



EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS–janUARY 20, 2021

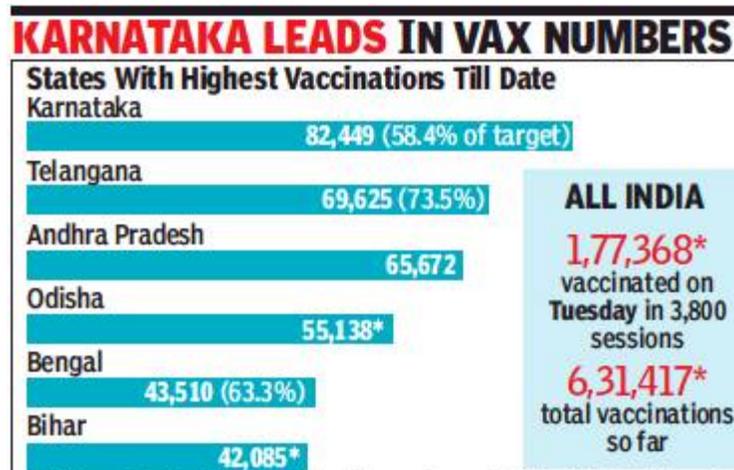
TAMIL NADU

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi - agreed to visit Tamil Nadu soon to inaugurate various completed projects in the state**
- ✓ This was announced by chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami on January 19 in Delhi
- ✓ The PM will inaugurate metro rail connectivity between Washermenpet and Wimco Nagar and petroleum ministry's Ramanathapuram-Tuticorin gas pipeline project
- ✓ He will also lay foundation for Cauvery-Gundar interlink, extension, renovation and modernisation of Grand Anicut canal system and Lower Bhavani sub-basin system
- ✓ In his meeting with the PM for half-an-hour, the chief minister also made requests for Central assistance to various state government programmes.
- ✓ They include ₹1,000 crore for setting up bulk drug park at Manallur in Gummidipoondi and ₹100 crore for medical devices park near Oragadam in Kancheepuram district.
- ✓ The CM urged the Centre to sanction Rs.713.39 crore for execution of Nandanthal Vaazhi Cauvery to restore the river and its tributaries on the lines of Namami Gange.
- ✓ He requested early approval of phase II of metro rail under 50:50 equity model and flight services from Chennai to Salem and Coimbatore to UAE
- ✓ The CM sought the sanction for two mega textile parks in the state and development of Vellapallam fishing harbour in Nagapattinam and fish landing centres in 18 small fishing harbours, besides expediting the setting up of the defence industrial corridor.
- ✓ The CM also urged PM to release ₹1,200 crore immediately under Central financial assistance to provide cyclone relief to the people of Tamil Nadu
- ✓ Tamil Nadu was hit by two successive cyclones, Nivar and Burevi recently

- ✓ The state suffered extensive damage to standing samba crops following the heavy rainfall in the southern districts and coastal areas due to unusual extension of monsoon in January
- **Metropolitan Transport Corporation (MTC) - has launched its revamped website with live info on bus routes, fares and timings.**
- ✓ The site which resembles the one maintained by Bengaluru Transport Corporation, aims at assisting regular commuters and people new to the city
- ✓ The new website seeks to help passengers to find out the bus route numbers for a particular destination from a selected source
- ✓ On entering these details in the drop-down menu, the site will display the list of direct bus options available between these two points.
- ✓ Once the route number is displayed, a separate tab is provided to check the fares and timings, which are updated on a real-time basis
- ✓ Besides this, a separate link has been provided to assist passengers from other cities who wish to travel to tourist destinations, hospitals, religious and educational institutions.
- ✓ On selecting a particular place, list of all MTC buses crossing through that point are displayed.
- ✓ Efforts are underway to introduce live bus tracking option in this page.
- ✓ This feature will be available in the 'Locate and Access My Bus' (LAMB) mobile app as well.
- ✓ Following a successful trial run, the app is at the final phase of testing currently

