- **On January 12, Malaysia’s king - declared a nationwide state of emergency to fight a coronavirus surge and suspended the parliament**
 - ✓ The surprise move came a day after the Prime Minister announced sweeping new curbs across much of the Southeast Asian nation, including the closure of most businesses
 - ✓ The PM also warned the health system was “at breaking point”.

- ✓ Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah agreed to declare an emergency until August 1 following a request from Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin
- ✓ It is the first time Malaysia has declared a national state of emergency in over half a century
- ✓ The declaration gives the government powers to take over private hospitals as government facilities become overwhelmed, and get extra help from the military and the police.
- ✓ Malaysia handled the pandemic well last year with a tough lockdown but, once curbs were eased, cases accelerated and have repeatedly hit fresh records in the recent days.
- ✓ The country has reported more than 1,38,000 virus cases and 555 deaths.

DEFENCE

- **The cabinet committee on security - clears ₹47k crore deal for 83 indigenous Tejas fighters for the Indian Air Force on January 13**



- ✓ In the biggest-ever indigenous military deal, the committee chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi cleared the procurement of 73 LCA Tejas Mk-1A fighter aircraft and 10 LCA Tejas Mk-1 trainer aircraft
- ✓ The aircrafts will be procured at the cost of ₹45,696 crore along with design and development of infrastructure sanctions worth ₹1,202 crore
- ✓ In meeting out the order, defence PSU Hindustan Aeronautics (HAL) will be working with almost 500 big and small companies
- ✓ This will not only boost the fledgling domestic military production sector, but also greatly improve the fast-depleting number of fighter squadrons in the IAF.
- ✓ Under the deal cleared by the CCS, deliveries of the single-engine Tejas Mark-1A jets will begin in three years.

- ✓ All 83 jets are slated for delivery in the January 2024-December 2028 timeframe.
- ✓ However, the “indigenous” Tejas Mark-1A fighter still has 50% “foreign” parts, including the all-important engine.
- ✓ But defence minister Rajnath Singh said the indigenous content level will go up to 60% by the time the 83rd jet rolls out.
- ✓ The MK-1A would have over 40 modifications over the MK-1 variant
- ✓ This includes some major ones like an electronic warfare system, advanced electronically scanned array (AESA) radar, beyond visual range (BVR) missiles and a network warfare system comprising software defined radio (SDR)

AWARDS

- **Rohini Godbole from Centre for High Energy Physics (CHEP) at Indian Institute of Science (IISc) - has been awarded the Ordre National du Mérite or the National Order of Merit, considered among the highest distinctions bestowed by France.**



- ✓ IISc, while congratulating Godbole, said she has been recognised for her contribution to collaborations between France and India and her commitment to promoting enrolment of women in science.
- ✓ Earlier, Godbole was awarded the Padma Shri by the Indian government in 2019
- ✓ Godbole had a very long collaboration with the French scientific community.
- ✓ She has been a member of the scientific council of Indo-French Centre for the Promotion of Advanced Research (IFCPAR) and held Indo-French meetings on women in science both in India and in France.
- ✓ A renowned Indian physicist and academic, Godbole has worked extensively on different aspects of particle phenomenology over the past three decades.

