

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS–FEBRUARY 13, 2021

TAMIL NADU

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi – to visit Chennai on February 14 for inaugurating and laying foundation stones for various projects at a function**
- ✓ Further, the PM will hand over the indigenously designed and developed Arjun main battle tank (MK-1A) to the Indian Army.
- ✓ Arjun MK-1A has been designed, developed and manufactured by Combat Vehicles Research and Development Establishment (CVRDE) Chennai, DRDO along with 15 academic institutions, eight labs and several MSMEs
- ✓ It has already completed all modifications and tests for the army.
- ✓ The army had placed an order for 118 tanks with the CVRDE.
- ✓ The PM will inaugurate the Chennai Metro Rail phase-I extension project, which has been completed at a cost of ₹3,770 crore, and commission passenger services from Washermanpet to Wimco Nagar.
- ✓ This 9.05-km extension will link north Chennai to the airport and the Central railway station.
- ✓ The PM will also inaugurate the 22.1km fourth rail line between Chennai Beach and Attipattu, that has been laid at a cost of ₹293.40 crore
- ✓ This section connects the Chennai port and the Ennore port and passes through major yards
- ✓ He will lay the foundation stone for the extension, renovation and modernisation of the Grand Anicut Canal System
- ✓ The canal is important for irrigation in the Cauvery delta districts.
- ✓ It will be modernised at a cost of ₹2,640 crore so as to improve its carrying capacity.
- ✓ The PM will also lay the foundation for the 'discovery campus' of IIT-Madras at Thaiyur built over an area of 2 lakh sq m at an estimated cost of ₹1,000 crore in the first phase

- ✓ Further, the PM will inaugurate the railway electrification of single line section of 228 km route in between Villupuram, Cuddalore, Mayiladuthurai, Thanjavur and Mayiladuthurai.
- ✓ The PM will also visit Kerala on February 14 for inaugurating various projects in the state
- **The findings of the 11th edition of the Tamirabarani Waterbird Count (TWC) – were released on February 12**
- ✓ A total of 26,868 birds, belonging to 73 species, including thousands of migratory birds from Siberia and Mongolia were recorded in the Count
- ✓ The TWC was conducted in the waterbodies of Tirunelveli, Tuticorin and Tenkasi districts from January 29 to 31 covering 62 waterbodies
- ✓ More than 120 volunteers, comprising of nature enthusiasts, students, entrepreneurs, farmers, homemakers, and physicians took part in the exercise
- ✓ During the 10th edition of TWC in 2020, 24,411 birds from 74 species were spotted.
- ✓ Breeding colonies of Asian open bill, oriental darter, little cormorant, Indian shag, and black-headed ibis were spotted in Gangaikondan tank.
- ✓ A sizable number of oriental darter breeding colonies with chicks were identified in Nainarkulam in Tirunelveli city.
- ✓ Black-tailed godwit (*limosa limosa*), a migratory bird from Siberia was spotted in Sengulam near Mukkudal and Kalkurichikulam near Thalaiyuthu.
- ✓ The species is listed in the near-threatened category in the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)'s red list.
- ✓ Bar-headed geese (*anserindicus*), a migratory bird from Mongolia known to be one of the highest-flying bird species, was seen at Vepankulam in Sivanthipatti village.
- ✓ The number of birds recorded this year is much less than the numbers recorded in seven editions.
- ✓ The highest recorded count was 67,194 birds belonging to 72 species in 2014, followed by 60,966 of 70 species in 2013.
- ✓ The lowest is 8,256 of 57 species in 2017.
- ✓ The number of birds was less this year due to the unexpected heavy rainfall in the Tirunelveli region in January compared to previous years.

STATES

- **Goa - has become the 6th State in the country that has successfully completed the urban local bodies reforms.**
- ✓ These urban local bodies reforms were set up by the Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance
- ✓ With this, Goa is now eligible to mobilise the additional financial resources of Rs. 223 crore with the help of Open Market Borrowings.