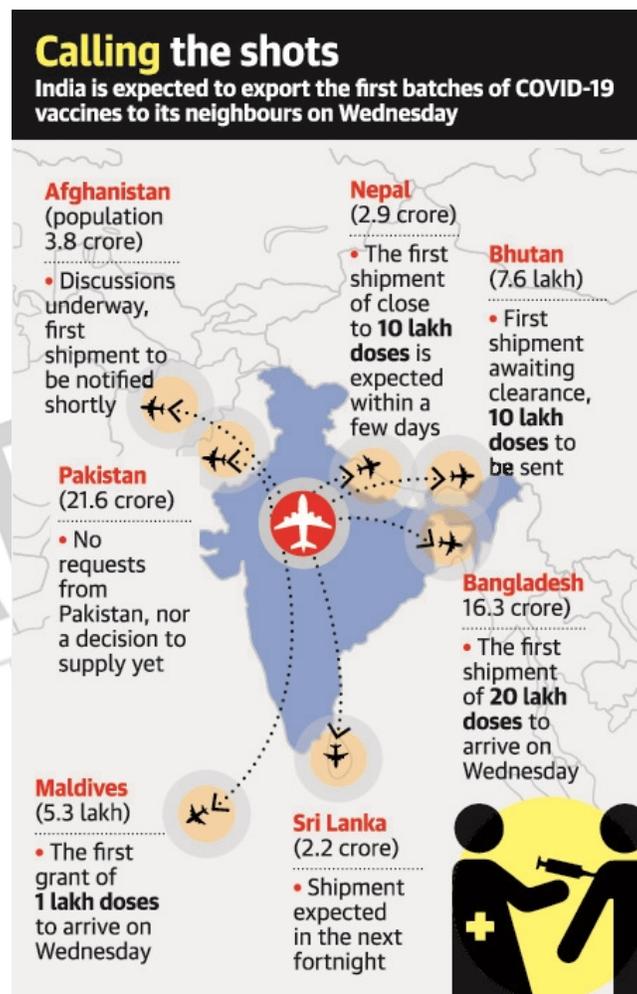
NATIONAL

- **India - has so far vaccinated 6,31,417 people against Covid-19 in the last four days since January 16, the day of launch of the inoculation drive.**
- ✓ Comparing India's vaccination status with other countries, the government said India has immunised far more people than any other country, including US, UK, France and Russia.



- ✓ While 5.56 lakh beneficiaries were vaccinated in US, India has crossed that in just three days.

- ✓ The Centre has asked states like Punjab, Puducherry and Tamil Nadu with less than 40% vaccine coverage to take steps to ramp up the number of sessions.
- ✓ On January 19, 1,77,368 beneficiaries were vaccinated through 3800 sessions
- ✓ Lakshadweep (89.3%), Sikkim (85.7%), Odisha (82.6%), Telangana (81.1%), Arunachal Pradesh (75.4%), Uttar Pradesh (71.4%) and Rajasthan (71.3%) fare at the top in the all-India level with the maximum percentage of people covered
- ✓ India will begin to ship out lakhs of doses of the novel coronavirus vaccine to neighbouring countries beginning January 20
- ✓ The first batches expected to reach Bhutan and the Maldives among several countries by special planes as a grant or gift.



- ✓ Bhutan will receive the first shipment of 1,50,000 Covishield vaccines on January 20
- ✓ The release of the shipments is part of the government's "Neighbourhood First" initiative, and will make India the first country to reach COVID-19 vaccines in South Asia, ahead of China
- **The Centre – has asked WhatsApp to withdraw its controversial privacy update programme in the country.**

- ✓ It had urged the Facebook-owned instant messenger to “respect the informational privacy and data security of Indian users”
- ✓ The new privacy update programme allows the company to share certain data of WhatsApp users with its parent Facebook and other platforms such as Instagram
- ✓ The IT Ministry has sent a detailed questionnaire to the company as part of the communication to WhatsApp CEO Will Cathcart.

MASSIVE BACKLASH ON NEW POLICY	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ WhatsApp has over 40cr subscribers in India, its largest user base in any country ➤ Firm had rolled out its new privacy update in Dec 2020 and asked users to upgrade by Feb 8, 2021 or be ready to move out of platform. WhatsApp has now decided to defer the rollout till May 15 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Platform received massive backlash on its proposal, with concerns raised by privacy advocates, enterprises, entrepreneurs like Tesla founder Elon Musk and govt agencies ➤ Move led to huge growth in competing platforms like Signal (set up by WhatsApp co-founder Brian Acton) and Telegram

- ✓ The government is particularly unhappy with two others measures that have been proposed by WhatsApp as part of the upgrade
 - ✓ The first being a forced adoption plan for users to either accept the update or be ready to leave the chat platform
 - ✓ The other concern is the seemingly-lenient privacy update for Europeans vis-à-vis the plan for India and users here.
- ✓ The government has asked the company to provide details of difference between WhatsApp privacy policies in other countries and India.
- **On January 19, the Union Culture Ministry - announced that January 23, birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, would be celebrated as “Parakram Divas”, day of courage, every year.**
- ✓ The Ministry notified that the government had decided to celebrate the 125th birth anniversary year starting from January 23, 2021 in a “befitting manner at national and international level”.
- ✓ Later, at a press conference, Culture Minister Prahlad Singh Patel said Prime Minister Narendra Modi would preside over the inauguration of the celebrations in Kolkata
- ✓ A permanent exhibition on Netaji would be opened at the Victoria Memorial, Kolkata
- ✓ A programme would be held in Cuttack, birthplace of Netaji.