- ✓ It will also be granted permission to mobilise financial resource of Rs. 2,731 crore by the Department of Expenditure
- ✓ Apart from Goa, five other states namely Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Manipur and Telangana have already completed the urban local bodies reforms.
- ✓ These five states have also been granted a total additional borrowing permission to the tune of Rs.10,435 crore.
- ✓ As part of the reforms, the states are required to notify floor rates of property tax in ULBs in accordance with the guideline rates for property transactions
- ✓ They must also notify the floor rates of user charges with respect to the provision of water-supply, drainage and sewerage.
- ✓ Further, the states should launch a system of periodic increase in the floor rates of property tax or the user charges with respect to the price increases.
- ✓ Apart from these reforms, the centre has also identified four citizen centric areas for reforms namely, the Implementation of One Nation One Ration Card, Urban Local body or utility reform, Ease of doing business reform and Power Sector reforms.
- ✓ These reforms would enable the ULBs to provide better public health and sanitation services to its citizens.

NATIONAL

- **The Central Vaccine Task Force - to stick to its original plan of administering the second dose of Covishield vaccine after 28 days (four weeks)**
 - ✓ Earlier, the WHO recommended extending the interval between the two doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine to 8 to 12 weeks for maximum efficacy
 - ✓ The administration of the second dose is scheduled to start from February 13
 - ✓ On February 10, the WHO said in its interim recommendations that the two dose efficacy and immunogenicity increase with a longer inter-dose interval.
 - ✓ As per the manufacturer's product label, the vaccine can be administered with an interval of 4-12 weeks
 - ✓ Clinical trial findings from studies in the UK, Brazil and South Africa have shown an efficacy of just over 63% irrespective of inter-dose interval.
 - ✓ However, the analyses showed that efficacy increased to 70% in those who took it at an interval of 9-12 weeks and 78% in those who took it after 12 weeks.
 - ✓ It was only around 56% in the group that took the second dose in 4-8 weeks.
- **Lok Sabha - has passed the Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Bill 2021 on February 12 by voice vote.**
 - ✓ Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad introduced the bill in the Lok Sabha on February 4
 - ✓ The Bill seeks to make India a big hub for domestic and international arbitration.

- ✓ The Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Bill 2021 deal with the domestic and international arbitration.
 - ✓ It also defines the law to conduct the conciliation proceedings.
 - ✓ The Bill replaces an ordinance containing same provisions that was promulgated on November 4, 2020.
 - ✓ It seeks to amend the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996, which regulates the domestic arbitration in India.
 - ✓ This act was first amended in the year 2015 and later by the Lok Sabha in August 2019.
- **The Government – has announced the increase of the upper ceiling for family pension from Rs 45,000 to Rs 1,25,000 per month**
 - ✓ This was announced by the Union Minister of State for Prime Minister’s Office and Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, Dr. Jitendra Singh, on February 12
 - ✓ The decision would help in providing adequate financial security to the family members of the deceased employees.
 - ✓ The Department of Pension & Pensioners’ Welfare (DoPPW) has also clarified the amount admissible when child is eligible to draw two family pensions after death of parents.
 - ✓ The Pay Commission provide recommendations with respect to the changes in salary structure of the Government employees
 - ✓ The 1st pay commission was set in the year 1947.
 - ✓ The 7th pay commission was set up in September 2013, headed by Justice A.K Mathur.
 - **The Technology Information, Forecasting and Assessment Council (TIFAC) - has launched a job portal called SAKSHAM to map the skills of workers as required by the MSMEs.**



- ✓ It also launched a Seaweed Cultivation Mission.
- ✓ The Saksham portal will help in eliminating the middlemen and labour contractors to identify the skill proficiency level of workers, especially during the pandemic situation.