COMMITTEES

- **The Supreme Court-appointed committee for deliberations on the three farm laws - launches a dedicated portal to obtain the views from farmers**
- ✓ The panel held its first meeting on January 19 at Pusa
- ✓ Even individual farmers are allowed to submit views on the contentious legislation

- ✓ The panel had decided to hear at least 20 organisations on the first day of consultations on January 21.
- ✓ It also said repeal of the laws, as demanded by protesting agri-unions, was “not on the cards”.
- ✓ The panel finalised a roadmap of activities for two months to prepare its final recommendations that it will submit to the court.
- ✓ It will hear state governments and the State Agricultural Marketing Boards along with the farm unions and cooperatives for their views on the farm reform laws.
- ✓ The unions and associations, which may not be able to be present before it physically because of the pandemic, will be consulted through video conference.
- ✓ The members of the committee includes
 - ✓ Anil Ghanwat, president of the Maharashtra-based farm outfit Shetkari Sanghatana,
 - ✓ Ashok Gulati, Agriculture economist and former chairman of the Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices (CACP) and
 - ✓ Pramod Joshi, former director for South Asia, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)
- ✓ Bhartiya Kisan Union president Bhupinder Singh Mann, however, recused from the committee last week.
- ✓ On January 11, the apex court had stayed the implementation of the three farm laws
- ✓ The SC had set up the four-member committee on January 12 for the purpose of hearing the grievances of the farmers and the views of the government and to make recommendations” within two months.

DEFENCE

- **Bharat Dynamics Limited, a Government of India enterprise – signed an agreement with Thales, a French Multinational Company recently for mutual collaboration on STARStreak Air Defence System**



- ✓ The STARStreak is a short-range surface-to-air missile that can travel at Mach 3 speed, that is, the speed of the missile is three times the speed of sound.

- ✓ Called earlier as the Shorts Missile System, it has been in service with the British Army since 1997.
- ✓ The minimum range of the system is 0.3 km and the maximum range is 7 km.
- ✓ It has several variants, which include an air to air system that can be fired from helicopters, a system that has range of more than 7 km and a Light Weight Multiple Launcher variant that can be used mounting on a stationary vehicle.
- ✓ The surface to air missile installed in the STARStreak Air Defence System is currently the fastest short-range surface to air missile in the world.
- ✓ After being fired from the system, the missile picks up speed greater than Mach 4 level.
- ✓ The missile is made of three LASER guided Darts, which increases the accuracy of reaching the target position.
- ✓ Usually, the missile systems have only one LASER guided dart that increases the probability of missing the target.
- ✓ The STARStreak Air Defence System cannot be jammed by infrared countermeasures or suppressed with anti-radar missiles.
- ✓ It has been optimised to engage attack helicopters at a very high speed

APPOINTMENTS

- **Lt-General C P Mohanty from Odisha – is named as the 42nd vice-chief of the 13-lakh strong Army**



- ✓ He takes over from Lt-General S K Saini who superannuates on January 31.
- ✓ Lt-Gen Mohanty is currently serving as the Commanding-in-Chief of Southern Command chief
- ✓ Prior to this, he was posted as the General Officer Commanding of Uttar Bharat area.
- ✓ Earlier, he had commanded the crucial 33 Corps in the eastern sector immediately after the 73-day confrontation with China at Doklam in 2017.
- ✓ He has also led a multinational UN brigade in Congo earlier
- ✓ Lt Gen Mohanty has operational experience along the borders with Pakistan and China and in active counter-insurgency operations in Assam

AWARDS

- **Southern Railway - has won silver for its response to Covid-19 in the SKOCH Awards.**
- ✓ The award was given after the railway zone took part in a competition by filing documentation and a presentation detailing various activities undertaken in response to the pandemic.
- ✓ The presentation covered Southern Railway's strategies and multifarious efforts including running of 507 Shramik specials
- ✓ The award also recognises its freight services and timetabled parcel services for transportation of essential commodities, special trains to important destinations, refurbishing coaches into isolation facilities, in-house making of PPEs, hand sanitizers, masks and various innovative prototypes

OBITUARY

- **Renowned oncologist and Cancer Institute chairman Dr V Shanta (94 years) – passed away on January 19 in Chennai**



- ✓ The doyen of oncology breathed her last at Apollo Hospitals after attempts to clear critical blocks in the blood vessels of her heart failed
- ✓ Born on March 11, 1927 in a distinguished family of luminaries — both her maternal uncle S Chandrasekhar and maternal grandfather C V Raman are Nobel laureates — Shanta graduated in medicine in 1949 from Madras Medical College, and obtained M.D. in Obstetrics and Gynaecology in 1955.
- ✓ She was then selected to the post of assistant surgeon at the Women and Children's Hospital, Madras by the Madras Public Service Commission
- ✓ However, Dr Shanta joined Adyar Cancer Institute as a resident medical officer in 1955, a year after it was founded by Dr Muthulakshmi Reddy, one of the first women graduates of medicine in India and a legislator.
- ✓ The Institute was established by the Women's Indian Association (WIA) Cancer Relief Fund with just two doctors, two nurses and 12 beds