- ✓ It will directly connect the workers with MSMEs and facilitate the placement of about 10 lakh blue-collar jobs across the country
 - ✓ The Seaweed Cultivation is also called as the kelp farming.
 - ✓ It is the practice of cultivating and harvesting the seaweed.
 - ✓ As per the estimate of the department, if commercial seaweed cultivation is done in 10 million hectares or in the 5% of the Exclusive Economic Zone area in India, it would help in providing employment to 50 million people.
- **India - launched its' first-ever diesel tractor that has been converted to Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) on February 12.**



- ✓ The CNG Tractor was formally launched by Nitin Gadkari, the Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways.
- ✓ The conversion of the diesel tractor into the CNG tractor was carried out jointly by Rawmatt Techno Solutions and Tomasetto Achille India.
- ✓ The CNG tractor will help the farmer to save more than 50% on the costs of fuel annually.
- ✓ Further, this retrofitted CNG tractor produces more power or equal when compared to the diesel-run engine
- ✓ It will also reduce the overall emissions by 70% as compared to the emission by the diesel tractors

INTERNATIONAL

- **On February 11, President of United States, Joe Biden - has withdrawn the emergency order issued by former President Donald Trump to construct the US-Mexico border wall.**
- ✓ The idea to construct a wall at US-Mexico border was announced by the former President of United States Donald Trump in 2016 during the presidential campaign trail.
 - ✓ After this, he had been repeatedly asking Mexico to pay for the construction of the border wall.
 - ✓ On February 15, 2019, the Trump administration had signed the executive order that declared the national emergency so as to build US-Mexico border wall.



- ✓ Later in 2020, the Customs and Border Protection allocated USD 11 billion as fund in order to construct the wall.
- ✓ The border seeks to reduce the illegal immigration from the Mexico to the United States from Mexico.
- ✓ Along the border, security is provided by virtual fence of cameras, sensors, and other surveillance equipment.
- **The Joe Biden administration in United States - is all set to re-join the UN Human Rights Council.**
- ✓ The US had withdrawn from the UNHRC in the year 2018 under Presidency of the Donald Trump because of its disproportionate focus on Israel
- ✓ Israel had received the largest number of critical council resolutions so far with respect to any other country.
- ✓ UNHRC is an inter-governmental body within the UN system.
- ✓ The agency is involved in strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights across the world.
- ✓ The council was created in the year 2006 by the UN General Assembly Resolution 60/251.
- ✓ The agency is involved in discussing all the human rights issues and violations
- ✓ The UNHRC was created after replacing the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR).
- ✓ The council comprises of the 47 UN Member States.

INDIA AND NEIGHBOURS

- **The Reserve Bank of India - has announced that the Export-Import Bank of India (Exim Bank) will provide \$ 400 million to Maldives for funding the Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCP)**
- ✓ The Exim Bank had signed an agreement with the Maldives government to provide the supported Line of Credit of \$400 million on October 12, 2020.
- ✓ The utilisation period of the terminal is 60 months after the completion date of the project.

- ✓ The GMCP project was the election promise by the current President of Maldives, Ibrahim Mohamed Solih.
- ✓ It will connect the Gulhifalhu Port at Male and Thilafushi industrial zone with a 6.7-kilometre-long bridge.
- ✓ This is a landmark project that will streamline the connectivity between the four islands namely, Maldives, Villingili, Gulhifahu and Thilafushi.
- ✓ India is among those countries that recognized the Maldives after it gained its independence in 1965.
- ✓ Both the countries share an ethnic, linguistic, religious, cultural and commercial links.
- ✓ India and Maldives are the founding members of SAARC.
- ✓ India also consider Maldives a part of its 'Neighbourhood First' Policy
- ✓ It had established the Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital in Male.