- ✓ Dr. Shanta played an important role along with Dr. Krishnamurthi in the development of the Cancer Institute from a cottage hospital to over-500 bed major comprehensive Cancer Centre of national and international stature.
- ✓ She was responsible for the recognition and practice of medical oncology as a speciality and the creation of a separate medical oncology division at the Institute.
- ✓ The first super specialty course in surgical and medical oncology in India was introduced at the institute in 1984.
- ✓ Most patients who received treatment at the institute either got it for free or at a subsidised cost
- ✓ Only 40% are paying beds and the remaining are general beds where patients are boarded and lodged free of cost.
- ✓ Dr. Shanta was on the World Health Organisation Advisory Committee on Cancer till March 2005.
- ✓ She was also convenor of the State Advisory Board on Cancer, and has been member of many ICMR committees.
- ✓ On December 28, 2020, she participated in the launch of Tamil Nadu Cancer Registry Project Report 2020, a collaborative study by Cancer Institute and Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Tamil Nadu.
- ✓ For her work, Dr Shantha was recognised with the Padma Vibhushan (2016), Padma Bhushan (2006), Padma Shri (1986), and the Ramon Magsaysay Award (2005).
- ✓ In her lifetime, Dr Shanta received more than 40 awards from public and private organisations for her contribution to the management and control of cancer.
- ✓ Prime Minister Narendra Modi led the nation in condoling the death of the veteran in cancer care
- ✓ Dr Shanta was laid to rest with police honours at the Besant Nagar crematorium.

SPORTS

- **India - beat Australia by three wickets on January 19 to win back-to-back Test series on Australian soil**
- ✓ The injury-ridden team scripted a historic victory with only three overs remaining in the fourth and final Test and clinched the Border-Gavaskar Trophy by 2-1 margin
- ✓ In the process, they became the first ever Asian side to win a Test at the Gabba after chasing down their third-highest total in Brisbane.
- ✓ This was Australia's first loss at The Gabba since 1988
- ✓ This was arguably India's greatest Test win overseas and definitely their finest series victory ever.



- ✓ India needed only a draw to retain the Border-Gavaskar trophy.
- ✓ Just three Tests ago, India had plumbed the depths of 36 all out in the first Test at Adelaide
- ✓ The team secured the first victory at Melbourne, while the Sydney test ended in a draw
- ✓ India had earlier won the three-match T20I series 2-1 after having lost the ODI series by the same margin.

PIOs IN NEW US GOVERNMENT - REPORT

INDIAN AMERICANS IN THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

“My constituents in Delaware, my staff in the Senate, the Obama-Biden administration, which had more Indian-Americans than any other administration in the history of this country and this campaign with Indian-Americans at senior levels, which of course includes the top of the heap, our dear friend (Harris) who will be the first Indian-American vice-president in the history of the United States of America **”** | PRESIDENT-ELECT JOE BIDEN



Kamala Harris | Vice-President

Neera Tanden | Director of the White House Office of Management and Budget

Dr Vivek Murthy | US Surgeon General

Vanita Gupta | Associate Attorney General Department of Justice

Uzra Zeya | Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights

Mala Adiga | Policy Director to the future First Lady Dr Jill Biden

Garima Verma | Digital Director of the Office of the First Lady

Sabrina Singh | First Lady's Deputy Press Secretary



Kamala Harris

Aisha Shah | Partnership Manager at the White House Office of Digital Strategy

Sameera Fazili | Deputy Director at the US National Economic Council (NEC) in the White House

Bharat Ramamurti | Deputy Director of the White House National Economic Council

Gautam Raghavan | Deputy Director in Office of Presidential Personnel

Vinay Reddy | Director of Speechwriting

Vedant Patel | Assistant Press Secretary to the President

Sonia Aggarwal | Senior Advisor for Climate Policy and Innovation

In the Office of the Domestic Climate Policy at the White House

Vidur Sharma | Policy Adviser for Testing for the White House Covid-19 Response Team

Tarun Chhabra | Senior Director for Technology and National Security

Sumona Guha | Senior Director for South Asia in National Security Council; Shanthi Kalathil: Coordinator for Democracy and Human Rights in National Security Council

Neha Gupta | Associate Counsel in the Office of the White House Counsel

Reema Shah | Deputy Associate Counsel in the Office of the White House Counsel