PERSONALITIES

- **Rashmi Samant, from Manipal in Karnataka -was elected president of the Oxford Student Union on February 11**



- ✓ Rashmi is the first Indian woman to occupy the position.
- ✓ The alumna of Manipal Institute of Technology (MIT), MAHE, secured higher votes than the combined count of the other three contestants.
- ✓ An MSc student in energy systems at Linacre College, Oxford University, Rashmi received 1,966 of the 3,708 votes cast for president.
- ✓ The student union election this year saw a record turnout of 4,881 students who cast 36,405 votes for all posts combined.
- ✓ Rashmi has listed four main priorities - decolonisation and inclusivity, Covid interventions for all, access to quality mental health resources and decarbonising the university.
- ✓ Rashmi completed her graduation in mechanical engineering at MIT (2016-2020) and was technical secretary of the student council at MIT.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **On February 10, Chinese spacecraft 'Tianwen-1' - has successfully entered the orbit of Mars**

- ✓ The spacecraft will launch a lander which is carrying a 240-kilogram rover in a rapid seven-minute descent.
 - ✓ The rover will land at the northern hemisphere of Mars called as Utopia Planitia.
 - ✓ After that, the solar-powered rover will be exploring the Martian surface for 90 days
 - ✓ The rover will trace the sub-surface water and ice using the ground-penetrating radar
 - ✓ It will study the soil and identify the presence of signs of any ancient life
 - ✓ Tianwen-1 is an interplanetary mission by the China National Space Administration (CNSA).
 - ✓ The robotic spacecraft consists of an orbiter, a deployable camera, a lander and a rover.
 - ✓ It was successfully launched on July 23, 2020 from the Wenchang Spacecraft Launch Site from a Long March 5 heavy-lift launch vehicle.
 - ✓ The spacecraft has been named Tianwen-1, which means “Questions to Heaven” following a old Chinese poem.
 - ✓ It is China’s first independent mission to the Red planet, after the failed probe that was co-launched with Russia in the year 2011.
- **On February 9, the United Arab Emirates - has made history as the first Arab country to reach the reddish planet, Mars.**
- ✓ The Emirates Mars mission, named the Hope, reached the red planet and sent its signal back to Earth
 - ✓ This makes the UAE only the second country, after India, to successfully enter Mars’ orbit on its first try
 - ✓ UAE has become the fifth country to launch the spacecraft into the orbit of MARS after United States, Soviet Union, Europe and India.
 - ✓ The space mission will study the daily and seasonal weather cycles and weather events such as dust storm in the lower atmosphere.
 - ✓ It also seeks to study why the planet is losing the hydrogen and oxygen into space.
 - ✓ The Hope probe, a \$200 million project called Al-Amal in Arabic, was launched on July 20 from Japan’s Tanegashima Space Station through the Mitsubishi Heavy Industries H-IIA launch vehicle
 - ✓ It will now spend one Martian year — equivalent to 687 days on Earth — studying and gathering data on the red planet’s atmosphere.
 - ✓ The year 2021 marks the 50th anniversary of the UAE’s formation as a country.
 - ✓ The spacecraft carries three highly specialised instruments to fully map the Martian atmosphere
 - ✓ It includes a highly sophisticated camera to photograph Mars and study its lower atmosphere, an ultraviolet spectrometer that will detect the planet’s levels of carbon monoxide and oxygen, and an infrared spectrometer that will measure Martian dust, ice clouds and water.

- ✓ The design, development, and operations of the MARS mission are led by the Mohammed bin Rashid Space Centre (MBRSC).
- ✓ It was developed in collaboration with the Laboratory for Atmospheric and Space Physics (LASP) at the University of Colorado and with the help of Arizona State University (ASU).
- ✓ The spacecraft was assembled at the University of Colorado.

ECONOMY

- **The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) - has concluded the Financial Literacy Week (FLW) for this year recently**
- ✓ The week was observed from February 8 to 12, 2021
- ✓ This year, the Financial Literacy week focused on 'Developing the credit discipline and encouraging availing of the credit from the formal financial institutions as it is required'.
- ✓ It was observed to spread awareness regarding the credit facilities which are provided by the banks
- ✓ Through this programme, the banks have highlighted about various types of credit or loan facilities including the home loan, business loan, vehicle loan and Kisan Credit Card etc.
- ✓ The financial literacy week is organised by the central bank since 2016 to highlight different banking services to the general public
- ✓ In the year 2020, the FLW focussed on the 'Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises'.
- ✓ Last year, the RBI dealt on the topics of formalisation, discounting of receivables, rehabilitation of stressed units, collateral free loan, and timely repayment of the loan
- ✓ In the year 2019, it focused on Farmers', while in the year 2018 it focussed on 'Consumer Protection'.

APPOINTMENTS

- **On February 12, Congress - appointed veteran Mallikarjun Kharge as the party leader in Rajya Sabha, making him the new leader of opposition**
- ✓ Kharge replaces Ghulam Nabi Azad who retires from the Upper House on February 15
- ✓ Kharge, a Congress loyalist and a senior Dalit leader, was the party leader in Lok Sabha during 2014-19
- ✓ After losing the 2019 poll, he was brought into the Rajya Sabha last June.
- ✓ He had spent the majority of his political career in Karnataka assembly where he won a record assembly terms and occupied ministerial posts in multiple state governments



- ✓ He will be the second leader from Karnataka to be the Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha after M S Gurupadaswamy, one of the founders of Janata Party
- ✓ Overall, Kharge will be the 17th Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha He was the former Minister of Railways and Minister of Labour and Employment in the UPA government
- ✓ Senior member Anand Sharma will continue in the position of deputy leader.
- ✓ Azad has served as the Leader of Opposition for the longest period of six years and nine months, followed by Sikander Bakht (5 years 10 months), Manmohan Singh (5 years 9 months) and Arun Jaitley (5 years 2 months).

SPORTS

- **Delhi Capitals CEO Dhiraj Malhotra - will be the BCCI's new General Manager for Game Development**



- ✓ He replaces the incumbent GM, Saba Karim.
- ✓ Karim's three year stint had ended last month after being on six months notice period.
- ✓ Malhotra has more than two decade long stint in the cricket industry
- ✓ He has also held senior positions at the ICC and has been responsible for overseeing cricket operations of various ICC events.

INTERNATIONAL DAY

- **World Radio Day – February 13**



- ✓ The Day is being celebrated across the world to highlight that the radio is a powerful medium to reach wide audience and promote diversity in the society
- ✓ Theme 2021 - “New World, New Radio”
- ✓ The day was proclaimed by the members of UNESCO in 2011 and adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in the year 2012 as an International Day.
- ✓ The agenda of observing the World radio day was first put forward by a Spanish Radio Academy on September 20, 2010.

➤ **International Day of Women and Girls in Science – February 11**



- ✓ The observance of the Day highlights the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development namely the gender equality and science
- ✓ This day promotes full and equal access to women and girls in the field of science and technology
- ✓ It is jointly observed by UNESCO and UN Women
- ✓ Theme 2021 - “Women Scientists at the forefront of the fight against COVID-19”
- ✓ The event was held at the United Nations Headquarters through video conferencing.
- ✓ The International Day of Women and Girls was proclaimed through a resolution of the United Nations General Assembly that was passed on December 22, 2015.
- ✓ According to the UNESCO data for the year 2014-2016, only around 30% of all female students select the STEM-related fields for the higher education.

➤ **World Pulses Day – February 10**



- ✓ The day aims to raise awareness about the important role played by pulses in our daily nutritional requirements
- ✓ Theme 2021 - "Nutritious Seeds for a Sustainable Future"
- ✓ On this occasion, a massive event was held virtually in New York to highlight the contribution of pulses in maintaining the sustainable food systems and healthy diets.
- ✓ The day aims to celebrate the second goal of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal which is "Zero Hunger."
- ✓ It also includes the objectives of the United Nations Agenda 2030.
- ✓ The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations established this day in the year 2018 with the aim of increasing the awareness as well as access to pulses.
- ✓ On the occasion of the world pulses day, people are requested to consume and donate pulses.

